

Monergism

A person stands on the peak of a mountain, silhouetted against a dramatic sky. The sky is filled with clouds, some illuminated by a warm, golden light from the sun, which is low on the horizon. The overall scene is one of vastness and contemplation.

The Sovereign and Final Happiness of Man

WITH THE EFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN IT

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THE PREFACE.

The Argument before us recommends itself as from its Nature and Quality, for true Happiness is the first and last in the order of things desirable; the first for its attractive Excellence, the last in its consummate Fruition; so upon this most valuable account, that it nearly concerns every Person. For Happiness is not restrained to any peculiar rank of Men, but may equally and perpetually be possessed by all that sincerely apply themselves to obtain it. If in the very different States of Life here, there were any uncapable of Eternal Life, or that have another Object for their last end, there might be some reason why they should not feel their desires inflamed, and Spirits moved towards Celestial Felicity, and to justify their sole Pretensions to the things of Time, whereto their Interests are confined. But the offer of Heaven comprehends all that upon God's Terms will accept it. The most sensible inequality that Riches, Dignity, or any other Temporal Accident makes between Men here, is so true a Nothing in comparison of Eternal Glory, that it makes no difference of one from another as to the obtaining of it.

Besides the universal respect wherein the Doctrine of Eternal Salvation concerns all Men as capable of it, 'tis also of admirable use to their various Conditions Temporal and Spiritual. For the

prosperous or afflicted in the World; the Strangers to serious Religion, or the experienced in the Affairs of the Soul; the newly entered into a state of Grace, or the greatest Proficients, may find what is suitable to them in the consideration of it. As the quickening Influences of Heaven are appropriated to the divers Qualities of Fruits, with that discreet Operation, that the hard are softened, the small acquire growth and substance, the Green are colored and made beautiful, the harsh become pleasant, and receive their fragrancy and full maturity. Thus the virtue of the Celestial Reward is powerful to reform the obstinate in Evil, and to encourage the irresolute in Good, to produce the first Life of Holiness, and to cherish and strengthen it till it comes to perfection. Happiness is the Spring and Crown of our Obedience.

I shall only add this, That no Argument has more exercised the Minds of the wisest and best Men, than the last End and highest Good of Man: and that in the managing of this most necessary Subject, I have selected some things from their Writings, that were proper to my Design, which I acknowledge with that candor as if I had particularly named them.

CHAPTER I.

The generality of Men [to] pursue a false Happiness.

The causes of their mistake. Rules to direct in the search after the blessed End of Man. The Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, the frame of Man's Nature, and the Holy Scriptures discover it. The things of the World are defective, in all the essential Conditions requisite to Man's Felicity. God alone who

is a spiritual infinite eternal Good, can make him perfectly blessed.

That the Inclination to Happiness is as universal as the Human Nature, we have the clearest testimony from the experience of all Men. This inclination is neither cold nor barren, but vigorously exerts itself in motions of flight, and aversion from what is apprehended as Evil, and in the pursuit of what is conceived under the appearance of Good. From hence proceeds the unwearied Industry of Men in using means to accomplish their general End. Some waste their Time and Strength in an eager pursuit of sensual Pleasures, and Riches, and Dignities; Others in acquiring the more valuable Treasures of Knowledge, or in purchasing an honorable Reputation, as if the obtaining of these things were the cure of their distempered Desires. But the concurrence of all particular Goods that enrich the Soul within the Sphere of Nature, or that preserve and delight the Body, cannot afford true Content. The Heart still remains empty, and languishes for Satisfaction. 'It is therefore a just cause of wonder, that an intelligent Creature finding the product of all his Diligence unanswerable to his Hopes, should vainly seek for Happiness where 'tis not to be found; and after innumerable disappointments fly at an impossibility. An Error in the first enquiry might have some color of excuse, but that having been so often deceived with painted Grapes for the Fruits of Paradise, Men should still seek for substantial Blessedness to fill the Soul, in vain shows that can only feed the Eye, is Madness exceeding all Admiration. What powerful charm obstructs their true judging of things? What Spirit of Error possess them? The only Account that can be given of it is this: Man being fallen from the Holiness and Perfection of his Original State, the Affections are viciously inclined to sensible things, and the fumes arising from carnal Lusts cloud and overshadow the Mind, and hinder its clear discovery of that universal comprehensive Good in whose Fruition true Happiness consists, therefore he earnestly applies himself to please the lower Faculties, allured by present Delights, and the facility of obtaining them.

And from hence we may understand, that the only way of their recovery is by clearing the Mind from Ignorance and Folly, that it may discern the sole proper object of the rational Appetite in its true Beauty and Goodness, and by that sight the Will may feel its ravishing Power, and be drawn to a free and firm choice of it. And that the Soul may not faint under the apprehension of insuperable difficulties interposing between it and the obtaining of its Happiness, and therefore content itself with easy Vanities, to propound such means that sincerely used will be effectual, and offer it that assistance that will make it finally victorious over all opposition.

Thus the two leading Faculties being turned from the Creature to God, the inferior Wheels will follow their motion, and the Conversation be entirely changed. In order to this happy work the following Discourses were composed; wherein are represented those reasons from the Dignity, Capacity, and Immortality of Man's Soul, and from the essential conditions of his Felicity; that impartially considered by the Men of the World, who prefer Earth before Heaven, will discover the vanity of their Designs, and check the fury of their Prosecutions, and turn their Aims and endeavors to that that is infinitely more worthy of them. But the real effecting this belongs solely to his Divine Power, who purchased Heaven for us.

O thou Sun and Life of Souls, shed abroad thy Light and Vital Heat, the belief of the Truth of unseen things, and the love of their superlative Goodness in the Minds and Hearts of Men, that they may not frame to themselves an imaginary Happiness in the enjoyments of this perishing Life, but with that zeal and vigor in their Affections and Actions seek after the real Blessedness of the future Life, as becomes an Object so glorious and eternal.

In treating of this Subject, our first inquiry is, What is the blessed End for which Man was created? This we may clearly discover; by considering three things.

1. The Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator, who made all things in order to some End worthy his Perfections.
2. The Human Nature in its highest Faculties, and their utmost Capacities.
3. The Revelation of it in God's Word. Natural Light gives a real signification of God's Intention by the two first: but the most clear and full is in the Holy Scriptures.

I will treat of them in their order.

First, The working of God is always [I] with some design of High Providence. He did not create the World and Man by chance, nor as a Seal impresses its Figure without knowing what is stamped. But he works always by Counsel and Election, knowing what he does, and for what End. Now the last Period wherein all his Works determine, is his own Glory, that being the chiefest Good. He made great variety of Creatures, and bountiful Provisions for their Happiness, ultimately for his own Pleasure. According to his Wisdom and most free Goodness, he was pleased that the World should not only be filled with material and sensitive Beings, that objectively glorify him, by the reflex of the Divine Perfections appearing in them, but to frame a higher rank of Creatures, wherein the Image of his Excellencies was more conspicuous, and that might actively glorify him, by understanding and magnifying, by loving and obeying Him. And as the several kinds of things have degrees of Excellency, they are subordinate in their use: the simple to the compounded, the dead to the living, the lower Natures to the more Noble. By this we may take an estimate of their Dignity and Order. Now for whom was this vast Fabric raised, and furnished with as many Miracles as Creatures? For whose use were the Lights of Heaven, and the innumerable Forms of lower Beings, Plants, and Beasts on the Earth? If we regard their Operations, 'tis evident they were intended for the benefit of Man. He that understands himself, and will not forfeit the Prerogative of the reasonable Nature, must readily

acknowledge that the Preservation and Comfort of Man, was their final Rule in the mind of the Creator, and their mutual usefulness to one another is referred to his advantage. He is the Center of the Universe, wherein the several Orders of visible Beings, as Lines drawn in a Circle, unite. And is Man alone left without an end worthy his excellent Nature? 'It is not to be conceived without vile Thoughts, even the casting an imputation on the Wisdom of his Maker.

Secondly, The Frame of Man's Nature, [II] and his Capacity is an indication of the End for which he was created. For of things made with design, the End is present in the Mind of the Agent, that directs and regulates all the parts of the Work as the prime reason of it. In a Ship, the Matter, the Form, the Tackling, the number and diversity of Instruments, are all in order to Sail. Now Man consists of two parts, an Earthly, and Spiritual: and to make a right Judgment of his last and happy End, we must consider him with respect to the Soul that is capable of nobler Operations, and higher enjoyments than the Body is; for the true notion of Happiness consists in the perfection and satisfaction of his principal and most receptive Faculties, the Understanding, Will and Affections, and consequently both in Action and Fruition with respect to the most excellent Objects. Hence it necessarily follows that he is made for a more worthy purpose than the pursuit and enjoyment of sensible things, that please the inferior Part, and only content the natural Appetites. To make this evident 'tis requisite to discover the defects and undervalues of all Worldly Things, how miserably they fail in the essential conditions of Felicity that is proper to Man, and this will convincingly prove that the divine Maker, who is infinitely Wise and Good, endowed him with intellectual and immortal Powers, to advance and enjoy his Glory, wherein the entire Blessedness of the reasonable Creature consists.

1. Worldly Things are not perfective of his highest Faculties. Man is but one degree lower than the Angels, and carries the Image of God indelibly engraven in his Spiritual Immortal Soul; And accordingly the order of things in the visible World is established. Thou hast set him over the Works of thy Hands, and put all things under his Feet.

By Nobility of Nature, and the condition of his state, he is incomparably above them. And can inferior things make him better? Can Gold be more precious by incorporating with a baser Metal? Or Light more resplendent by mixing with Clouds and Smoak? All the Bona adventitia, the good things of this World, Honors, Riches, Pleasure, cannot denominate him truly Wise and Holy, cannot add the least intellectual or moral Good, wherein the rectitude and brightest excellence of Man is truly placed.

Nay they are consistent with all those sordid Lusts, that blemish and defame the human Nature, and sink it below itself. External Honor is no Character of real Desert, and considered absolutely, confers no more to Virtue than to Vice. As Varnish in Painting serves only to give Luster and Vivacity to the Colors, whether the Design be regular or ill, the Picture deformed or beautiful, and makes the Beauty or Deformity more visible. Splendor of Extraction renders the good or bad qualities of a Person more conspicuous. Folly set in high Degree is more observed than in a low Condition. And usually Titles of Honor are an occasion of absurd Pride to ignorant Souls, that understand not, that Virtue incomparably excels Nobility, as the Light is more glorious and radiant where it springs, than where 'tis reflected. Riches are often joined with habitual Vices in the Possessors, and indifferently serve for bad or good uses. The greedy pursuit of them blasts all true worth of Spirit, and turns the Soul to Earth and Corruption. And sensual Pleasures are so far from advancing Man, that the luxurious enjoyment of them, by the lowest degradement makes him like the Beasts, in all things but Innocence. In short, all the admired things of the World are of so little value, that they debase and enslave him by an overprizing and affecting them. 'It is his true perfection from consciousness of his native worth, and through Royalty of Mind, to despise them.

2. The sensible World cannot give complete satisfaction to Man. Felicity is the complacence and rest of the Soul in the enjoyment of a suitable Object, commensurate to its real capacity and duration. Such an Object must be a Spiritual Good, pure without Alloys,

infinite and eternal. Now all things in the World are in every respect insufficient to satisfy our Desires.

1. They are not a convenient Good to the Soul. What proportion is there between a spiritual Nature and carnal Sensualities, between the divine Offspring, and the low voluptuousness of Flesh? What are Treasures of Gold and Pearls, but shining Dust and the froth of the Sea, and can these enrich a Heavenly Being? What is Honor and Reputation? An invisible imagination formed in a few Heads: What is Praise, a favorable sound from a few Mouths? And can a Fancy, a Breath be the solid Good of the Soul? As well may an empty Dream afford substantial Nourishment to the Body.

Hence the Expectation is far above the Fruition of earthly Things. Whilst seen by the false Beams of Fancy and the Passions, they promise fair, but upon trial are found to be a mere Illusion, that has nothing real but the bitterness that attends them. And from hence there is a perpetual generation of Desires in the Breasts of Men, the end of one is the beginning of another, as Fuel increases the Fire. The wanting Soul becomes more ardent by failing in what it expected, and makes endless inquiries for matter of satisfaction. Seneca observed an image of this in Nature, and gives the Moral of it. A Tortoise if turned on the Back, though it suffer no pain, is violent in Motion till it recovers its natural Posture. Thus Man, though free from external Troubles, yet is in restless changes, always casting about till he obtains the Happiness for which he was made, that is adequate to his Capacity. Who will show us any Good? Is the voice of Mankind chasing several Hopes, and engaged in infinite errors in the search of Felicity here below. But the confluence of all worldly things cannot quiet the ravings of their misguided Appetites. The Persian Kings with all their Royalties, and Revenues and Delights, were so unsatisfied, that they proclaimed a Reward to any that invented a new Pleasure. The sweetest Enjoyments are not without secret distastes. The most pleasurable Heights are infinitely distant from Felicity. Therefore the most prosperous in the World are fain to borrow the Opinions of others, who blindly admire what they never

had experience of, to conceit themselves Happy. For their real inward Sense is perfectly contrary to the vain Fancies of those below them.

Nay, suppose a Man possessed of all the Varieties that compound earthly Felicity, the more full the less satisfied he is: for his desires being unquenched, when all things are ready that promised to appease them, and no lure of Hope remaining, the disappointment in a mistaken Object, and despair of ever finding satisfaction here, necessarily involves him in a double Misery. Of this we have the certain Testimony of Solomon himself, who after a curious and earnest search for Happiness, declares that all, even the most valued things below, are Vanity, pompous Names without sense and reality, and therefore vexation of Spirit. Now what a poor Happiness is the World when the fullest possession of it is so far from enriching a Man with true content, that it makes his Poverty desperate.

2. The Things of the World are temporal, not commensurate to the duration of the Soul. Blessedness signifies an unchangeable State, not a transient Passage: The Object must be firm as the Center, and the Fruition of it without end or interruption. The fear that arises from the naked possibility of losing it, dashes our Joy, how much more the certainty. Now suppose the whole World were the Portion of a Man, can he joyfully acquiesce in it? The fear, nay certainty of parting with all these things, are inseparable Properties of our possessing them. Fear, upon the account of their transitory condition, certainty, from Death that is inevitable to all Men.

1. Fear of losing them. Such is the instability of worldly Things through vicissitudes of Times, disasters of Chance, decays of Nature, that we cannot be secure of them a day. Honor is a casual Happiness, depending on the uncertain Opinions of Men that rise and fall every Hour. Riches are deceitful, not only because they do not supply our greatest Wants, but fly from us when we think our hold is fastest. They are a Quick-Silver no Art can fix. Beauty is a fading Flower often blasted, while the stalk remains. All things under the Sun are

Vanity. Whatever is measured by Time, is in a continual Flux like a Torrent, one part is present to the Eye, because another is swiftly passed away. So that 'tis evident they are insufficient to make a Man happy. For who can possess them without a just jealousy lest they should slip away, or by violence be ravished from him. As the Inhabitants of Campania, the most fruitful and delicious part of Italy, but near Vesuvius that always flames, or smokes and scatters Ashes abroad, are in frequent apprehensions lest a sudden deluge of Fire should break forth and devour their Palaces and Gardens, and Vineyards, and change that natural Paradise into a Scene of Horror, an accidental Hell. Now the very suspicion of losing what is our Happiness is perfectly irreconcilable to it.

2. There is a certainty of losing all earthly things at Death. Other Evils may surprise us unexpected, or not come when feared. And this relieves Mankind in the present state that is liable to innumerable Evils, that many may be prevented. But the last evil is inevitable. Though Men are distinguished in the condition of Living, yet all are equal in the necessity of Dying. Human Greatness in every kind, Nobility, Riches, Empires cannot protect from the sovereign and sudden hand of Death that overthrows all. The expressions of Scripture concerning the frailty of Man are often precisely and literally verified; He is like Grass, in the Morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the Evening it is cut down and withereth.

Now suppose the World constant and faithful to you till the last hour of your Lives, will it not fail you then? And can that be the Happiness of a Man that attends him for a time and leaves him forever? The most conspicuous difference of Men in this World is that of the Victorious over the Vanquished prostrate at his Feet. But Death makes them equal. Then the wretched Captive shall upbraid the proud Conqueror, Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like us? 'It is no wonder then that the wise Preacher despises all the States of the present Life as Vanity. For the Fabric cannot be more solid than the Foundation, nor the Accident more real than the Being on which it depends. On every side Death is in our view, and the

Shadow of it approaching darkens our brightest Days. 'It is no wonder then that he equals the Fool with the Wise. For all that Wisdom that is confined to mortal things dies with them. Nay he confounds Man with the Beast. One thing befalls them: as the one dieth so dieth the other, yea they have all one Breath, so that Man has no preeminence above them. While we regard him only with the Eye of Sense, what shall we see in his Life, but Folly mixed with Anxieties and Cares? And what in his Death, but wasted Spirits, the Springs of Motion disordered, and at last the living Frame dissolved into the Earth from whence it came?

But if we consider the Soul, that carries in it the clear marks of its Original from God; by the same reason that everything shall be reunited to its Principle, that shall return to God that gave it, and remain forever. The Felicity therefore to which it naturally aspires, must be parallel to its duration. From these Considerations 'tis above all doubt that Man was designed by his Maker for a higher End than the enjoyment of the present World.

2. The consummate Happiness of Man is in his Communion with God. For God is a Spiritual Good suitable to the Nature of his better and divine part, and communicates Himself to the Spiritual Faculties, the Understanding and Will, the principles of Man's eminent Operations, and most capable of enjoying Felicity: God is an infinite Good, and can so fully appease all the rational Appetites, that nothing is wanting to his entire Blessedness. God is an unchangeable Good, not to be lost with this Life, but may be securely enjoyed to Eternity. In the Knowledge and Love, in the Imitation and Enjoyment of his Excellencies, the highest elevation, and complete satisfaction of the rational Nature consists. As Man by applying himself to unworthy things is degraded into a lower Order, and his Thoughts and Affections that are Spiritual in respect of their Principles, are Sensual and Perishing in respect of their Object: so when the noble Faculties are exercised in a perfect manner on their Sovereign Good, he is advanced to an equality of Perfection and Joy with the Angels.

The more refined Heathens had a glimpse of this Happiness, some streaks of it run through their Philosophy. But till God was pleased to reveal it, the World sat in Darkness, and slept securely in the shadow of Death, unconcerned for an invisible future Felicity. 'It is necessary therefore to inquire into his Word what that blessed State is wherein the final Happiness of Man consists.

CHAPTER II.

The clear Revelation of Man's final Happiness by the Gospel.

'It is set forth by sensible Representations to make it more intelligible. It includes an exemption from all Evils sinful and penal. The concurrence of all positive Excellencies to entire Blessedness. The Body shall be raised in Glory. The Soul shall be made perfect. The Understanding shall clearly contemplate the most excellent Objects. The Will be inflamed with the perfect Love of God. The highest Satisfaction arises from Union with God by Knowledge and Love. The full Joy of Heaven shall be perpetual.

'Tis the peculiar honor of the Gospel that by it Life and Immortality are brought to Light. 'Twas not wholly concealed from Men that only saw the Creator in his visible Works. 'Twas more fully discovered by the Law; but with incomparable more Clearness by the Gospel. The Nature of it is now revealed: 'It is a pure and holy Felicity in everlasting Communion with the blessed God. The subject of it is the entire Man; for this End the Body shall be awakened out of its dead sleep and quickened to an Immortal Life. The place is the highest Heavens, framed by the Divine Hand for the seat of his Majesty, the Kingdom of his Love, wherein the glorious Communications of

himself are to his Favorites. The causes of it are the infinite Mercy of God, and the meritorious Obedience of his Son in Man's Nature. The Means whereby 'tis obtained are a lively purifying Faith that unites us to Christ, and entitles us to an Inheritance purchased by his most precious Blood. And to confirm our Hopes of this Supernatural Happiness. Our Savior exhibited a perfect example of this in himself, rising from the Grave, crowned with Immortality, and in the presence of his Apostles ascending to Heaven, where he sits at the right Hand of God; the Head of the Church, from whom Glory will descend to his Members.

To make this supernatural Blessedness more easy and intelligible to us, the Scripture describes it by sensible Representations. For while the Soul is clothed with Flesh, Fancy has such a Dominion, that we can conceive of nothing but by Comparisons and Images taken from material Things. 'It is therefore set forth by a Feast, and a Kingdom, to signify the Joy and Glory of that State. But to prevent all gross conceits; it tells us that the Bodies of the Saints shall be spiritual, not capable of hunger and thirst, nor consequently of any refreshment that is caused by the satisfaction of those Appetites. The Objects of the most noble Senses, Seeing and Hearing, the pleasure of which is mixed with Reason, and not common to the Brutes, are more frequently made use of to reconcile that glorious State to the proportion of our Minds. Thus sometimes the Blessed are represented placed on Thrones with Crowns on their Heads; sometimes clothed in White, with Palms in their Hands; sometimes singing Songs of triumph to Him that sits on the Throne, and to their Savior. But the reality of this Blessedness infinitely exceeds all those faint Metaphors. Heaven is lessened by Comparisons from earthly things. The Apostle who was dignified with the revelation of the Successes that shall happen to the Church till Time shall be no more, tells us, It does not appear what we shall be in Eternity. The things that God has prepared for those that love him, are far more above the highest ascent of our Thoughts, than the Marriage-Feast of a great Prince exceeds in splendor and magnificence the imagination of one that has always lived in an obscure Village, and never saw any

Ornaments of State, nor tasted Wine in his Life. We can think of those things but according to the poverty of our Understandings. But so much we know that is able to sweeten all the bitterness, and render insipid all the sweetness of this World.

This will appear by considering that whatever is requisite to constitute the perfect Blessedness of Man, is fully enjoyed in the Divine Presence.

1. An exemption from all evils, is the first condition of perfect Blessedness. The sentence of wise Solon is true in another sense than he intended,

—Dicique beatus, Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

No Man can be named happy whilst in this valley of Tears. But upon the entrance into Heaven, all those evils that by their number, variety, or weight disquiet and oppress us, are at an end,

Sin, of all Evils the most hateful, shall be abolished; and all Temptations that surround us, and endanger our innocence, shall cease. Here the best Men lament the weakness of the flesh, and sometimes the violent assaults of spiritual Enemies. St. Paul himself breaks forth into a mournful Complaint, O wretched Man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of Death? And when harassed with the buffets of Satan, renews his most earnest addresses to God to be freed from them. Here our Purity is not absolute, we must be always cleansing ourselves from the relics of that deep defilement that cleaves to our nature. Here our peace is preserved with the Sword in our hand, by a continual Warfare against Satan and the World. But in Heaven no ignorance darkens the Mind, no passions rebel against the sanctified Will, no inherent pollution remains. The Church is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And all Temptations that war against the Soul, shall then cease. The Tempter was cast out of Heaven, and none of his poisoned Arrows can reach

that Purified Company. Glorious Liberty! Here ardently desired, but fully enjoyed by the Sons of God above.

And as Sin, so all the penal consequences of it are quite taken away. The present Life is an incurable disease, and sometimes attended with that sharp sense, that Death is desired as a remedy, and accepted as a benefit. And though the Saints have reviving Cordials, yet their joys are mixed with sorrows, nay, caused by sorrows. The tears of Repentance are their sweetest refreshment. Here the living Stones are cut and wounded, and made fit by Sufferings for a Temple unto God in the New Jerusalem. But, as in the building of Solomon's Temple, the noise of a Hammer was not heard, for all the parts were framed before with that exact design and correspondence, that they firmly combined together. They were hewn in another place, and nothing remained but the putting them one upon another in the Temple; and then, as sacred, they were inviolable. So God, the wise Architect, having prepared the Saints here by many cutting Afflictions, places them in the Eternal Building, where no voice of Sorrow is heard. Of the innumerable Company above, is there any Eye that weeps, any Breast that sighs, any Tongue that complains, or appearance of Grief? The Heavenly State is called Life, as only worthy of that Title. There is no infirmity of Body, no Poverty, no Disgrace, no Treachery of Friends, no Persecution of Enemies. There is no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor shall there be any more Pain: for former things are past away. God will wipe away all Tears from the Eyes of his People. Their Salvation is complete in all degrees. Pure Joy is the Privilege of Heaven, unmixed Sorrows the punishment of Hell.

A concurrence of all positive Excellencies is requisite to Blessedness. And these are to be considered with respect to the entire Man.

1. The Body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and quickened into a glorious immortal Life. The Soul and Body are the essential parts of Man; and though the inequality be great in their operations that respect Holiness, yet their concurrence is necessary. Good Actions are

designed by the Counsel and Resolution of the Spirit, but performed by the Ministry of the Flesh. Every Grace expresses itself in visible actions by the Body. In the sorrows of Repentance it supplies tears, in Fasting's its appetites are restrained, in Thanksgivings the Tongue breaks forth into the joyful praises of God. All the victories over sensible pleasure and pain are obtained by the Soul in conjunction with the Body. Now 'tis most becoming the Divine Goodness not to deal so differently, that the Soul should be everlastingly happy, and the Body lost in forgetfulness; the one glorified in Heaven, the other remain in the dust. From their first setting out in the World to the Grave they ran the same Race, and shall enjoy the same Reward. Here the Body is the Consort of the Soul in obedience and sufferings, hereafter in fruition. When the Crown of Purity, or Palm of Martyrdom shall be given by the great Judge in the view of all, they shall both partake in the honor. Of this we have an earnest in the Resurrection of Christ in his true Body, who is the first fruits of them that sleep. He shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like to his glorious Body, according to the working of his Power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. A substantial unfading Glory will shine in them infinitely above the perishing Pride of this World, that is but in appearance, like the false colors painted on the feathers of a Dove by reflection of the Light, which presently vanish, when it changeth its posture, or the Light is withdrawn. Indeed what can be more glorious than to be conformed to the Humanity of Christ, the seat of all Beauty and Perfection. This Conformity shall be the work of his own hands. And when Omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. The raising the Body to an unchangeable state of Glory, is as easy to the Divine Power, as the forming it at first in the Womb. As the Sun labors no more in the Mines in the forming Gold and Silver, the most precious and durable Metals, than in the production of a poor short-lived Flower.

II. The Soul shall have perfection and satisfaction in all its Faculties.

1. The Understanding shall clearly see the most excellent Objects. Now we know but in part. The naked beauty of Divine Things is

veiled, and of impossible discovery. And the weakness of the mind is not proportionable to their dazzling brightness. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. In that enlightened state, the glorious manifestation of the objects shall as much exceed the clearest revealing of them here, as the Sun in its full luster, one beam of Light strained through a crevice in the Wall. And the Understanding shall be prepared to take a full view of them. Therefore the Apostle compares the several Periods of the Church in respect of the degrees of Knowledge, to the several Ages of this Life. When I was a Child, I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought as a Child: but when I became a Man, I put away childish things. In Children the organs, either from an excess of moisture, or their smallness, are indisposed for the vigorous exercise of the Mind: some strictures of Reason appear, a presaging sign what will be, but mixed with much obscurity. But when the organs are come to their just proportion and temperament, the Soul displays its strength and activity.

All things of a supernatural order shall then be clearly discovered. The contrivance of our Salvation, the ways of conducting us to Blessedness, which are objects of a sublime nature, will afford an exquisite pleasure to the Understanding. All the secrets of our Redemption shall be unsealed. The great Mystery of Godliness, the Incarnation of the Eternal Son, and his according Justice with Mercy, shall then be apparent. The Divine Counsels in governing the World, are now only visible in their wonderful effects either of Mercy or of Justice, and those most dreadful; but the Reasons of them are past finding out. But what our Savior said to Peter, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter, is applicable to these impenetrable dispensations. All the original Fountains of Wisdom, as clear as deep, shall then be opened. We shall then see the beauty of Providence in disposing temporal things in order to our eternal felicity. We now see as it were the rough part, and Knots of that curious Embroidery: but then the whole Work shall be unfolded, the sweetness of the Colors, and proportion of the Figures appear. There we shall be able to expound the perplexing Riddle, How out of the

Eater came meat, and out of the Strong came sweetness. For we shall know as we are known.

We shall see God. Our Savior tells us, This is Life Eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. The beginning and perfection of our Happiness consists in this knowledge. The Deity is spiritual and invisible to the Eye of the Body, infinite and incomprehensible to the Soul. But we shall then so clearly understand the Divine Perfections, that our present knowledge compared to that, is but as the seeing a dark resemblance in a Glass, to the clear view of a Person in the native beauty of his Face. God is most gloriously present in Heaven. For according to the degrees of excellence in the Work, such are the impressions and discoveries of the Virtues of the Cause. Now all sensible things in the low order of Nature, are but weak resultances from his Perfections, in comparison of their illustrious Effects in the Divine World. The Glories of the Place, and of the Inhabitants, the Angels and Saints, clearly express his Majesty, Goodness and Power. But in a transcendent manner he exhibits himself in the glorified Mediator. He is styled the brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express image of his Person; not only for his equal Perfections in respect of the unity of their Nature, but to signify that God in the Person of the incarnate Mediator is so fully represented to us, that by the sight of him we see God himself in his unchangeable Excellencies. This appears by the following words, that having purged us from our sins, he sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high; for they respect the Son of God as united to the human Nature, in which he performed the Office of the Priesthood, and took possession of his glorious Kingdom. During his humble state, the Divine Virtues, Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Power, were so visible in his Person, Life, Revelations, and miraculous Works, that when Philip so longed for the sight of the Father as the only consummate Blessedness, Show us the Father, and it suffices; He told him, He that has seen me, has seen the Father also. But how brightly do they appear in his triumphant Exaltation. 'Twas his Prayer on Earth; Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they

may behold my Glory. Inestimable Felicity! Whether we consider him in the respect of an Object, that incomparably transcends all the created Glory of Heaven, or in the relation of our Head, on a double account; partly that because he was debased into the form of a Servant, and suffered all Indignities and Cruelties of Sinners for us, has received the Recompence of his Meritorious Sufferings, the triumph of his Victory, being glorified with the Father with the Glory he had before the World was; and partly because every Member shall be conformed to him in his Glory; we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And all Felicity and Glory is comprised in that Promise. The sight of the Face of Moses when radiant, had no transforming efficacy; for the light of it was not in him as its source, but by derivation. But God is Light essentially, and the sight of his Perfections will be productive of his Likeness in us, so far as it may be in a restrained subject. When our Savior was upon the holy Mount, and one vanishing Beam of Glory appeared in his Transfiguration, Peter was so transported at the sight, that he forgot the World and himself. How ravishing then will the sight of him be in his triumphant Majesty, when we shall be transfigured ourselves?

2. As they shall behold God's Face, know his most amiable Excellencies; so they shall love him as perfectly as they know him. To the illustrations of the Mind, there are correspondent impressions on the Heart. In the present state our Love is imperfect, and as Fire out of its sphere, dies away, by our neglect to feed it with proper materials, enamoring considerations of God. But 'tis not so in Heaven: there the Divine Sun attracts every Eye with the light of its beauty, and inflames every Heart with the heat of his Love. The continual Presence of God is in different respects the Cause and Effect of our Love to him. For there is no more powerful Attractive to love him, than to see him; And Love keeps the thoughts undivided from him. God is Love, and will kindle in us a pure Affection that Eternity shall never lessen.

Our Affections that are now scattered on many things, wherein some small Reflections of his Goodness appear, shall join in one full

Current in Heaven, where God is all in all. We shall then understand the riches of his Love, that God who is infinitely happy in himself, should make Man for such a Glory, and such a Glory for Man. And that when for his Rebellion he was justly expelled from Paradise, and under a sentence of Eternal Death, God should please to restore him to his Favor, and give him a better state than was forfeited. We shall then understand our infinite Obligations to the Son of God, who descended from the Heaven of Heavens to our Earth; and which is more, from the Majesty wherein he there reigned, from the Glory wherein he was visible to the Angelical Minds, and became Man for Men, Redemption for the Lost, to purchase Immortal Life for those who were dead to that blessed Life. In short, then God will express his Love to us in the highest degrees that a finite Creature is capable to receive from Love itself, and we shall love him with all the strength of our glorified powers.

3. Complete satisfaction flows from union with God by Knowledge and Love. In his Presence is fullness of Joy, at his Right-hand are Pleasures forever. The Causes and Excellencies of the Heavenly Life are in those words expressed. The Causes are the influxive Presence of God, the revelation of his attractive Perfections, the beholding his Face, the declaration of his peculiar Favor. This our blessed Lord himself had a respect to, as the complete Reward of his Sufferings: Thou shalt make me full of Joy with thy Countenance. And his Right-Hand, his Bounty that dispenses, and Power that secures that Felicity. The Excellencies of this state are fullness of Joy, and that without diminution, or end.

When the Soul opens its eyes to the clear discoveries of the first Truth, and its breast to the dear and intimate embraces of the Supreme Good, beyond which nothing remains to be known, nothing to be enjoyed, what a deluge of the purest Pleasures will overflow it? We cannot ascend in our thoughts so high, as to conceive the excess of Joy that attends those operations of the glorified Soul upon its proper object. But something we may conjecture.

Those who are possessed with a noble Passion for Knowledge, how do they despise all lower Pleasures in comparison of it? How do they forget themselves, neglect the Body, and retire into the Mind, the highest part of Man, and nearest to God? The bare apprehension of such things that by their internal nature have no attractive influence upon the Affections, is pleasant to the Understanding. As the appearance of Light, though not attended with any other visible beauties, refreshes the Eye after long darkness: so the clear discovery of Truths, how abstract so ever, that were before unknown, is grateful to the intellective Faculty. Thus some have been strangely transported with the pleasure of a Mathematical Demonstration, when the evidence, not the importance of the thing was so ravishing; for what is more dry and barren of delight than the speculation of Figures and Numbers? Solon when near his end, and some of his Friends that visited him were speaking softly of a Point of Philosophy, by that sound of Wisdom was awakened from the sleep of Death that was just seizing on him, and opening his eyes, and raising his head to give attention; being asked the reason of it? Answered, That when I understand what you are discoursing of, I may die. Such was his delight in Knowledge, that a little of it made his Agony insensible. But here are many Imperfections that lessen this intellectual Pleasure, which shall cease in Heaven. Here the acquisition of Knowledge is often with the expense of Health: the flower of the Spirits, necessary for Natural Operations, is wasted by intense thoughts. How often are the Learned sickly? As the Flint when 'tis struck, gives not a spark without consuming itself; So Knowledge is obtained by Studies that waste our faint sensitive faculties. But then our Knowledge shall be a free emanation from the spring of Truth, without our labor and pains. Here we learn by circuit, and discern by comparing things; our Ignorance is dispelled by a gradual succession of Light: But then Universal Knowledge shall be infused in a moment. Here after all our labor and toil, how little Knowledge do we gain? Every Question is a Labyrinth out of which the nimblest and most searching Minds cannot extricate themselves. How many specious Errors impose upon our Understandings? We look on things by false Lights, through deceiving Spectacles: But then

our Knowledge shall be certain and complete. There is no forbidden Tree in the Celestial Paradise, as no inordinate Affection. But suppose that all things in the compass of the World were known, yet still there would be emptiness and anguish in the Mind: for the most comprehensive knowledge of things that are insufficient to make us happy, cannot afford true Satisfaction. But then we shall see God in all his Excellencies, the supreme Object and End, the only Felicity of the Soul. How will the sight of his Glory personally shining in our Redeemer, in the first moment quench our extreme thirst, and fill us with joy and admiration? 'It is not as the naked conception of Treasures, that only makes rich in ideas, but that Divine sight gives a real Interest in him. The Angels are so ravished with the Beauties and Wonders of his Face, that they never divert a moment from the contemplation of it.

2. The pure Love of the Saints to God is then fully satisfied. Love considered as an affection of Friendship is always attended with two desires; to be assured of Reciprocal Love, and to enjoy the Conversation of the Person beloved, the testimony of his esteem and good-will. This kind of affection seems to be inconsistent with that infinite distance that is between God and the Creature. But though 'tis disproportionable to the Divine Majesty, 'tis proportionable to his Goodness. Accordingly our Savior promises, He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him. And to confirm our belief of this astonishing Condescension, repeats it, If a Man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him. In the present state, the signs of God's special Favor are exhibited to his Friends. Now he bestows on them the honor of being his Sons, the Graces and Comforts of his Spirit, the precious Earnests of his Love, and Seal of their Redemption. But in eminency of degrees, the effects of his Love are incomparably more glorious in Heaven. Here the Saints are adopted, there crowned. There he opens all the bright Treasures of his Wisdom, the Riches of his Goodness, the Beauties of his Holiness, the Glories of his Power, and by the intimate application of his Presence makes his Love most sensible to them. O the mutual

delights between God and glorified Souls! God looks on them with an engaged Eye, as his own by many dear titles, and is well pleased in his own Goodness to them, and ravished with the Reflex of his own Excellencies shining in them. As the Bridegroom rejoices over the Bride, ('tis the language of Divine Love) so their God rejoices over them. And what a blessed Rest do they find in the complete fruition of their Beloved? All their desires quietly expire in his Bosom. What triumphs of Joy follow? Can we frame a fuller Conception of Happiness than to be perfectly loved by infinite Goodness, and perfectly to love him?

3. The supreme Joy of the Saints is for the Felicity and Glory of God himself. For as the holy Soul feels no more powerful motive to love God, than because he is most worthy of it, as he is God, a Being of infinite Excellencies, and therefore to be loved above the dearest Persons and Things, even itself; so the highest Joy it partakes of is from this consideration, that God is infinitely blessed and glorious. For in this the supreme desire of love is accomplished, that the most beloved Object is perfectly honored and pleased In Heaven the Love of the Saints to God is in its highest Perfection, and they see his Glory in the most perfect manner, which causes a transcendent Joy to them. And this is one reason why the Saints though shining with unequal degrees of Glory, are equally content. For their most ardent Love being set on God, that he is pleased to glorify himself by such various communications of his Goodness, is full satisfaction to their desires. Besides, in those different degrees of Glory, everyone is so content with his own, that there is no possible desire of being but what he is.

4. The full joy of Heaven shall continue without diminution, or end. The number of Possessors cannot lessen it. The Divine Presence is an unwasted Spring of Pleasure, equally full and open to all, and abundantly sufficient to satisfy the immensity of their desires. Envy reigns in this World, because earthly things are so imperfect in their nature, and so peculiar in their possession, that they cannot suffice, nor be enjoyed by all. But in Heaven none is touched with that low

base passion: for God contains all that is precious and desirable in the highest degrees of Perfection, and all partake of the influence of his universal Goodness without intercepting one another. In the Kingdom above there is no cause for the elder Brother to repine at the Father's Bounty to the younger, nor for the younger to supplant the elder, to obtain the Birth-right. The Heirs of God are all raised to Sovereign Glory. Everyone enjoys him as entirely and fully, as if solely his felicity. God is a Good as indivisible as infinite, and not diminished by the most liberal communications of Himself. We may illustrate this by comparing the Price of our Redemption, and the Reward. The Death of Christ is a universal benefit to all the Saints, yet 'tis so applied to every Believer for his perfect Redemption, as if our Savior in all his Agonies and Sufferings had no other in his Eye and Heart; as if all his Prayers, his Tears, his Blood were offered up to his Father only for that Person. The common respect of it the Apostle declares in those admirable words, that signify such an excess of God's Love to us, He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? But to imagine that the propriety of every Believer is thereby prejudiced, is not only false, but extremely injurious to the Merit and Dignity, and to the infinite Love of Christ. Therefore the same Apostle tells us, The Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself for me: as if he were the sole Object of Christ's Love, the End and Reward of his Sufferings. And this appropriating of it to himself, is no prejudice to the Rights of all others. St. John describes himself by that truly glorious Title, The Disciple whom Jesus loved. Could he speak this of himself without the injury and indignation of the other Disciples? Certainly he might. For if we consider that incomprehensible Love of Christ, expressed to them all at his last Supper, after Judas was gone forth; As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you; we may easily understand, that every one of them might justly believe that he was singularly beloved of Christ. They were all received in the Heart, though (with John) they did not all lean on the Breast of their Divine Master. Thus in Heaven God is the universal Treasure of all the Saints, and the peculiar Portion of everyone, not engrossed by

possessing, nor wasted by enjoying. As by his Essence he equally fills the whole World, and every part of it; and by his Providence equally regards all and every particular Creature; so in Heaven he dispenses the Riches of his Love to all, that they cannot desire more, if every one of them, were (if I may so express it) the only begotten of the only begotten himself, the sole Heir of all the Merits of his Son. Every Saint may with the inflamed Spouse break forth in that Triumph of Love; My Beloved is mine, and I am his.

Nay, the great number of the glorified Saints, is so far from lessening their Joy, that it unspeakably increases it. The innumerable Company of Angels, and the General Assembly of the Church of the First-born, next of the happiness of enjoying God, are a chief part of Heaven. An unfeigned ardent Affection unites that pure society. Our Love is now kindled either from a relation in Nature, or a civil account, or some visible Excellencies that render a Person worthy of our choice and friendship: but in Heaven the Reasons are greater, and the degrees of Love incomparably more fervent. All Carnal Alliances and Respects cease in that supernatural state. The Apostle tells us, If I have known Christ after the Flesh, I know him so no more. By the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ he was transported into another World, and had communion with him as a Heavenly King, without low regards to the temporal Privilege of conversing with him on Earth. The Spiritual relation is more near and permanent than the strictest band of Nature. The Saints have all relation to the same Heavenly Father, and to Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, and Head of that happy Fraternity. The principal motives of Love here are the inherent Excellencies of a Person. Wisdom, Holiness, Goodness, Fidelity are mighty Attractives, and produce a more worthy Affection, a more intimate Confederacy of Souls, than propinquity in Nature, or any carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old Person, though wrinkled and deformed: Vice is hateful in a young Person though beautiful. There are clearer Eyes than those of Flesh, a purer Light than what is sensible, a diviner Beauty than what is Corporeal, and a nobler Love than what is sensual. David declares

that all his delight was in the Excellent. But there are allays of this Spiritual Love here. For,

1. There are relics of Frailty in the best Men on Earth, some Blemishes that render them less amiable when discovered. Here their Graces are mixed with Infirmities, and but ascending to Glory. Accordingly our Love to them must be regular, and serene; not clouded with Error, mistaking defects for amiable qualities. But in Heaven, the Image of God is complete, by the union of all the glorious Virtues requisite to its perfection. Every Saint there exactly agrees with the first Exemplar, is transformed according to the primitive beauty of Holiness. No spot or wrinkle remains, nor any such thing, that may cast the least aspect of deformity upon them.

2. In the present state the least part of the Saints Worth is visible. As the Earth is fruitful in Plants and Flowers, but its riches are in Mines of precious Metals, the veins of Marble hidden in its bosom. True Grace appears in sensible Actions, but its Glory is Within. The sincerity of Aims, the purity of Affections, the impresses of the Spirit on the Heart, the interior beauties of Holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is the humility of eminent Saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they show. As the Heavenly Bodies when in nearest conjunction with the Sun, and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight. But all their Excellencies shall then be in view. The Glory of God shall be revealed in them. And how attractive is the Divine Likeness to a holy Eye? How will it ravish the Saints to behold an immortal Loveliness shining in one another? Their Love is mutual and reflexive, proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant Flame is preserved by pure Materials. Everyone is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamored with all. Now can we frame a fuller conception of Happiness, than such a State of Love, wherein whatever is pleasant in Friendship is in perfection, and whatever is distasteful by Men's folly and weakness is abolished? The Psalmist breaks out in a Rapture, Behold how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity! Love is the Beauty and Strength of Societies, the Pleasure of Life. How excellent is the Joy of

the Blessed, when the Prayer of Christ shall be accomplished, that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. God is absolutely One in his glorious Nature and Will, and therefore unalterably Happy; And their inviolable Union in Love, is a Ray of the Essential Unity between the sacred Persons. There are no Divisions of Heart and Tongues, as in this Babel; but the most perfect and sweetest Concord, an Eternal Agreement in Tempers and Inclinations. There are no envious Comparisons; for Love that affectively transforms one into another, causes the Glory of every Saint to redound to the Joy of all. Everyone takes his share in the Felicity of all, and adds to it. Such is the power of that Celestial Fire wherein they all burn, that it melts and mixes Souls in such an entire Union, that by Complacence and an intimate Joy, the Blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to everyone; as if everyone were placed in the Hearts of all, and all in the Heart of everyone. If in the Church of the first-born Christians in the earthly Jerusalem, the Band of Charity was so strict that 'tis said, the Multitude of Believers were of one Heart, and one Soul; How much more intimate and inseparable is the Union of the Saints in Jerusalem above, where everyone loves another as himself? 'It is recorded of Alexander, that entering with Hephestion his Favorite, into the Pavilion of Darius his Mother, then his Prior, she bowed to the Favorite, as having a greater appearance of Majesty, thinking him to be Alexander: but advised of her Error, she humbly begged his Pardon: To whom the generous King replied, You did not err, Mother, this is also Alexander: Such was their Affection, that whoever was taken of them, the other was taken in him; the less ascending in the greater, without degrading the greater in the less. This is a Copy of the holy Love of the Blessed; but with the same difference, as between the Description of a Star with a Coal, and its Beauty in its proper Aspect. And where all is Love, all is Delight. O how do they enjoy and triumph in the Happiness of one another? With what an unimaginable Tenderness do they embrace? What Reciprocations of Endearments are between them? O their ravishing Conversation, and sweet Intercourse! For their Presence together in Heaven is not a silent Show. In the Transfiguration, Moses and Elias

talked with Christ. With what excellent discourses do they entertain one another? If David felt such inward Pleasure from the sense of God's favors, that he could not restrain the expression of it, but invites the Saints, Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and, I will tell you what he has done for my Soul. Certainly in Heaven, the blessed with overflowing affections recount the Divine Benefits: the admirable Methods, whereby the Life of Grace was begun, preserved and carried on in the midst of Temptations; the continual Succession of Mercies in the time of their Hopes, and the Consummation of all in the time of their Enjoyment. How joyfully do they concur in their thanksgivings to God for the goodness of Creation: in making them reasonable Creatures, capable to know, love and enjoy Him, when they might have been of the lowest Order in the whole sphere of Beings: for his compassionate care and providence over them in this World: But especially for his sovereign and singular Mercy in electing them to be vessels of honor: for his powerful Grace, in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of Sin: for his most free Love, that justified them from all their guilt by the Death of his only Son, and glorified them with himself. They are never weary in this delightful exercise, but continually bless him for his Mercy that endures forever. We may judge by the Saints here, when they are in a fit disposition to praise God, what fervors they feel in their united Praises of him in Heaven. The Psalmist in an Ecstasy calls to all the parts of the World to join with him; The Lord reigns, let the Heavens rejoice, and the Earth be glad; let the Sea roar, let the Fields be joyful, and all that dwell therein. He desires that Nature should be elevated above itself, that the dead parts be inspired with Life, the insensible feel Motions of Joy, and those that want a Voice break forth in praises, to adorn the Divine Triumph. With what Life and Alacrity will the Saints in their blessed Communion celebrate the Object of their Love and Praises? The Seraphims about the Throne cried to one another, to express their Zeal and Joy, in celebrating his Eternal Purity and Power, and the Glory of his Goodness. O the unspeakable Pleasure of this Concert! When every Soul is harmonious, and contributes his part to the full Music of Heaven. O could we hear but some Echo of those Songs wherewith the Heaven

of Heavens resounds, some remains of those Voices wherewith the Saints above triumph in the Praises, in the solemn Adoration of the King of Spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them? Blessed are those that are in thy House, they always praise thee.

2. The fullness of Joy in Heaven is undecaying; for the causes of it are always equal. And those are the Beatific Object revealed, and the uninterrupted Contemplation of it. Whilst we are here below, the Sun of Righteousness, as to our perception and sense, has ascensions and declinations, accesses and recesses. And our Earth is not so purified, but some Vapors arise that intercept his cheerful refreshing Light. From hence there are alternate successions of Spiritual Comforts and Sorrows, of Doubts and filial Confidence in the Saints. 'It is a rare favor of Heaven, when a humble Believer in his whole course is so circumspect as not to provoke God to appear displeased against him: When a Christian (as those tutelary Angels spoken of in the Gospel) always beholds the face of his Heavenly Father, and converses with him with an holy Liberty. And what a torment the hiding of God's Face is to a deserted Soul, only they know who feel it. External troubles are many times attended with more Consolations to the Spirit, than Afflictions to Sense; but to love God with a transcendent Affection, and to fear he is our Enemy, no Punishment exceeds, or is equal to it. As his Loving-kindness in their esteem is better than Life, so his Displeasure is worse than Death. How do they wrestle with God by Prayers and Tears, and offer, as it were, a holy Violence to the King of Heaven, to recover their first serenity of Mind, the lost Peace of Heart? How passionately do they cry out with Job, in the Book of his Patience, O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: when his Candle shined upon my head, and when by his Light I walked through darkness: As I was in the days of my youth, when the Secret of God was upon my Tabernacle. And sometimes God delays the revealing himself even to his dearest Children; not that he does not see their Necessities, and hears their Prayers, or is so hard that till their Extremities he is not moved with Compassion, but for wise and holy Reasons; Either that

they may not return to folly, if by any presumptuous Sin they forfeited their Peace; or if they have been careful to please him, yet he may deprive them of Spiritual Comforts for a time, to keep them humble, and that with an obedient resignation to his Sovereign Pleasure they may wait for his reviving Presence. And then Joy returns greater than before. For thus God usually renders with interest what he suspended only for trial. But the Saints above are forever enlightened with the vital splendor, and dear regards of his Countenance, always enjoy his beamy smiles. A continual effusion of Glory illustrates Heaven and all its blessed Inhabitants.

And their Contemplation of God is fixed. If the Object, though extraordinary glorious, were transient, or the Eye so weak that it could only see it but by glances, the height of Joy would not be perpetual. But the mind is prepared with supernatural vigor, to see the brightness of God's Face, and by the most attentive application always converses with that blessed Object; so that the Joy of Heaven is never intermitted for a moment. They always see, and love, and rejoice, and praise him.

'It is possible a carnal suspicion may arise in some, as if the uniform perpetual vision of the same Glory might lose its perfect delightfulness. For those who seek for happiness in the vanity of the Creatures, are always desirous of change, and have their Judgments so corrupted, that while they languish with a secret desire after an unchangeable Good, yet they conceive no Good as desirable, that is not changed.

But to correct this gross error of Fancy, let us a little inquire into the causes of Dissatisfaction, that make the constant fruition of the same thing here to be tedious.

Sensible things are of such a limited Goodness, that not any of them can supply all our present wants, so that 'tis necessary to leave one for another. And the most of them are Remedies of our diseased Appetites, and if not temperately used, are destructive Evils. Eating

and Drinking are to extinguish Hunger and Thirst, but continued beyond just measure, become nauseous. Besides, the Insufficiency of their Objects, the Senses themselves cannot be satisfied all at once. The Ear cannot attend to delightful Sounds, and the Eye be intent on beautiful Colors at the same time. The Satisfaction of one Sense defeats another of enjoying its proper good; therefore the same Object is not constantly pleasant, but the Heart is distempered from as many Causes, as there are desires unaccomplished. Add farther, all things under the Sun afford only a superficial delight, and miserably deceive the Expectations raised of them: and many times there is a mixture of some evil in them, that is more offensive, than the good is delightful. The Honey is attended with a Sting, so that often those very things we sigh after through vehement desire, when they are obtained, we sigh for grief. Now all these Causes of dissatisfaction cease in Heaven; for God is an infinite Good, and whatever is truly desirable and precious, is in Him in all degrees of Perfection. And in his Presence all the Powers of the Soul are drawn out in their most pleasant exercise, and always enjoy their entire happiness. The fruition of him exceeds our most raised hopes, as much as he is more glorious in Himself than in any borrowed Representations. God will be to us incomparably above what we can ask or think. The compass of our thoughts, the depth of our desires are imperfect measures of his Perfections. And as he is a Pure Good in Himself, so he is prevalent over all Evil. 'It is evident therefore that nothing can allay the Joys of Saints when they are in God's presence.

2. Novelty is not requisite to ingratiate every Good, and make it perfectly delightful. God is infinitely happy, to whom no Good was ever new. 'It is indeed the Sauce that gives a delicious taste to inferior things. For Men relish only what is eminent; and the good things of this World are so truly mean, that they are feign to borrow a show of Greatness by comparison with a worse estate preceding. But an infinite Good produces always the same pure equal complete Joy, because it arises from its intrinsic perfection, that wants no Foil to commend it. The Psalmist breaks forth, Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? This is no vanishing Rapture, but a constant joyful height of

Affection. God, the essential happiness of the Saints, is always perfectly lovely and delightful to them.

3. The glorified Saints in every period of their happy state, have as lively a perception of it as in the beginning. To make this evident, we must consider that the pleasure of Novelty springs from a quick sense of the opposite terms, between our condition in the want of some desired Good, and after our obtaining it. Now the Mind is more intense on the advantage, and more strongly affected at first. One newly freed from the torments of a sharp disease, feels a greater pleasure than from a constant tenor of health. Those who are raised from a low state to eminent Dignity, are transported with their first change, but in tract of time the remembrance of their mean condition is so weakened and spent, that 'tis like the shadow of a Dream, and proportionably their Joy is lessened. Honors like Perfumes, by custom are less sensible to those that carry them. But the Saints above always consider and feel the excellent difference between their suffering and triumphant state. They never lose that ravishing part of felicity, the vivid sense of past evils. Their reflections are always as strong on the Misery from whence they were raised to the pitch of Happiness, as in their first glorious Translation. In what an Extasy of wonder and pleasure will they be, from the fresh memory of what they were, and the joyful sense of what they are? I was (says the admiring Soul) poor, blind, and naked; but O miraculous and happy Alteration! I am full of Light, enriched with the Treasures of Heaven, adorned with Divine Glory. I was under the tyrannous power of Satan, but he is bruised under my feet. I was sentenced to an everlasting separation from the Presence of God, my only Life and Joy; but now am possessed of my supreme Good. O how transporting is the comparison of these wide and contrary extremes? How beautiful and pleasant is the Day of Eternity, after such a dark tempestuous Night? How does the remembrance of such Evils produce a more lively and feeling fruition of such Happiness? How strangely and mightily does Salvation with Eternal Glory affect the Soul? This gives a spritely accent to their everlasting Hallelujahs. This preserves an affectionate Heat in their Thanksgivings to their

Victorious Deliverer. And thus their Happiness is always the same, and always new. Their pleasure is continued in its perfection.

Lastly, The Blessedness of the Saints is without end. This makes Heaven to be itself. There is no satiety of the present, no solicitude for the future. Were there a possibility, or the least suspicion of losing that happy state, it would cast an aspersion of bitterness upon all their delights: they could not enjoy one moments repose; but the more excellent their Happiness is, the more stinging would their fear be of parting with it. But the Inheritance reserved in Heaven, is immortal, undefiled, and fades not away. And the tenure of their Possession is infinitely firm by the Divine Power, the true Support of their everlasting Duration. With God is the Fountain of Life. They enjoy a better Immortality, than the Tree of Life could have preserved in Adam. The Revolutions of the Heavens, and Ages, are under their Feet, and cannot in the least alter or determine their Happiness. After the passing of millions of Years, still an entire Eternity remains of their enjoying God. O most desirable State! Where Blessedness and Eternity are inseparably united. O joyful Harmony! When the full Chorus of Heaven shall sing, This God is our God forever and ever. This adds an infinite weight to their Glory. This redoubles their unspeakable Joys with infinite sweetness and security. They repose themselves in the complete Fruition of their Happiness. God reigns in the Saints, and they live in him forever.

CHAPTER III.

The Mercy of God the Original Cause of his designing and preparing Heaven for his People.

The Obedience of Christ, the meritorious Cause. Some Qualifications are required in those that shall possess it. The holy Change of Man's Nature indispensibly requisite in order to his Reception into Heaven. The Reasons of it specified.

Having such a Revelation of Heaven in the Gospel, that all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them, in comparison, are but as a Glow-worm to the Light of the Sun, with what inflamed desires should we seek, and strive for that unchangeable Happiness? In order to this we shall consider the causes of it, and the means whereby 'tis obtained.

The Original moving Cause is the pure rich Mercy of God that prepared it for his People, and prepares them for it. The procuring Cause is the meritorious efficacy of Christ's Obedience and Sufferings. This is expressly declared by the Apostle; The wages of Sin is Death, but the gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. The designing, the preparation, and actual bestowing of the Heavenly Glory is from the Mercy of God. This will appear by considering,

1. That it is absolutely impossible that a mere Creature, though perfect, should deserve anything from God. For enjoying its being and powers of working from his Goodness, the product of all is entirely due to him. And the payment of a Debt acquires no Title to a Reward. He is the Proprietary and Lord of all by Creation. Hence 'tis clear that in the order of distributive Justice nothing can be challenged from him.

2. Besides, such is the infinite Perfection of God in Himself, that no benefit can redound to him by the service of the Creature. When you have done all, say you are unprofitable Servants, for we have done what we ought to do. The neglect of our duty justly exposes to punishment, but the performance of it deserves no Reward, because

no advantage accrues to God by it. Who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? He challenges all Creatures even of the highest order. To speak strictly therefore, When God crowns the Angels with Glory, he gives what is merely his own, and does not render what is theirs. If he should leave them in their pure Nature, or deprive them of their Being, he were no loser, nor injurious to them. For what Law binds him to enrich them with Immortal Glory, who are no ways profitable to him, or to preserve that being they had from his unexcited Goodness. No Creature can give to him, therefore none can receive from him by way of valuable Consideration.

3. There is no proportion between the best works of Men, and the excellency of the Reward, much less an equivalence. 'Twas the just and humble acknowledgment of Jacob to God, I am less than the least of all thy Mercies, those that common Providence dispenses for the support and refreshment of this temporal Life. But how much less than the glorious Excellencies of the supernatural Divine Life, wherein the Saints reign with God forever? The most costly, the most difficult and hazardous Services, are equally nothing in point of Merit, with the giving but a Cup of cold Water to a Disciple of Christ, there being no correspondence in value between them and the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle tells us, I count the Sufferings of the present Life are not to be compared to the Glory that shall be revealed in us. And suffering is more than doing. God rewards his faithful Servants not according to the dignity of their Works, but his own Liberality and Magnificence. As Alexander having ordered fifty Talents of Gold to be given to a Gentleman in Poverty to supply his want, and he surprised with that immense Bounty, modestly said, ten were enough; He replied, If fifty are too much for you to receive, ten are too little for me to give; therefore do you receive as Poor, I will give as a King. Thus God in the dispensing his Favors does not respect the meanness of our Persons or Services, but gives to us as a God. And the clearest Notion of the Deity is that he is a Being infinite in all Perfections, therefore all-sufficient and most willing to make his Creatures completely happy.

4. If a Creature perfectly Holy that never sinned is incapable to merit anything from God, much less can those who are born in a sinful State, and guilty of innumerable actual Transgressions, pretend to deserve any Reward for their Works. This were presumption inspired by prodigious Vanity. For,

1. By his most free Grace they are restored in conversion to that Spiritual Power by which they serve him. The Chaos was not a deader Lump before the Spirit of God moved on the Face of the Waters, than the best of Men were before the vital influences of the Spirit wrought upon them. And for this they are so deeply obliged to God, that if a thousand times more for his Glory were performed, yet they cannot discharge what they owe.

2. The continuance and increase of the powerful supplies of Grace to the Saints, who even since their holy calling by many lapses have justly deserved that God should withdraw his grieved Spirit, are new Obligations to Thankfulness: and the more Grace the less Merit.

3. The best Works of Men are imperfect, allayed with the mixtures of Infirmities, and not of full weight in the Divine Ballance. If God should strictly examine our Righteousness, 'twill be found neither pure nor perfect in his Eyes, and without Favor and Indulgence would be rejected. And that which wants Pardon, cannot deserve Praise and Glory. He shows Mercy to thousands that love him, and keep his Commandments. If Obedience were meritorious, it were strict justice to reward them. The Apostle prays for Onesiphorus, who had exposed himself to great danger for his love to the Gospel, The Lord grant he may find Mercy in that day. The Divine Mercy gives the Crown of Life to the Faithful in the day of eternal Recompenses.

II. The meritorious Cause of our obtaining Heaven, is the Obedience of Jesus Christ comprehending all that he did and suffered to reconcile God to us. From him as the eternal Word we have all benefits in the order of Nature, for all things were made by him; and

for him, as the incarnate Word, all good things in the order of Grace. What we enjoy in Time, and expect in Eternity, is by him. To show what influence his Mediation has to make us happy, we must consider;

1. Man by his Rebellion justly forfeited his Happiness, and the Law exacts precisely the forfeiture. Pure Justice requires the Crime should be punished according to its Quality, much less will it suffer the guilty to enjoy the favor of God. For Sin is not to be considered as an Offence and Injury to a private Person, but the violation of a Law, and a disturbance in the order of Government, so that to preserve the honor of governing Justice, an equivalent reparation was necessary. Till Sin was expiated by a proper Sacrifice, the Divine Goodness was a sealed Spring, and its blessed effects restrained from the guilty Creature. Now the Son of God in our assumed Nature offered up himself a Sacrifice in our stead, to satisfy Divine Justice, and removed the Bar, that Mercy might be glorified in our Salvation. The Apostle gives this account of it; We have boldness to enter into the Holiest, by the Blood of Christ, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the Vail, that is to say, his Flesh.

2. Such were the most precious Merits of his Obedience, that it was not only sufficient to free the guilty contaminated race of Mankind from Hell, but to purchase for them the Kingdom of Heaven. If we consider his Human Nature, all Graces were born with him, as Rays with the Sun, and shined in the whole course of his Life in the excellence of perfection. And the dignity of his divine Person derived an immense value to all he performed as Mediator. One act of his Obedience was more honorable to God than all the Lives of the Saints, the Deaths of the Martyrs, and the Service of the Angels. God was more pleased in the Obedience of his Beloved Son, than he was provoked by the Rebellion of his Servants. Therefore, as the just recompense of it, he constituted him to be Universal Head of the Church, supreme Judge of the World; invested him with Divine Glory, and with Power to communicate it to his faithful Servants. He is the Prince of Life. In short, it is as much upon the account of

Christ's Sufferings that we are glorified, as that we are forgiven. The Wounds he received in his Body, the Characters of Ignominy, and Footsteps of Death, are the Fountains of our Glory. His Abasement is the cause of our Exaltation.

If it be said, this seems to lessen the freeness of this Gift. The answer is clear;

This was due to Christ, but undeserved by us. Besides, the appointing his Son to be our Mediator in the way of our ransom, was the most glorious work of his Goodness.

2. The means of our obtaining Heaven are to be considered. Though the Divine Goodness be free in its Acts, and there can be nothing in the Creature of Merit, or Inducement to prevail upon God in the nature of a cause, yet he requires qualifications in all those who shall enjoy that blessed unchangeable Kingdom. The Apostle expressly declares, 'It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that showeth Mercy. But we must distinguish the Effects of this Mercy, which are dispensed in that order the Gospel lays down. The first Mercy is the powerful calling the Sinner from his corrupt and wretched State; a second Mercy is the pardoning his Sins; the last and most eminent is the glorifying him in Heaven. Now 'tis clear that in this place, the showing of Mercy, signifies the preventing Grace of God in Conversion, for in the 18th verse, 'tis said, God shows Mercy to whom he will, and whom he will he hardens. Where 'tis evident that showing Mercy is opposed not to condemning, but to hardening, and consequently the intent of the Words is this, That Divine Grace overcomes the Rebellious Will, softens the stiff and stubborn Heart, and makes it pliant to Obedience. This flows from his pure good Will and Pleasure, without the least motive from the inclinations or endeavors of sinful Men. But the other Effects of God's Mercy require Conditions in the Subjects that receive them: for he pardons only penitent Believers, and glorifies none but persevering Saints.

To make this clear 'tis worthy of Observation, The Gospel has several Denominations. 'It is called a Law, a Covenant, and a Testament. 'It is called the Law of Faith, and the Law of the Spiritual Life. As a Law it signifies a new Right that God has most freely established in favor of lost Man, that commands certain Duties, and sets before them Eternal Life as the reward of Obedience, and Eternal Death the punishment of Disobedience. According to this the trial and decision of Men's everlasting States shall be, which is the Character of a true Law. This Law of Grace, is very different from the Law of Nature, that required entire innocence, and for the least omission, or accusing act, passed an irrevocable doom upon the Offender: for that strictness and severity is mollified by the Gospel, which accepts of sincere persevering Obedience though imperfect; accordingly 'tis called the Law of Liberty. But the Law of Faith is unalterable, and admits of no dispensation from the duties required in order to our being everlastingly happy.

2. The Gospel is styled a Covenant, and that imports a reciprocal engagement between parties for the performance of the matter contained in it. The Covenant of Grace includes the promise of pardoning and rewarding Mercy on God's part, and the Conditions on Man's with respect to which 'tis to be performed. There is an inviolable dependence between them. He will be our God, to make us happy, but we must be his People to yield unreserved Obedience to him. He will be our Father, and we shall be his Sons and Daughters, but 'tis upon the terms of purifying ourselves from all pollutions of Flesh and Spirit, and unfeigned endeavors to perfect Holiness in his fear. 'It is astonishing Goodness that he is pleased to condescend to such a treaty with fallen Creatures: by a voluntary promise he encourages them, but though most free in making, 'tis conditional in the performance. The constancy of his holy Nature obliges him to fulfil his Word, but 'tis if we do not fail on our part by carelessness of our Duty, A Presumer may seal assurance to himself, and be deceived in this great matter, but God will not be mocked. If we prove false in the Covenant, he will be faithful, and exclude those from Heaven that were neglectful of the Conditions to which it is promised.

3. The Gospel is styled a Testament sealed in the Blood of Christ, confirmed by his Death. The donation of eternal blessings in it is not absolute and irrespective, but the Heirs are admitted to the Possession of the Inheritance according to the Will of the rich liberal and wise Testator. There can be no regular title or claim made out without performing what is required. And this is the Will of God and Christ our Sanctification, without which we cannot enjoy it.

Now from hence we may see the admirable agreement between these two Notions, that Heaven is a Gift and a Reward. 'It is a Reward in the order of giving it, not due to the Work, but from the Bounty of the Giver. God gives Heaven to those that faithfully serve him. But their Service was due to God, of no worth in respect of Heaven, so that Man's Work is no Merit, and God's Reward is a Gift. Our everlasting Glory must be ascribed to his most free Grace, as much as the pardon of our Sins.

I shall now proceed to consider, what the Gospel declares to be indispensably requisite in order to our obtaining of Heaven: this is comprised in the holy change of Man's Nature, which I will briefly unfold, and show how necessary it is to qualify us for Celestial Glory.

1. This holy Change is expressed in Scripture by the new Birth. Our Savior with a solemn repeated Asseveration tells Nicodemus; Verily, Verily, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Sin is natural to Man from his Conception and Birth, and infects with its contagion all his Faculties. This is fomented and cherished by temptations that easily encompass him. The Understanding is polluted with evil Principles, full of strong Prejudices, and lofty Imaginations against the supernatural Mysteries of Salvation. 'It is full of Ignorance and Folly, and from hence either rejects them as incredible, or despises them as impertinent or unprofitable. The Will is depraved and perverse, full of unruly and unhallowed Affections. The Senses are luxurious and rebellious. In short Man, is so viciously and sensually inclined, so alienated from the Life of God, as if he had no diviner part within

him, that should aspire to a Spiritual Blessedness, that should regulate and control the excess of the inferior Appetites. This is the unhappy Character Satan impressed on him in his Fall, and without renovation upon an infinite account he is incapable of seeing God. This renovation consists not in the change of his substance, as the Water was miraculously turned into Wine at the Marriage in Cana of Galilee: the same Soul with its essential Powers, the same Body with its natural Senses, the Work of the Creator remains; but in the cleansing of his stained nature, in the sanctifying his Faculties that are the Springs of his Actions. The whole Man is quickened into a Divine Life, and enabled to act in conformity to it. And of this the new Birth is a convenient Illustration. An active Principle of Holiness is planted in him that springs up into visible Actions. The Apostle particularly expresses it in his earnest Prayer for the Thessalonians, The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole Spirit, Soul and Body blameless till the coming of Jesus Christ. Every Faculty is renewed, and every Grace infused that constitutes the Divine Image. The Mind is renewed by Spiritual Light, to believe the Truth and Goodness of unseen things promised, the reality and dreadfulness of things threatened in the Word of God. It sees the truest Beauty in Holiness, the highest Honor in Obedience to God, the greatest Equity and Excellence in his Service. The Will is renewed by holy Love, a purifying Flame, and feels the attractive virtue of our blessed End, before all desirable things on Earth, and determines to pursue it in the vigorous use of proper means. The Body is made a holy instrument fit for the renewed Soul. In short, the natural Man becomes spiritual in his Perceptions, Resolutions and Actions. All things are become New. There is a firm assent, an inviolable adherence to those most precious Objects revealed in the Scripture, and a sincere chosen constant Obedience flows from the renewed Faculties. And from hence we may distinguish between regenerating Grace, and formal Hypocrisy in some, and the proficiency of Nature, and power of common Grace in others. A Hypocrite in Religion is acted from without, by mercenary base respects, and his Conscience being cauterized, handles sacred things without feeling: a regenerate Person is moved by an internal living Principle, and performs his

Duties with lively Affections. Natural Conscience under the compulsion of Fear, may lay a restraint upon the outward acts of Sin, without an inward consent to the sanctity of the Law. Renewing Grace cleanses the Fountain, and the current is pure. It reconciles the Affections to the most holy Commands. I love thy Law because 'tis pure, saith the Psalmist.

A moral Principle may induce one to abstain from many Sins, and to perform many praise-worthy things in conformity to Reason. But this is neither sanctifying nor saving: for it only prunes Sin as if it were a good Plant, and does not root it up; it compounds with it, and does not destroy it. There may be still an impure indulgence to the secret lusting's of the Heart, notwithstanding the restraint upon their Exercise. And many Duties may be done on lower motives, without a divine respect to the Commands and Glory of God.

But renewing Grace subjects the Soul to the whole Royalty of the Law, uniformly inclines it to express Obedience to all its Precepts, because they are pure, and derived from the eternal Spring of Purity. It mortifies Concupiscence, and quickens to every good Work, from a Principle of Love to God, and in this is distinguished from the most refined unregenerate Morality. In short, there may be a superficial tincture of Religion from common Grace, a transient Esteem, vanishing Affections, and earnest Endeavors for a time after Spiritual Things, and yet a Person remain in a state of unregeneracy. But renewing Grace is a permanent solid Principle, that makes a Man partaker of the Divine Nature, and elevates him above himself.

This holy Change is wrought by Divine Power. Our Savior tells Nicodemus, Except a Man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. The Analogy of a new Birth signifies, that 'tis entirely the work of the sanctifying Spirit, that conveys a Principle of Life in order to the Functions of it. 'It is the living impression of God, the sole Efficient and Exemplar of it, the Fruit and Image of the Divine Virtues. 'It is expressed by the new Creature. The production of it is attributed to God's power displaying itself in a

peculiar excellent way, even in that precise manner, as in making the World. For as in the first Creation all things were made originally of nothing, so in the second, the habit of Grace is infused into the Soul that was utterly void of it, and in which there was as little preparation for true Holiness, as of nothing to produce this great and regular World. And although there is not only an absolute privation of Grace, but a fierce resistance against it, yet creating invincible Power does as infallibly and certainly produce its effect in forming the new Creature, as in making the World. From hence it appears that preventing renewing Grace is so entirely the Work of God; as his forming the human Body from the Dust of Earth at first. But with this difference, the first Creation was done without any sense in the Subject, of the efficiency of the Divine Power in producing it: but in the new Creation, Man feels the vital influence of the Spirit, applying itself to all his Faculties, reforming and enabling them to act according to the quality of their nature.

And by the way we may observe the admirable Grace showed to Man in the renovation of his corrupted Nature. In the composition of his Being are united a Spirit like the Angels, and a Body like terrestrial Animals, by which he partakes of the spiritual and natural Life: but he has peculiar Favors conferred upon him. For, whereas his Soul sinned with the Angels, and his Body dies with the Beasts, yet God is pleased to restore them by his glorious Power. An Angel after Sin never repents, and is therefore incapable of Pardon, and irrecoverably disinherited of Heaven: a Beast after Death never revives: but though Man sins and dies, yet his Soul may be renewed by Divine Grace, and his Body shall be raised in an incorruptible Glory.

Now the indispensable necessity of this holy Change is evident from the Words of our Savior, for he speaks universally, Except a Man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. He does not simply declare that an unregenerate Man shall not, but with the greatest Emphasis, cannot, to signify an absolute impossibility of it. The Jews highly presumed of the privilege of their carnal Birth, they sprang

from the pure and noble Blood of Abraham, God's Friend; they had the Seal of the Holy Covenant marked in their Flesh: and hence it was proverbial among them, that every Israelite should have a part in the World to come. But our Savior overthrows this vain conceit, and tells them that the supernatural Birth entitles to the supernatural Inheritance. Circumcision then, and Baptism now, without real Grace is an ineffectual sign, of no avail to Salvation. In the quality of Sons, we are Heirs of God's Kingdom. And that honorable Relation we have upon a double account; by Adoption and Regeneration. Divine Adoption is not a mere change of our state, a naked Declaration that one shall be dignified with the Title of God's Son, but a holy Nature is always infused into the Person, whereby he is made like to God in his Excellencies. In this it differs from human Adoption, that gives the Name, and Arms, the Honor and Estate of the Adopter to a Person, without conveying any of his intellectual or moral Endowments. Whom God adopts he begets to a Divine Life. Besides, our Savior purchased this high privilege for us: God sent his Son made of a Woman, under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons. By Union with him we receive the investiture of this Dignity. Now whoever is in Christ is a new Creature. For the quickening Spirit, that is to the Soul what the Soul is to the Body, the principle of Life and Strength, of Beauty and Motion, and an active purifying Faith that is influential upon all other Graces, are the band of that vital Union: So that as all in Adam are universally corrupt by the first Birth, all that are in Christ are made holy by a new Birth. But of this I shall speak in the next Chapter more fully, under a distinct Head. Briefly, the Spirit of Grace that sanctifies, is the Spirit of Adoption that seals our Right to that Kingdom.

Now the reasons why this Change must be in order to our obtaining of Heaven, are these:

1. There is an exquisite Wisdom shines in all God's works, in disposing them for the ends to which they are appointed: and is it not monstrously absurd to imagine, he will admit into his Presence

and Kingdom, those that are absolutely unqualified for its Blessedness, and opposite to its Purity?

2. His invariable Justice excludes for ever all unholy Persons from Heaven. For in the last Judgment God will be glorified as a Governor, in the distribution of Rewards with respect to the Obedience and Disobedience of Men. 'It is worthy of observation, that the Actions of God on the reasonable Creatures are of two sorts. Some proceed from his sovereign good Pleasure, of which there is no motive or reason in the Subjects on which they are terminated. Thus by a free and insuperable Decree (when all Mankind, lapsed and miserable, was in his view) he chose some to be Vessels of Mercy, and by privilege separated them from the rest that finally perish. Now what induced him to place a singular Love on the Elect? There was nothing in them to incline his Compassion, being equally guilty and depraved with the rest of the Progeny of Adam. This difference therefore is to be resolved into his unaccountable and adorable Will, as the sole cause of it. Thus God declares it to be his glorious Prerogative, I will have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy, and I will have Compassion on whom I will have Compassion. And this is no unjust acceptance of Persons: For as a Benefactor, he may dispense his own Favors as he pleases. A Gift from mere and arbitrary Bounty may be bestowed on some, and not on others without injustice. But there are other actions of God for which there is an evident reason in Men on whom they are terminated. Thus as the supreme Judge, without respect of Persons, he will judge and reward every Man according to his Works. The Evangelical Law (as was touched on before) is the rule of eternal Judgment, and gives a right from the gracious Promise of God, to all penitent Believers in the Kingdom of Heaven, and excludes all impenitent Infidels. Divine Justice will illustriously appear then in distinguishing Believers from Unbelievers by their Works, the proper Fruits either of Faith or Infidelity. All the thick Clouds of Disgraces, Calumnies, Persecutions, that often oppress the most sincere Christians here, shall not then darken their Holiness, and all the specious appearances of Piety, which the most artificial Hypocrites make use of to deceive others,

shall not conceal their Wickedness. And accordingly the one shall be absolved and glorified, the others condemned and punished forever. In short, without violation of his own righteous establishment in the Gospel, God cannot receive the unholy into his Glory.

3. Besides the Legal Bar that excludes unsanctified Persons from the beatific vision of God, there is a moral incapacity. Suppose that Justice should allow Omnipotence to translate such a Sinner to Heaven, would the Place make him happy? Can two incongruous Natures delight in one another? The happiness of Sense is by an impression of Pleasure from a suitable Object: The happiness of intellectual Beings arises from an entire conformity of dispositions. So that unless God recede from his Holiness, which is absolutely impossible, or Man be purified, and changed into his likeness, there can be no sweet Communion between them. Our Savior assigns this Reason of the necessity of Regeneration in order to our admission into Heaven: That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. According to the quality of the Principle, such is what proceeds from it. The Flesh is a corrupt Principle, and accordingly the Natural Man is wholly carnal in his propensions, operations, and end. The Disease is turned into his Constitution. He is dead to the Spiritual Life, to the actions and enjoyments that are proper to it: Nay, there is in him a surviving Principle of Enmity to that Life: not only a mortal coldness to God, but a stiff aversion from him, a perpetual resistance and impatience of the Divine Presence, that would disturb his voluptuous enjoyments. The Exercises of Heaven would be as the Torments of Hell to him, while in the midst of those pure Joys his inward inclinations vehemently run into the lowest Lees of Sensuality. And therefore till this contrariety, so deep and predominant in an unholy Person, be removed, 'tis utterly impossible he should enjoy God with satisfaction. As it was necessary that God should become like Man on Earth, to purchase that Felicity for him, so Man must be like God in Heaven before he can possess it. Holiness alone prepares Men for Celestial Happiness; that is against the corruption and above the perfection of mere Nature.

CHAPTER IV.

Faith in the Redemer is required of all that will obtain Salvation.

The choice of Supernatural Happiness previous to our obtaining it. The choice must be sincere, early, and constant. The sincerity of the Heavenly Choice declared by its Qualities and Effects.

I Shall now proceed to consider more particularly what is requisite in order to our obtaining of Heaven.

1. Faith in the Redeemer is absolutely required of all that will partake of the Salvation purchased by him. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish but have Eternal Life. This is the Spirit and Substance of the Gospel, therefore I will briefly unfold it. The Son of God having assumed the human Nature, and performed what was necessary for the expiation of Sin, the Father was so pleased with his Obedience, that from his lowest State he raised him to Divine Glory, and gave him supreme Authority, and all-sufficient Power to communicate that Glory to others. Thus our Savior declares; Thou hast given him (i. e. the Son) power over all Flesh, that he should give Eternal Life to as many as thou hast given him. And he exhorts the People, Labor for that Meat that endures unto Eternal Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed. Now this glorious Life is not given to all, but only to those who are united to him. As Adam the principle of the carnal corrupt Nature, derives Guilt and Death to all his Progeny, so Jesus Christ (who is opposed to him) the Head and Prince of the renewed State, communicates Life and Glory to his People. The Apostle expresses it, As in Adam all die, his natural Descendants are involved in his Condemnation, even so in

Christ shall all be made alive: that is, all that are spiritually united to him shall partake of his glorious Resurrection. And St. John tells us, He that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life. The having the Son, upon which our right to Eternal Life depends, is believing in him. Faith has a principal Efficiency in receiving Christ, therefore 'tis expressed by that Act; But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, (and consequently Heirs of Glory) to as many as believed on his Name. And Christ is said to dwell in our Hearts by Faith. This is not a mere assent to the Doctrines of the Gospel concerning the Dignity of his Person, that he is in so high and glorious a Relation of being the Eternal Son of God, and the infinite value of his Merits, whereby he is able to save all that come unto God by him, and his merciful compassionate Nature to embrace returning Sinners, and the excellency of the benefits purchased by him, but such a Belief as sways the Will and Affections to receive him upon God's terms for our Salvation. Faith is seated in the whole Soul, in the Mind and Heart, and accepts of Christ entirely as Prophet, Priest and King. The parts of the Mediator's Office, are inseparably connected, and all the Effects of them are communicated to the same Persons. Jesus Christ is made of God to Believers, Wisdom, to cure their Ignorance and Folly, Righteousness to abolish their Guilt, Sanctification to renew their Natures, and Redemption to free them at last, from the Grave and bring them to Glory. From hence 'tis clear, that the Faith, which is justifying and saving, includes in its Nature, as dependence and trust in Christ as a powerful and merciful Mediator, that is able and willing to reconcile us to God, and make us forever happy in his Favor; so a sincere resolution of Obedience and Subjection to all his holy Commands, even to the plucking out of the right Eye, and the cutting off the right hand, the parting with the most pleasing or profitable Sins. For the Promises of God that are the Rule of Faith, make an offer of Christ upon these Conditions to us: Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of Sins. And only the Justified shall be glorified. Those therefore who desire a partial interest in him as a Savior, out of absolute necessity, to escape Hell, and will not out

of Love submit to him as their Prince, have not that Faith that is unfeigned, and gives a title to Eternal Life by the Promises of the Gospel.

2. We must choose Heaven as our supreme Happiness, and regard it as the main end of our Lives. Man fell from his Duty and Felicity by preferring sensual Pleasure before the Favor of God, and became guilty of the greatest Disobedience and Dishonor to his Maker, and is restored by the holy change of his Will, the setting his Affections on a pure Spiritual Blessedness. This subliming the Will, and turning its Love and Choice from the Creatures to God, is the effect of Divine Grace, and wrought in a rational way. For Man is not moved as artificial Engines by force, nor as Brutes from necessity, their Faculties being determined by the outward application of Objects: he is not drawn up to Heaven by such a natural impression, as Steel by the Load-stone, nor forced by a violent motion as a Stone ascends, but as an understanding free Agent, by the direction of the enlightened Mind, and the consent of the Will, an elective unconstrained Faculty. And herein the Wisdom, Goodness and Equity of God's Transactions with Man appears. His Wisdom, in that as he has ordered in the whole sphere of Nature, that the active Powers of every Creature, be drawn forth into exercise for their preservation, and accordingly he is pleased to work in and by them, so the Understanding and Will, the Principles of Operation in Man, are to deliberate and choose in order to his Happiness. Otherwise the rational Faculties would be in vain. His Goodness and Equity, in that he sets before them Eternal Life as the Reward of Obedience. God will be glorified by him as a Law-giver and a Benefactor, and has ordained in the Gospel, that all who choose and diligently seek the Kingdom of Heaven shall infallibly obtain it, and none be deprived of it, but for their neglect. The Decree of a final state of Misery, though not in time, yet is consequent in the order of causes to the obstinate reluctancy of Sinners against restoring Grace, and the willful forsaking their own Mercies. Therefore God vindicates the Equity of his Proceedings with Men by their own Principles, and with tender pity expostulates, Why will ye die? The corrupt Will declining from

God, and adhering to the Creature as its Happiness, is the true cause of Mans ruin. This will infinitely clear the Wisdom and Justice, the Purity and Goodness of God from all Imputation.

The choice of Heaven for our Felicity is primarily to be determined, for 'tis from the prospect of it, that all holy Counsels derive their Life and Vigour. As in drawing the Picture of a Man, the first work is to delineate the Head, not only as the part that in dignity and eminence is above the rest, but as it regulates the drawing of the other parts, and gives a just proportion and correspondence between them, without which the whole Figure becomes disordered and monstrous. Thus in the moral consideration of Man, that which is primarily to be considered is the Soul, and its final Felicity, as incomparably more excellent than the Body and its Pleasures: for this will have a powerful influence upon the whole Life, directing to avoid what is inconsistent and impertinent, and to do what is conducive to it.

Now this being a matter of unspeakable importance, I will first show what the regular choice of Heaven includes, as to its Qualities and Effects. Secondly, direct how to make this Choice. Thirdly, present some powerful Motives to excite us to it.

The Qualities of this Choice are three. First, it must be sincere and cordial. Secondly, early, in our first and best days. Thirdly, firm and constant.

1. It must be sincere and cordial. The most essential and active desire in human Nature is to Happiness, but there being two kinds of good things presented to the Will, that solicit the Affections, the pleasures of Sense, and spiritual Joys, from hence it is that that which makes Men happy is the object of Election. And although there is nothing more uniform and inviolable than the natural inclination to Happiness, yet the great distinction of Mankind arises from this source, the regular or perverse use of this inclination, the wise or mistaking choice of Happiness. Now the Sincerity of our Choice is discovered, when 'tis clear and entire, arising from a transcendent

esteem of the favor and enjoyment of God as our chief Good, and absolutely requisite for us. The Choice of true Happiness, necessarily includes the despising and rejecting of the false Happiness that stands in competition with it. There cannot be two reigning Principles in the Soul: for it cannot vigorously apply itself to two Objects at the same time. Our Savior has decided it, No Man can serve two Masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon. The Masters are irreconcilable, and their commands are directly opposite. It was as possible to place upon the same Altar the Ark of God, and the Idol of the Philistines, as that Heaven and the World should compound and take equal shares in our Affections. Indeed if the conceptions in the Mind are but faint and floating of the universal satisfying Goodness of the Object proposed to make us happy, the Will remains in suspense; but when 'tis clearly and strongly represented, the Heart is drawn entirely to embrace it. Divine Grace by the illumination of the Understanding purifies and changes the depraved Will, and heals the distempered Affections. The wise Merchant that had a discerning Eye saw reason enough to part with all, that he might gain the Pearl of Price, the Grace and Glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle declares his resolute contempt of the concurrence of all the Prerogatives either the Law or the World could afford him, that he might have an Interest in Christ, the Reconciler and Restorer of Man to the Favor and Fellowship of God. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ. The glorious Gospel is the brightest and most pleasant Light that ever shone upon the World, a revelation of the deepest Wisdom and most admirable Love, wherein the combination of God's holy and wonderful Counsels for our Salvation is unfolded, and accordingly St. Paul, with the greatest Life of Affection sets forth his value of it, and by full and most vilifying Expressions rejects all things in comparison of it.

2. The Sincerity of the Heavenly Choice is discovered by a zealous observance of the means requisite in order to it. Inanimate things incline to rest in their Centre, the rational intend and pursue it. The blessed End when valued and respected according to its worth, excites and directs the Affections and Endeavors in that order and measure as is proportionable to its Excellency; and the difficulties of obtaining it. There may be a naked estimation, and some desires of Eternal Happiness simply considered, yet the Will remain incomplete and undetermined in its choice: for the End in conjunction with the Means is propounded to us, and the carnal Man will not consent to the Means. He dislikes the Holiness of Religion, and will rather forfeit Heaven than submit to such strict terms. Though with Balaam, in a fit of Devotion he says, O that I might die the death of the Righteous, and that my last end might be like his, yet from Indulgence to his sensual Inclinations, he will not live as the righteous. All his wishes of true Happiness are soon strangled by the predominant love of some Vanity. 'It is said of the Israelites, they despised the pleasant Land, not absolutely in itself, for it was the Glory of all Lands, abounding with things for the support and delight of Man, but considering its distance, a Wilderness waste and wild interposing, and the Enemies to be encountered, they did not think it worthy of undergoing such hazards and difficulties. The Land of Canaan was a Type of Heaven, both with respect to its pleasantness, and the manner of the Israelites obtaining it. Their Title to it was derived from the rich Bounty of God, therefore 'tis called the Land of Promise; but it was to be possessed by Conquest. Thus the Celestial Canaan is the pure gift of God, but the actual enjoyment of it is obtained by victorious resistance, against the Enemies of our Salvation. And carnal Men despise this pleasant Land, the Promise being inseparably joined with Precepts of Duty and Obedience, from which they are averse. But he that chooses sincerely, is joyful and vigorous in the use of means for acquiring his most desired good. Ardent Affections, like Elijah 's Chariot of Fire, ravish the Soul above this sensible World, to the place where God dwells in Glory. Zeal animates his endeavors, as the Motion of the Heart diffuses the Spirits into the Arteries, to convey Life to all parts of the Body. One

thing (saith the inflamed Psalmist) have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to inquire into his Temple. The sensual Man is ranging abroad for satisfaction, and shoots all the Game that crosses his Eye; but the Soul that has a discovering light, and feeling heat of the Divine Beauty, unites all its desires in God, and with affection to an ecstasy longs for the enjoyment of him, and the endeavors are in some proportion to the desires. Our Savior tells us, That from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Some previous rays of the Sun of Righteousness appeared in his Ministry, and produced such a holy ardency in those Converts, that with all resolution, diligence and earnestness they sought to be partakers of the Blessedness revealed. Lazy Desires, easy Prosecutions, sluggish Attempts, discover that the Heart is not thoroughly engaged for the spiritual Eternal Good. When the End is truly designed it will give Law to the Actions. This is visible in Men who are wholly led by Sense, how sagacious, how solicitous are they to accomplish their Ends and base Designs? They try all ways either by fine Dissimulation, or toilsome Industry to obtain their Desires. No time is too much in their gainful Affairs, or voluptuous Enjoyments. They transform the Night to lengthen out the Day for their Profit, they veil the Day to lengthen out the Night for their Ease and Pleasure. But alas, Heaven is only regarded by the By; as if the intellectual Soul were only given to dwell with the Body on Earth, the place of its Banishment, and direct Affairs here below, and not to lead in the way to Heaven, the place of its Nativity, and prepare for another World. The work of Salvation is followed with that remiss degree of Affection, as if it were a slight matter whether performed or neglected. These Persons carry their Conviction in their Bosoms; for they are ardent and active to obtain inferior and infinitely less concerning Ends, but with that cold application mind the superior nobler End of Man, that it is wholly frustrate, which plainly shows it was never seriously intended by them.

3. The sincerity of our Heavenly choice declares itself, in the temper and frame of our Hearts with respect to all temporal things in this World. For our main and happy End being established, that it consists not in secular Riches, and Honors, and the Pleasures of Sense, but in the clear vision of God, the blessedness of the Spirit; it follows that all present things are in our use so far good or evil, and to be desired or not, as they are profitable or prejudicial to our obtaining Salvation, as they conduct or divert us from Heaven. A wise Christian looks on temporal things not through the Glass of disordered Passions, that are impetuous and impatient for what is grateful to them, but with reference to his future Happiness. He considers the train of Temptations that attend an exalted condition, and desires such a portion of these things, as may redound to the Glory of the Giver, and be improved for his own Salvation. This Purity of Affections our Savior teaches us: For in his divine form of Prayer, the true directory of our desires, are set down in an admirable order all things we are to pray for. And they respect the End, or the Means. The End is the primary object of our desires, accordingly the two first Petitions concern our blessed End, as it respects God and ourselves. We pray, hallowed be thy Name, that is, by the reverence and adoration of all his Subjects: and, thy Kingdom come, that is, for the manifestation of his Eternal Glory in the next World, that we may reign with him. The Means in order to this End are of two sorts. Some conduct to it by themselves, those are the good things desired in the third and fourth Petitions; and some lead to it by accident, and those are the freedom from evils expressed in the last Petition. The good things desired either have a direct influence upon our obtaining Happiness; and they are summed up in our universal obedience to God's Will, expressed in the third Petition, let thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven; or they are such as by way of subserviency promote our Happiness, and those we pray for in the fourth Petition, Give us this day our daily Bread. And 'tis observable there is but one Petition for Temporal Blessings, and 'tis the last in the Order of those that concern good things. And that single Petition is so restrained, that, 'tis evident by its Tenor, that earthly things are not absolutely good to be desired for themselves,

but relatively and subordinately to our eternal Good. Daily Bread we must ask of our heavenly Father, the necessary support of the present Life, without which we cannot exercise our internal or external Powers and Faculties in his Service, but not Delicacies and Abundance for the luxurious Appetite.

The difference of Conditions in the present World is very great: as in Pharaoh 's Dream, some Ears of Corn were so full and weighty that they bended with their weight, others so thin and blasted, that they were as Stubble for the Fire. Thus some abound in all Felicities possible in this Life, others are chastened every Morning, under various and continual Afflictions. Now this infallible Principle being planted in the Heart, that all present things are to be improved with respect to our future Happiness, will moderate the Affections in Prosperity, so to use the World that we may enjoy God, and make us not only patient but pleased in Adversities, as they are preparatory for Heaven.

The Original of all the Sins and Misery of Men, is their perverse abuse of things, by turning the Means into the End, setting their Affections of Love, Desire, and Joy upon sensible things, as their proper Happiness, with inconsiderate neglect of the spiritual eternal state, to which all other things should be subservient. As if one diseased and sickly in a Forreign Country, that could not possibly recover Health but in his Native Air, in his return thither, invited by the pleasantness of the way, should take up his residence in it, and never arrive to his own Country. Among the West Indians some are reported to be so swift in running, that no Horse can keep pace with them, and they have a constant rule in their Diet, to eat of no Beast, or Bird, or Fish that is slow in motion, fancying it would transfuse a sluggishness in them. The Christian Life is by the Apostle compared to a Race, and earthly things by an inseparable property of Nature load and depress the Soul, that it cannot with vigor run the race set before it. The Believer therefore who intends for the high price of his Calling, and is true to his end, will be temperate in all things. Nay he will not only be circumspect lest they should check with his great

Design, but wisely manages them in subserviency to it. St. Paul, charges them that are rich in this World, to do good, to be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying in store for themselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal Life.

And the fixed aim at Heaven as our Felicity, will reconcile an afflicted state to us. When temporal Evils are effectual means to promote our everlasting Happiness, the amiableness and excellency of the End changes their Nature, and makes those Calamities that in themselves are intolerable, to become light and easy. The Poor, the Mourners, the Persecuted are blessed now, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle, though under variety of sharp troubles, yet expresses his sense with that mitigation, as but lightly touched with them: as sorrowful, but always rejoicing. From hence he tells us, that with unfainting courage he prosecuted his glorious End. For our light afflictions that are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of Glory. This seriously believed and considered, will make us understand the Harmony and Consent of the most discordant parts of God's Providence. This will reconcile the severity and roughness of his Hand, with the tender Compassions of his Heart towards his Servants. This will dry up Rivers of unprofitable Tears that flow from the afflicted, and make the Cross of Christ a light burden. For their heaviest Afflictions are not only consistent with his Love, but the Effects of it, being influential upon their Happiness. Whereas the prosperity of Fools shall slay them, and their good things here aggravate their Miseries hereafter.

4. The sincere choice of Heaven as our final Happiness, will make us aspire to the greatest height of Holiness we are capable of in the present state. For the End has always a powerful virtue to transform a Man into its likeness: and Heaven is a state of perfect conformity to the Holy God. This difference is observable between the Understanding and the Will in their Operations: The Understanding in forming Conceptions of things, draws the Object to itself. The Will is drawn by the Object it chooses, and is always fashioning and

framing the Soul into an entire conformity to it. Thus carnal Objects when propounded as the End of a Man, secretly imprint on him their likeness, his Thoughts, Affections, and whole Conversation is carnal. As the Psalmist speaks of the Worshippers of Idols, they that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusteth in them: whatever we adore and esteem, we are changed into its Image. Idolaters are as stupid and senseless, as the Idols to which they pay Homage. Thus when God is chosen as our supreme Good and last End, by conversing with him the Image of his glorious Holiness is derived on the Soul, and it becomes Godly: the Heart is drawn by his attractive excellencies, and the Life directed to him. This being a point of great importance, I shall further prove and illustrate it. There is no deliberating about the degrees of that which is loved for itself as our End. More or less may respect the Means that are valued and used to obtain it, but the love of the End is vast and unlimited. A Physician endeavors to recover his Patient to sound and perfect Health, that being the End of his Art. He that seeks for Honor or Riches, is not content with a mediocrity of Success, but drives on his Affairs to the full period of his Desires. An ardent Lover of Learning with a noble jealousy strives to excel others in Knowledge. In short, no Man designs and longs for a thing as his Happiness, but will use all diligence to gain the present and full Possession of it. Therefore it cannot be imagined that any Person sincerely propounds the enjoyment of Heaven as his End, but Love will make him fervent and industrious to be as Heavenly as is possible here. He will strive by blessed and glorious Gradations to ascend to the perfection of his aims and desires, to be holy as God is holy in all manner of Conversation, to be pure as Christ is pure. We have an admirable instance of this in St Paul who declares, Brethren, I count not myself, to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. His Progress was great, yet that did not make him slack in the prosecution of his End. He labored to attain the Presence of our Savior, to feel the Power of his Death and Life, to apprehend Christ entirely and perfectly as Christ had apprehended

him. He was very diligent to improve the Divine Image in his Heart and Life.

From hence we may discover the vanity of their Hopes, that are of luke-warm Affections in Religion, (the abhorred character of Laodicea) who esteem it a prudent Principle, as convenient for their carnal ease and interest, not to be earnest in following Holiness. Vices in mediocrity are tolerable with them, only the excess is condemned. They content themselves with a mediocrity in Religion, and are presumptuous and secure, as the Church that said, I am rich, and have need of nothing. They boast as if they had found out the temperate Region between the burning Line and the frozen Pole. They account all that is above their degrees in Religion, to be furious or indiscreet Zeal, and all below to be dead, cold Profaneness. They censure those for Hypocrisy or unnecessary Strictness, who are visibly better, and stand upon proud comparisons with those who are visibly worse. And thus set off themselves by taxing others. But how easily do Men deceive and damn themselves? Can we have too much of Heaven upon the Earth? Can we become too like God, when a perfect conformity to him is our Duty and Felicity? Indeed Moral Virtue consists in a Mediocrity, not of the habitual Quality, but of the Affections and Actions between the vicious extremities. Fortitude consists in the mean between Cowardice, and rash Boldness, but how much the more confirmed the courageous Habit is, so much the more a Man excels in that Virtue. Liberality consists between an indiscreet Profuseness, and sordid Avarice. Patience between a soft Delicacy, and stupid Insensibility. Thus Philosophic Virtue glories in its Beauty as pure and entire, between two vicious Deformities. And the Religion of many is Paganism dressed up in a Christian Fashion. But this mediocrity only belongs to inferior Virtues, that respect things of created limited goodness, and is determined according to the worth of their Nature. But divine Graces respect an object supremely Good, and their perfection consists in their most excellent degrees, and the most intense Affections and Operations that are leading to it. Faith in its Obedience, Hope in its Assurance, Love in its Ardor can never exceed. When the Object is Infinite, a mediocrity

is vicious. Humility can never descend too low, nor Love ascend too high: for reflecting upon our natural and moral Imperfections, that we were raised from nothing, that we are defiled and debased with Sin, we cannot have too low thoughts of our selves. And since God the Sovereign Being, infinite in Perfections, and infinitely amiable is the Object, no bounds or measure must be set to our Affections, but with all our united Powers, all the Heart, and with all the Soul, and with all the Mind, and with all the Strength, we must love him, and please him, and endeavor to be beloved of him.

There are others will acknowledge their defects, and tell you they do not pretend to eminent Sanctity, to the Graces of the Apostles and Martyrs, nor aspire to their degrees in Glory, they are content with a lower place in Heaven, and less strict Religion is sufficient for their purpose. This deceit is strengthened by Popery, that enervates and dissolves many of our Savior's Precepts, by teaching they are not Laws obliging all Christians to Obedience, that will attain to eternal Life, but Counsels of Perfection: if they are not done 'tis no Sin, and the performance of them meritoriously entitles to a richer Crown. And though Men by impure Indulgencies please their sensual Affections, yet by tasting Purgatory in the way, they may come to Heaven on easier terms than a universal respect to God's Commands, and an equal care to observe them. But Death will confute all these feeble wretched Pretenses, for though the Saints above shine with an unequal brightness, as the Stars differ in Glory: yet none are there but Saints. And those who do not mourn under their Imperfections, and unfeignedly desire and endeavor to be better were never really good. The slothful Servant that did not waste but neglect to improve his Talent, was cast into outer darkness. There are different degrees of punishments in Hell, but the least miserable there are miserable for ever. In short 'tis a perfect contradiction, a Prodigy, for any Man to think he is sincere in his Choice, and prepared in his Affections for the pure glorious Felicity in Heaven, that does not labor to cleanse himself from all pollutions of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of God.

CHAPTER V.

The Choice of Heaven must be early.

The Pretenses of Men's delaying Repentance. The infinite danger of it.

Secondly. The choice of Eternal Felicity must be early in the prime of our days. The rule of our Duty, and Reason binds us to remember our Creator in our Youth, to pay to him the first fruits of our Time and Strength. When we are surrounded with enticing Objects, and the Sense are entire and most capable to enjoy them, when the electing Powers are in their vigor, then 'tis just we should live to God, obey him as our Law-giver and prefer the fruition of him in Heaven, the reward of Obedience, before as the pleasures of Vanity. 'It is very honorable and pleasing to God to give the Heart to him, when the Flesh and the World strongly solicit to withdraw it. 'It is a high endearment of the Son to him, when his excellencies are prevalent in the Esteem and Affections above all the charms of the Creatures. And 'tis an unspeakable satisfaction to the Spirit of a Man, to declare the Truth and Strength of his love to God, by despising all Temptations when they are most inviting, and he is most receptive of them. But alas! How many neglect their Duty and defer their Happiness? They think it too soon to live for Heaven before the evil days come wherein they shall have no Pleasure, when they cannot Sin, and fondly presume they can Repent. The infinite danger of this I will briefly lay open.

The Devil is a Sophister in perfection, and his ordinary and successful Artifice to elude the force of present conviction, and wrap Men in Sin and Damnation, is to induce them to delay the great work of the Soul till afterwards. He is not so foolish to tell them as he did our first Parents, ye shall not die, for the Temptation is so palpable that it could deceive none. Though the evidence and certainty of

supernatural Truths that disturb the security of Sinners is sometimes obscured by affected doubts, yet there is no artifice that can resist the full and strong conviction in Mankind, That Death is inevitable. Though Nature recoils from it with abhorrence, yet this sad Truth is so visible that it forces an assent from all. Those who are titular God's are not so vain as to pretend to an exemption by privilege from that fatal necessity, not to fancy that they may be embalmed alive, and Nature made incorruptible by Art. The Palace is as near the Grave as the Cottage. Therefore the Devil cherishes in Men fond hopes of long Life. As some Optic Glasses deceive the sight, and make a superficial representation in Colors on a Wall but two or three steps distance, appear a long deep Gallery. Thus the Tempter by a dangerous artifice presents to the imagination the fatal term at a great distance, and since he cannot weaken the certainty of Death in Men's Belief, he removes the Image of it out of their Memories, to lessen the impression that it is capable to make on their Spirits. They dare not venture to die as they live careless of Salvation, and unprepared for their accounts with God; therefore to suspend the workings of Conscience by a seeming compliance, the Tempter insinuates, there will be a long interval between the present time and the last hour, that shall decide their state forever, that it will be a convenient season to prepare for the other World when they have done with this, as if Repentance were best at last, when there are no Temptations, and therefore no danger of retracting it.

And the Heart of Man is a great Flatterer, very subtle to deceive and ruin him with vain resolutions of a devout retirement, and becoming seriously Religious hereafter, and thus by an easy permission he gratifies the present desires of the Flesh, and goes in a Circuit from one Vanity to another, till Death surprise the Presumer. 'It is very applicable to this purpose what is related of Alcaeus the Poet, who from every season of the Year took Arguments to give a new title to his intemperance. The Spring required liberal drinking in sign of Joy for the renovation of Nature; The Summer to temper the heat, and refresh our draught; 'Twas due to Autumn as dedicated to the Vintage; and Winter required it to expel the Cold, that would congeal

the Blood and Spirits. Thus he pleaded for the allowance of his Excess. And thus Men in the several Ages of Life, (which are correspondent to the seasons of the Year) have some Excuses to delay Repentance, and give some color to their contumacy in neglecting Salvation. The Vanity of Childhood, the Pleasures of Youth, the Business of Middle Age, the Infirmities of old Age are plausible pretenses to put off the seeking the Kingdom of Heaven and the Righteousness thereof. Now to excite us to a present choice and pursuit of eternal Happiness, Let us consider,

1. This Life is the only season allowed us for preparation in order to Immortality. As we improve or neglect it, we shall be forever. 'It is observed concerning the Straights where the Sea is but a few miles broad, yet from thence it pours itself into the vast Ocean that extends to both the Indies. So this Life that is confined within the straits of Time, issues itself into a boundless Eternity of Good or Evil. From a few years, well or ill spent here, tam immensa soeculorum vastitas panditur, Millions of Ages follow of Happiness or Misery. If Men now set their affections on things above, and earnestly seek them, they shall joyfully ascend to the Inheritance of the Saints in Light: for the preparation for Happiness is here, the perfection of it hereafter. But if they are carnally minded, and the main design of their lives be to enjoy the present World, when the parting hour is come, and Death shall make a separation between them and it, their Misery is irrecoverable as the Grave. Indeed if we had two lives in succession allowed us for trial, and having erred in our choice of Happiness in the first, might correct our error in a second Life, there were some pretense for security: but since immediately after Death a private judgment passes upon the Soul, without appeal to a more favorable Tribunal, since then the error is unpardonable forever, there is no stupidity equals the present neglect of Salvation.

2. Let us consider the desperate uncertainties upon which Men build their Hopes of a future Repentance and Divine Acceptance.

1. Men are flattered with the Presumption of long Life. But what is more uncertain? 'It is the Wisdom and Goodness of God to keep concealed in his own Counsels the time of our sojourning here; for if Men though liable to Death every hour, and therefore should be under a just fear lest it surprise them unprepared, yet against so strong a curb run with that exorbitant vehemence after the Vanities of the World, how much more licentious would they be, if secured from sudden Death? But none can promise to himself one day: Death comes not according to the order of Nature but the Divine Decree. How many in the flower of their Youth and Strength, thought themselves at as great a distance from Death as the East is from the West, when there was but a step between them and Death, between them and Hell. The Lamp suddenly expires by a blast of Wind, when there is plenty of Oil to feed it. The rich Man pleased himself with designs of sensual enjoyments for many Years, yet did not see the dawning of the next Morning. Thou Fool this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee: This Sentence is now pronounced in Heaven against thousands that are alive this day, conversant in the Vanities and Businesses of the World, Eating and Drinking, Playing and Trading, and all unconcerned as to Dying, yet shall breath their last before to Morrow, and their unwilling Souls be rent from the embraces of the Body. In various manners Men die suddenly from inward and outward causes. An Apoplexy, an Imposthume, a Flux of Rhume, stopping Respiration, kills the Body without any presaging signs of Death. As if the Roof and all the Chambers should fall within the House, whiles the Walls are standing. And how many unforeseen Accidents, and therefore inevitable, put a sudden period to Life? Is it not then the truest Wisdom to be early in our work for Heaven, when the season is certainly short, and uncertainly continued, and the omission is irreparable? Therefore the Gospel represents the coming of our Judge under different images of surprisal; of a Thief, that by the favor of the Night breaks into the House; of a Master that returns from abroad unexpected, to call his Servants to an account: Of a Bridegroom that makes his Nuptial entrance, at an unthought of hour, when the wise and foolish Virgins were asleep, Conscience was slumbered in the Good and stupefied in the Bad, to keep us always

vigilant and prepared for that hour, that is the end of Time, and beginning of Eternity.

2. Suppose Life be continued, yet Sinners can have no rational hopes that they shall sincerely repent. For,

1. Saving Repentance is the Gift of God. And is it likely that those who have been insensible of the loud and earnest calls of the Word, that have been inflexible to the gracious methods of Providence leading them to repentance, should at last obtain converting Grace? The gales of the Spirit are very transient and blow where he pleases, and can it be expected that those who have willfully and often resisted his pure Motions, should by an exuberant Favor receive afterwards more powerful Grace to overrule their stubborn Wills and make them obedient? Our Savior tells us, To him that hath shall be given, but to him that neglects the improving spiritual Treasures, that which he hath shall be taken away. There are special seasons of Grace, as the passing of Christ in the way where the blind men sat, which neglected, are irrecoverably lost. God has threatened that his Spirit shall not always strive with rebellious Sinners, and then their state is remediless. This may be the case of many even in this Life who are insensible of their Misery. As Consumptive Persons decline by degrees, lose their Appetite, Color and Strength, till at last they are hopeless, so the withdrawing's of the Spirit are gradual, his motions are not so frequent nor strong, and upon the continued provocations of Sinners finally leaves them under that most fearful doom; He that is filthy let him be filthy still; He that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still, and thus punishes them on this side Hell, as he does the damned, by giving them over to Sin. Nothing therefore is more dangerous than the usual excuses for the delays of Repentance. 'It is written as with a Sun beam, that God will graciously pardon repenting Sinners, but 'tis nowhere promised, that he will give repentance to those who securely break his Laws upon a corrupt confidence they will repent at last. 'It is a bloody adventure to indulge their carnal Affections, as if they had infallible assurance,

the word of God confirmed by his Oath, that they should not die in an impenitent state.

2. Supposing the Holy Spirit be not totally withdrawn, yet by every days continuance in an evil course the Heart is more hardened against the impressions of Grace, and more incapable of returning to God. 'It is therefore the subtlety of the old Serpent to make the entrance of Sin easy, for he knows that after sometime it will plead a right by prescription, and with difficulty be ejected. Custom is a second Nature, and has a mighty power either in that which is good or evil. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, can the Leopard change his spots, then may you who are accustomed to do evil, do good. If Sin in its infancy can make such resistance that the Spirit of Grace is foiled in his Motions to rescue the Soul from its bondage, how much more when 'tis grown into a confirmed habit? Therefore the Apostle urges so emphatically, today, while it is called today, hear the voice of God, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.

3. How uncertain is it whether God will accept the Addresses of such at last? We are commanded to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. The limitation implies if the season be neglected, he will hide his Face forever. Now in cases of great moment and hazard what diligence, what caution should be used?

1. How derogatory is it to his Majesty to offer to him the dregs of our Age, the relics of a licentious careless Life spent in the works of Vanity? Is this to give Glory to God? Contempt provokes Superiors as much as actual Injuries. And how vilifying is it of his excellent Greatness, that Men lavishly waste the best of their time upon their Lusts and the World, and when through weakness of Age, or the violence of a Disease they can no more relish the pleasures of Sin, then only to seek his favor, and presume upon it, as if he could not be happy without them, and it were his interest to receive them. If ye offer the blind for a Sacrifice is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame

and the sick is it not evil? Offer it now to thy Governor, will he be pleased with thee to accept thy Person? Saith the Lord of Hosts.

2. Consider what Sincerity or moral Value is in Religion that merely proceeds from bitter constraint? 'It is a rule in Law, falsum est eam peperisse, cui mortuae Filius extractus est. 'It is not a natural Birth when the Child is extracted from the dead Mother. 'It is not Genuine Piety that is only extorted by the Rack, whilst the Heart full of aversion and reluctancy does not truly consent. Pure Religion flows uncompelled from love to God. 'It is the Dreggs that come forth with pressing. 'It is observed of the Israelites that when God slew them they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God. But 'tis added, Nevertheless they did flatter him with their Mouths, and they lied to him with their Tongues, for their Hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his Covenant.

When Sinners are plunged in deep distress, when the shadow of Death sits upon their Eye-lids, they may with plentiful effusions of Prayers and Tears desire God to receive them to Heaven, not to serve him there, not to enjoy the Divine Presence, but as a Sanctuary from revenging Justice, as a Refuge from Hell. And will such Desires prevail? What swells the Confidence of Sinners, but unworthy Notions of God, as if a forced and formal Expression to him were sufficient to reconcile his offended Majesty?

3. There is nothing renders Men more unworthy of Mercy than continuance in Sin upon presumption of an easy Pardon at last. This is the most common deceitful Principle upon which they build their Hopes, as their Actions that bear the image of their Minds clearly manifest. They think that God is so gracious, such a lover of Souls, so easy to be entreated, that upon their dying Prayer, Lord, remember me in thy Kingdom, the answer will be, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

Now this presumptuous Indulgence gives the deepest grain to their Sins, and makes them more incapable of Pardon. Chrysostom

observes that Judas was encouraged to betray his Master, presuming on his Lenity, Goodness and Benignity, which Consideration intolerably aggravated his Treason, and confounded his Hopes. There is a dreadful threatening against those who reject the invitations of Grace in their Prosperity, and when the righteous Judge comes to Sentence and Execution, are earnest Suppliants for Mercy. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hands, and no Man regarded: But ye have set at naught all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof: I will also laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your fear comes: when your fear comes as a Desolation, and your destruction as a Whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. A doleful case beyond all possible expression, when the sinful Creature, forsaken of all Comforts below, addresses to Heaven for Relief, and meets with Derision and Fury, Scorn and Indignation. The foolish Virgins careless to prepare for the Bridegrooms coming, in vain at last discovered their want of Oil, in vain solicited the wise Virgins for a supply, in vain knocked at the door crying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: the answer was severe and peremptory, I know you not, and they were forever excluded from Spiritual Joys.

3. I will add further how incongruous it is to delay the solemn work of Reconciliation with God till the time of Sickness. This is an affair wherein our transcendent interest is concerned, and should be performed in our most calm and sensible condition, when we are most capable of reflecting upon our ways, and making an exact trial of ourselves, and returning to God by a holy Change of our Lives. Now that the time of Sickness is not a convenient season for this Work, is sadly evident. For some Diseases are stupefying, and all the Powers of the Spirit are benumbed in a dull Captivity, so that the sick Man only perceives with his animal Faculties. Some Diseases are tormenting, and cause a great disorder in the Soul, and wholly distract the Thoughts from considering his spiritual State. When the Storm is at the highest, and the Pilot so sick that he can give no

Directions, the Ship is left to the fury of the Winds, and escapes by Maracle. When there is a Tempest in the humors of the Body, and the Soul by sympathy is so discomposed, that it cannot apply itself seriously to prepare for the Divine Tribunal, what danger of being lost, and passing from a short Agony to everlasting Pains? Besides, suppose the Sickness more tolerable, yet how unfit is a Person weak and languishing, when Sence and Conscience are both afflicted, to encounter with the cruel Enemy of Souls? All that truly seek Peace with God must expect fierce Anger and War from Satan; therefore 'tis a point of necessary Wisdom while we are possessed of Health and Strength, to be in a heavenly preparation against his Assaults.

4. Consider how uncomfortable it is to delay Repentance till Age and Sickness, when the Fruits of it are not so evident and acceptable. In evil days and the approaches of Death, 'tis very hard to discover the sincerity of the Heart, whether Repentance proceed from holy Principles, whether the sorrow then expressed be Godly for Sin, or merely natural for Punishment; whether the good resolutions be the effects of a permanent Fidelity, or of violent Fear, that will vanish, the cause being removed. When the invitations to Sin cease, there may remain a secret undiscerned love to it in the Heart, which is the center of Corruption, and root of Apostasy. The Snake that seemed dead in the cold, revived by the Fire. The inordinate Affection that seemed mortified, when the sensitive Faculties were disabled for carnal Enjoyments, may have inward Life, and will soon be active and vigorous in the presence of Temptations. And that a Death-bed Repentance is usually deceitful, appears from hence, that not one of a thousand who recover from dangerous Diseases, are faithful in performance of their most sacred Vows to God. How many having a Sentence of Death in themselves, and under the terrors of the Lord, have expressed the greatest detestation of their Lusts, and resolved (as they thought sincerely) that if God would spare them, to reform their ways, to become new refined Creatures, exemplary in all holy Conversation: yet the danger being over, their heats of devotion expire as they revive, and their lusts recover strength with their Bodies, and having been suppressed only by fear, are more fierce in

their return. Their Hearts were as Marbles that in rainy Weather seems dissolved into Water, but 'tis only from the moisture of the Air, and remain as hard as ever. All their promises of Reformation are ineffective, as violent and void. Now if these Persons had died before this visible trial and discovery, they had past into another World with the reputation of true Penitents, deceiving others with their Prayers and Tears, and liberal Promises, the outward signs of Repentance, and deceived themselves by the inward workings of an alarmed Conscience. Therefore Ministers ought to be very circumspect in applying the Promises of Mercy to Persons in such a state: for an error in that kind has fearful Consequences. A little opiate Divinity may quiet the Mind for a time, but the virtue of it will be soon spent, and the Presumer perishes forever.

But suppose a dying Person with true Tears and unfeigned persevering Affections returns to God, can he have a comfortable assurance of his Sincerity? Indeed the Searcher and Judge of Hearts will accept him, but how doubtful and wavering are his Hopes, what anxious Fears are in his Breast, lest he builds upon a sandy Foundation? And how dreadful is it to appear before the Tribunal of God, and expect an uncertain Sentence?

But Sinners still please themselves in this, That God has effectually called some at the last hour, and they may find the same favor with others. To this I answer.

1. 'It is true we have some rare admirable instances of God's Mercy and Grace; the dying Thief, and some others, which show 'tis possible with God to abolish the most vicious confirmed habits in a short time, and by a swift Conversion to prepare a Sinner for Heaven. But these Examples are not to be drawn into Consequence, for the encouragement of any in their Sins. A Prince will not endure that his free Favors should be made a Law to him, and the special Privilege of some be extended to all. As Thales said, an old Mariner that has escaped the various dangers of the Seas, was a new Miracle; so that one who has lived an obstinate Sinner dies a penitent Believer is very

rare and extraordinary. What our Savior said concerning the Salvation of rich Men, is justly applicable in this case, that it was as easy for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, as for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This so astonished the Apostles, that they cried, who then can be saved? To mitigate the difficulty, he remembers them of the Divine Omnipotence, All things are possible with God. Thus for one that has been fitting himself for Hell, and hardened in a constant course of Sin, to be at last suddenly prepared and received into the pure and glorious Society above, is possible, but possible only as Miracles are, by the efficacy of infinite Power, and we cannot reasonably expect such Miracles. And are Heaven and Hell such trivial things as to be left to an uncertainty? Are not Men concerned in another manner in the Affairs of the World? How careful to prevent the sentence of Death, of Imprisonment or Banishment? How diligent to obtain some temporal Advantage? Yet how neglectful in things of the highest importance? It may be, says the secure Wretch, God will give me Repentance at last as he did to others. Remember you speak of the Soul, and dare you hang the weight of an immortal Soul upon a naked possibility of receiving Grace. What reasonable Person would neglect a Disease that may prove deadly, and rely on extreme Remedies? And can you be guilty of such a cruel indifference, such a desperate carelessness, as to leave eternal Salvation or Damnation to a peradventure?

2. Consider how many thousands have died in their Sins that cherished fallacious hopes of repenting at last. Diagoras the Atheist that denied a governing Providence of things in this lower World, the Sphere of mutability, when one for his conviction showed him in the Temple of Neptune, many votive Tables, containing the grateful acknowledgments of those who by addresses to the God's in dangerous Storms, had arrived safe at their Port, and asked him Whether he had observed those numerous testimonies for divine Providence; he replied, I see them, but how many have invoked Neptune yet perished in the Ocean, and never came to pay their Vows for Deliverance. 'Twas impiety in him to argue so against God's

disposing Providence: but it may justly be said to those who neglect their present Duty, presuming upon some Examples of his Glorious Goodness in those who were converted and saved in their approaches to Death, how many have finally miscarried in shooting that Gulf, to one that has arrived safe at Heaven? How many when Sick, hope either by the vigor of Nature, or the virtue of Remedies to overcome their Disease, and never see Death till they feel it, and delay Repentance till their time is irrecoverably gone? How many are blinded with vain presumptions to the last, that God is reconciled to them? And a false Tranquility is more terrible than the storms of a troubled Spirit, for those who hope upon deceitful grounds are in the most hopeless state, neglecting what is requisite in order to Salvation. And thus innumerable pass in a cloud of Ignorance to the Kingdom of Darkness. And how many who have lived in a deluding Dream, sensual and secure, yet at the last when by some sharp affliction or the present fear of divine Judgment Conscience is awakened, and looks into the depth of their Guilt, fall into the other extreme and die despairing? The Devil makes his advantage of the timorous Conscience as well as of the Obdurate. Solitude is his Scene as well as the noisy Theatre, and by contrary ways, either presumption or despair brings Sinners to the same end. He changes his methods according to their Dispositions; the Tempter turns Accuser, and then such who had a dim-sight of Sin before, have an over quick sight of it, and are swallowed up in an abyss of Confusion. The condition of such is extremely miserable. 'It is observed of those who are bit with a mad Dog, that being tormented with thirst, yet so fearful of Water, that the sight of it sometimes causes sudden Convulsions and Death; their Cure is extreme difficult, if not impossible. This is a significant emblem of a despairing Soul. For when the enraged Conscience bites to the quick, the Sinner filled with estuations and terrors, ardently thirsts for Pardon, yet fearfully forsakes his own Mercies. Whatever is propounded to encourage Faith in the Divine Promises, he turns to justify his Infidelity. Represent to him the infinite Mercies of God, the invaluable Merits of Christ sufficient to redeem the lost World, it heightens his despair, because he has perversely abused those Mercies, and neglected those

Merits. The most precious Promises in the Gospel are killing terrors to him: as the sweet Title of Friend, wherewith our Savior received Judas when he betrayed him, was the most stinging reproach of his perfidious Villainy. Thus it appears how dangerous it is to delay our Repentance and Reconciliation with God till Sickness and a Death-Bed, when the remembrance or forgetfulness of Sin, the sense or security of Conscience may be equally destructive.

I would not from what has been said, discourage any who have lived in a course of Sin, from earnest seeking to God for his Mercy in their last hours. Even then they are not utterly destitute of hope. The Gospel sets forth the Mercy of God to returning Sinners in various forms, and expressions of incomparable Tenderness. When the lost Sheep was recovered, there was Joy, as if a Treasure had been found. The Prodigal had wasted his Estate in Lust and Luxury, and by a harsh reduction came to himself, reflected with shame upon his Folly and Rebellion, and the sense of his Misery (not a more ingenuous or noble principle at first) compelled him to go to his Father, to try what his Affection would do. And it was not a vain Presumption, for he found the effects of his compassionate Love. When he was a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his Neck and kissed him. And the Son said, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. But the Father said to his Servants, Bring out the best Robe, and put a Ring on his Finger, and Shoes on his Feet, and bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, let us eat and be merry: for this my Son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found. The design of Christ was to represent his heavenly Father in that Parable, and to wounded Spirits that feel the intolerable weight of Sin, the Mercy and mildness of the Gospel is to be shown. God is rich in Mercy to all that call upon him in Truth. But to tell Sinners who securely proceed in an habitual course of evil, that they may be saved at last, and notwithstanding their presumptuous repulses of God's calls to his Service, yet they may come into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, and be rewarded, is to give countenance and protection to Sin, and to harden them to Destruction. Poison is not cured by giving Food, but

Antidotes, that put Nature into a Passion till it be expel'd. The Terrors of the Lord can only prove medicinal to such depraved Souls.

To conclude this Discourse; Let us seriously consider the Revelation God has made of himself in the Gospel as a Father and a Judge: that Justice and Holiness, as well as Mercy, are essential to his Nature, that our Affections may be accordingly moved towards him. If ye call on the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear Presumption and Despair are very dishonorable to God, and pernicious to the Soul: the one destroys the Fear, the other the Love of God. But Hope contempered with fear hath an excellent influence in the Christian Life. As the Ballast and the Wind are both necessary that the Ship may go safely and regularly: without the Winds the Ship can make no way, and without Ballast 'tis in danger of oversetting by every gust. Thus Hope and Fear are very useful to bring us safely to Eternal Felicity. Fear without Hope stupefies the vigor and alacrity of the Soul, that it cannot come to God, and Hope without Fear makes it vain and careless of its Duty, and liable to be overthrown by every pleasing temptation. Briefly, let us rightly understand the tenor of Evangelical Promises of Pardon and Grace: they are conditional and applicable only to penitent Believers. And unfeigned Faith, the condition of our Justification, purifies the Heart, works by Love, and is the living Principle of universal Obedience. And Repentance unto Life is productive of all good Fruits in their Season. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, as a Man Sows so shall he Reap. He that sows to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption. He that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting.

CHAPTER VI.

Our Choice must be Constant. Perseverance in a holy Life absolutely required in order to attaining the Reward.

The various Temptations that assault Christians, to divert them from the pursuit of Heaven. The Reason why Perseverance is necessary. Cautions against Presumption, and a vicious dejection of Spirit.

I Shall proceed next to consider that our Choice must be firm and lasting, victorious over all Temptations.

The two principal Rules of the Spiritual Life are to begin and end well: to fix and establish the main design for Everlasting Happiness, and from a determinate Resolution and ratified purpose of Heart to pursue it with firmness and constancy: to live for Heaven, and with readiness and courage to die for it, if the Glory of God so require. Perseverance is indispensably necessary in all that will obtain the Eternal Reward.

For the clearing this most important Point, I will first represent from Scripture the Idea of Perseverance, that is attended with Salvation. Secondly, Confider why 'tis so strictly required.

I. Saving Perseverance includes the permanent residence of Grace in the Soul: 'It is composed of the whole Chain of Graces, the union of holy habits that are at first infused into a Christian by the sanctifying Spirit. When Eternal Life is promised to Faith, or Love, or Hope, 'tis upon supposal that those Graces being planted in the Heart shall finally prosper. He that is faithful to the Death, shall inherit the Crown of Life. 'It is Love that never fails that shall enter into Heaven. 'It is hope firm unto the end that shall be accomplished in a glorious Fruition. If Grace be diseased by a usurping Lust, Apostasy will follow, and the forfeiture of our right in the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. Grace must be continually drawn forth into exercise according to our several states and duties, and the various occasions that happen in our course through the World. Those who are light in the Lord are

commanded to walk as Children of the Light; to signify the excellency and purity of the Christian Life. Those who live in the Spirit must walk in the Spirit; that is, by a conspicuous course of Holiness declare the vigor and efficacy of the divine principle that is communicated to them. *Paulum sepultae distat inertiae celata virtus*: Virtue that breaks not forth into visible Actions is not worthy of the Name. The mere abstaining from evil is not sufficient, but all the positive acts of the holy Life are to be constantly done. In discharging both these parts of our Duty, complete Religion is expressed, and the power of Grace consists.

3. Perseverance includes not only continuance in well-doing, but fervor and progress towards Perfection. There are two fixed States, the one in Heaven, the other in Hell. The blessed Spirits above are arrived to the height of Holiness. The Devil and damned Spirits are sunk to the lowest extremity of Sin. But in the middle state here, Grace in the Saints is a rising growing Light, and Sin in the Wicked improves every day, like Poison in a Serpent that becomes more deadly by his Age. We are enjoined not to remain in our first Imperfections, but to follow Holiness to the utmost issue of our Lives, to its entire consummation. For this end all the dispensations of Providence must be improved whether prosperous or afflicting. And the Ordinances of the Gospel were appointed that in the use of them we may be changed into the divine Image from Glory to Glory.

4. Perseverance is required notwithstanding all Temptations that may allure or terrify us from our Duties; whatever affects us one way or other, while we are clothed with frail Flesh. 'It is the fundamental Principle of Christianity declared by our Savior, If any Man will come after me, that is, be my Disciple, and Servant, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me; even to be crucified with him, rather than willfully forfeit his Integrity and Loyalty to Christ. He must by a sacred fixed resolution divest himself of all things, even the most valued and desirable in the present World, and actually forsake them, nay entertain what is most distasteful, and resist unto Blood rather than desert his Duty.

1. He must with unfainting Patience continue in doing his Duty, notwithstanding all Miseries and Calamities, Losses, Disgraces, Torments or Death itself, which wicked Men, and greater Enemies, the Powers of Darkness, can inflict upon us. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for Glory, Honor and Immortality, Eternal Life is promised. He that endures to the End (notwithstanding the most terrible Sufferings to which he is exposed for Christ's sake) shall be saved. In this a Christian must be the express image of his Savior, who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross; despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. Disgrace and Pain are Evils that human Nature has a most tender sense of, yet the Son of God with a divine generosity and constancy endured them in the highest degrees. He was scorned as a feigned King, and a false Prophet. He suffered a bloody Death, and by the Cross ascended to Glory. And we must follow him, if we desire to be where he is.

2. But this is not the only trial of a Christian. Prosperity is a more dangerous Enemy to the Soul, though Adversity be more rigorous.

Saevior armis, Incumbit luxuria:

For the Spirit is excited by Perils and Difficulties to seek to God for Strength, and with vigilant resolute. Thoughts unites all its Powers to oppose them; but 'tis made weak and careless by what is grateful to the sensual Inclinations. It keeps close the Spiritual Armor in the open encounter of Dangers that threaten its ruin, but is enticed to put it off by the caresses and blandishments of the World. It does not see its Enemies under the disguise of a pleasant Temptation. Thus Sin insinuates its self, and by stealing steps gets into the Throne without observation. A Man is wounded with a pleasant Temptation as with the Plague, that flies in the dark, and Grace is insensibly weakened. From hence it is that Adversity often reforms the Vicious, and Prosperity corrupts the Virtuous. Now Perseverance must be of proof against Fire and Water, against whatever may terrify or allure us from our duty.

5. Saving Perseverance excludes not all Sins, but total Apostasy, and final impenitency, which are fatal and deadly under the New Covenant. If the Righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the wicked Man doth, shall he live? All his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his Trespass that he has trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned he shall die. If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him, saith the Lord. These Threatening's imply, there is a possibility of the Saints falling away considered in themselves, but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning Power of Sin. The Threatening's are intended to awaken their Care, and are Preservatives of them from Ruin, and have a singular Influence on their Perseverance. A vigilant and cautious Fear establishes the certainty of their Hope. Indeed from the Relics of weakness and corruption in the Saints, they sometimes actually fall into presumptuous Sins, and by rebellious relapses wound Conscience, and let out much of the vital Spirits, their Graces and Comforts. But though the divine Nature in them is miserably wasted by such Sins, yet 'tis not abolished. As after the Creation of Light, there was never pure and total Darkness in the World. Grace does not consist in a Point, but is capable of Degrees. The new Creature may decline in Beauty and Strength, yet Life remain. Between a lively and a dead Faith there may be a fainting Faith; as in St. Peter, for certainly our Savior was heard in his Prayer for him, that his Faith should not fail in his dreadful Temptation. The Saints do not by a particular fall extinguish the first living Principles of Obedience, Faith and Love; nor change their last end by an entire turning from God to the World. In short, a single act of Wickedness does not reduce them into a state of Unregeneracy: for 'tis not the matter of the Sin singly considered, but the disposition of the Sinner that denominates him. If Grace in the Saints should utterly perish, as some boldly assert, their recovery would be impossible. For the Apostle tells us, that if those who were enlightened, and had tasted of the Heavenly Gift, that had been under some common Workings and lower Operations of the Spirit, if such fall away universally, and live in a course of Sin

opposite to their former illuminations and resolutions, it is impossible to renew them by Repentance; how much more than if those who were truly sanctified by the holy Spirit, should entirely lose all those gracious habits planted in them in their Regeneration? But David, though guilty of Adultery and Murder, Sins of so foul a Nature as would dishonor Paganism itself, and made the Enemies of God to blaspheme, was restored by Repentance. The Gospel propounds a remedy not only for Sins committed before Conversion, but after it. If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. God does not revoke the Adoption, nor reverse the Justification of a Believer: but upon scandalous disorders, a Pardon is not granted with respect to the new contracted Guilt, till there be sincere and actual Repentance. He is not disinherited, but his right to the Kingdom of Heaven is eclipsed as to the comfortable sense of it, nay suspended, till by renovation he is qualified and made fit for the enjoyment of that pure Inheritance. For those Sins which are a just cause of excommunicating an Offender from the Church on Earth, would exclude him from the Kingdom of Heaven without Repentance. Our Savior tells us, what is bound on Earth is ratified in Heaven. And the Apostle expressly declares of those kinds of Sin for which Professors must be removed from the Communion of Saints here, that they are an exclusive bar from the Kingdom of Heaven. But I have written to you, not to keep Company, if any that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner: with such a one, no not to eat. And know ye not that the Vnrightheous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. If one that is truly a Child of God fall into any of these Sins, till by an extraordinary Repentance he is prepared for Pardon he cannot obtain it, nor have a comfortable hope of entering into Heaven. For only those who are justified are glorified. Indeed it is not imaginable where the Seed of God remains, the vital principle of Grace as it does in all that are born of God, but that notorious Sins that cannot be concealed from the view of

Conscience, will cause stings and sorrows proportionable to their malignity, and consequently a hatred and forsaking of them. Now Perseverance principally respects the end of our course. There may be interruptions in the way for a time, but if with renewed Zeal and Diligence we prosecute our blessed End we shall not fall short of it.

2. I come now to consider the second thing propounded, The reason why Perseverance is requisite in all that will obtain Eternal Life, and 'tis this, That their Sincerity may be discovered by constancy in Obedience under all Trials. Blessed is the Man that endures Temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. The Law required unsinning Obedience as the condition of Life, the Gospel accepts of Sincerity, but if that be wanting, there is no Promise that gives right to the Reward. Now Sincerity implies such an entire Love of God, as makes a Person submit to all Duties commanded in his Law, and all Trials appointed by his Providence. A high Example we have of this in Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his only Son Isaac, and by his own Hands, for a burnt Offering. This was to kill a double Sacrifice at one blow, for the Life of Abraham was bound up in Isaac: he lived in him more dearly than in himself; all his Joy, all his Posterity by Sarah had died in Isaac. What resentments, what resistance of Nature did he suffer? Yet presently he addressed himself to perform his Duty. Who ever saw a more glorious Victory over all the tender and powerful Passions of human Nature? O unexampled Obedience! Being an Original without any Precedent to imitate, and without a Copy to succeed it. After this clear infallible Testimony of his Sincerity, the Angel declared from Heaven, Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me. And 'tis said concerning the Followers of the Lamb that they loved not their Lives unto the Death. The Love of Christ that animated them in all their Sufferings, was sweeter than Life, and stronger than Death.

Indeed there was a wonderful difference in the Behavior of the Martyrs under Sufferings, but in all the same Persevering Grace was

evident, though working variously. Some in the most beautiful Flower of their Age encountered Fire and Sword, Tormentors and Torments, with that sensible Joy, with those Songs of Praise to Christ, as if they saw the Heavens open with St. Stephen, and their Savior ready to receive and crown them. But many others as Chrysostom testifies, went to the Tribunals, to the Theatres, to Death, with many Appearances of Fear. Upon hearing the wild Beasts roar, they were struck with horror, at the sight of the Executioners and the Instruments of Torment they were pale and trembling. The Flesh seemed to cry out, O let this Cup pass from me, yet weak and faint, it followed the Spirit, that corrected the natural desire, with not my will, but thine be done. As the Moon in Eclipse, though obscure, yet goes on in a regular course, as when 'tis full of Light by the reflection of the Sun: So those desolate Martyrs, though as it were forsaken, and deprived of the bright Beams of Comfort, yet persevered in their Profession of the Truth. When one word to renounce Christianity would have saved them, no Torments could force it from them, but they patiently endured all. Now in these the Combat of Nature was visible, and the admirable Power of Grace. They first overcame their own Fears, the reluctancy of the carnal part, their Affections to whatever is desirable in the World, which is the noblest Victory, and then the Cruelty of their Persecutors. In them was verified the Testimony of the Spirit, Here is the patience of the Saints, Here are they that keep the Command of God and the Faith of Jesus.

But how many appear faithful while their Faith is not to be showed by difficult Works, and proved by Sufferings. The Seed that fell on the stony Ground, sprang up as hopeful as the Seed in the good Ground at first; but when Tribulation came, it withered away wanting the Root of Sincerity. And that which was sown among Thorns, was choked by the Cares and Pleasures of the World. Some Lust in the Heart interweaves with the Affections and causes Apostasy. How many from glorious Beginnings have made a lamentable End? Not only Mercenaries in Religion, whose Zeal is a foreign Complexion, not springing from an inward Principle of Life

and Health, relinquish even the profession of Godliness, when their gain ceases, but some who have thought themselves sincere, yet in times of danger their resolutions like sick Feathers dropped away. As the foolish Builder that computed not the charges of his designed Work, began to raise a magnificent Structure, but unable to finish it, laid the Foundation in his own Shame. They repented their choice of Heaven, when they saw what it must cost them, and would save the World with the loss of their Souls.

Others that began in the Spirit, and with raised Affections set out in the ways of Godliness, yet by the allurements of sensual Lusts and Temptations, (and therefore with greater Guilt) leave their first Love, and end in the Flesh. They fall from high Professions, but received by soft Pleasures feel not the fall. These were never sincere, and never had a right to Heaven. They took up sudden Resolutions, not grounded in serious and deep Thoughts, and for a Flash were hot and active, but with great levity return to their former Lusts. The Apostle tells us of such, it had been better for them they had not known the way of Righteousness, than to turn back and voluntarily to forsake it. 'It is observed that boiling Water taken off from the Fire, congeals more strongly than that which was never heated: because the subtle parts being evaporated by the Fire, the more terrestrial parts remaining are more capable of Cold. So those who have felt the power of the Word in their Affections, and afterwards lose that holy heat, become more hardened in their Sins. God justly withdraws his Grace, and the evil Spirit that was expelled for a time returns with seven worse, and aggravates his Tyranny.

To conclude; Since the certainty of Salvation is conditional, if we persevere in a holy State, let us beware of a corrupt Confidence, and a vicious Dejection of Spirit, the trusting in ourselves, or distrusting God. To prevent the trusting in ourselves, Consider,

1. The most excellent Creatures are by the instability of Nature liable to defection, subject to a corruptive change. Of this the fallen Angels

are a dreadful Example, who of their own motion, untempted, sinned in Heaven.

2. The danger is greater of falling away, when they are urged and solicited by a violent or grateful Temptation. Thus our first Parents fell, and lost more Grace in an Hour, then can be recovered by their Posterity in all Ages to the end of the World.

3. When there is supervenient Corruption in the Creature, that inclines them with earnest propensity to forbidden Things, and takes Flame from every Spark, the danger is extreme. Like a besieged City that is in great hazard of taking, by Assaults from without and Conspiracies from within. Let us therefore be very watchful over our Hearts and Senses, and keep as much as is possible at a safe distance from Temptations. And be very diligent in the use of all holy means to confirm and fortify our resolutions for Heaven. God promised to Hezekiah 15 years, but not to preserve his Life by Miracle, he was obliged to repair the wasting's of Nature by daily Food, and to abstain from what was noxious and destructive to his Body. The Apostle excites Christians, to work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in them to will and to do of his good Pleasure. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall. None are a more easy Conquest to the Tempter then those who presume upon their own Strength. We should be always jealous of ourselves, from the sad Examples of Apostasy in every Age. St. Ambrose testifies from his own knowledge, that many after the courageous enduring of cruel Torments for Religion, the tearing open their Sides that their Bowels appeared, and the burning of some parts of their Bodies, yet when led forth to finish the Victory of Faith, to be a triumphant Spectacle to Angels and Men, when the blessed Rewarder was ready to put the Martyrs Crown on their Heads, at the sight of their mourning Wives and Children in the way, were overcome by Pity the weakest Affection, and failed in the last act of Christian Fortitude. We must pray to be strengthened with all Might, according to his glorious Power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. For some may vigorously resist one sort of

Temptation, and render themselves to others. And if finally vanquished by one of those Enemies we lose our Victory and Crown.

And as Presumption betrays the Soul into the Devils Snares, so a vicious dejection of Spirit from a distrust of Relief from God in our Difficulties, and his assistance with our unfeigned endeavors for Salvation is very pernicious. For this damps Industry, and causes either a total neglect, or uncomfortable use of Means for that End. Many Christians considering their Graces are weak, their Nature fickle and apt to revolt, are ready (as David said, One day I shall perish by the hand of Saul) to conclude sadly of the issue of their Condition. To encourage such let them consider, that Perseverance is not only a Condition, but a Privilege of the Covenant of Grace. For that affords supply of spiritual Strength to the sincere Believer for performing the condition it requires. Indeed if Grace were the mere product of Free Will, the most fervent Resolutions would vanish into a Lye, upon the Assault of an overpowering Temptation. As Hezekiah acknowledged, that the Assyrian Kings, had destroyed the God's of the Nations that were no God's, but Idols the work of Men's Hands. But sanctifying Grace is the effect of the Holy Spirit, and he that begins that good work in the Saints, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He that inclined them joyfully to choose the Spiritual Eternal Good, will bind their inconstant Hearts, that by a faithful adherence they shall cleave to their Duty and Felicity. God has most graciously declared, I will put my Spirit into their Hearts, that they shall never depart from me. The Promise is founded in the unchangeable Love of God to his People. Were God as Man subject to Variation, there might be Jealousies in Believers lest they should lose his good Will. As those who depend on Princes, are suspicious lest from the natural inconstancy of the human Will, a new Favorite should supplant them. But whom God loves he loves to the end. The Apostle prays for the Thessalonians, that God would preserve them blameless till unto the coming of Christ, by this Consideration, faithful is he that calleth you, he will do it. He speaks of the Internal Call, that opens the Heart and overpowers all Resistance. As when the Angel came with a Light shining in the Prison to St. Peter, and

struck him on the Side, bid him arise quickly loosed his Chains, and led him through the Guards, opened the Doors, and restored him to Liberty. The effectual calling of a Sinner, is the visible and infallible effect of electing Mercy, and God is unchangeable in his own purpose, and faithful to his Promises of bringing all such by Sanctification to Glory. The same Apostle tells the Saints at Corinth. That the Redeemer would confirm them to the End: God is faithful by whom ye are called. Grace that was at first inspired, is continually actuated by the Spirit, who is styled the earnest of the Saints Inheritance. So that whereas the Angels that excelled in Strength kept not their first State of Purity and Glory, but are sunk into Corruption and Misery, yet true humble Believers though weak, and encompassed with many Difficulties, shall be preserved from destructive Evil, and raised to an unchangeable Estate of Perfection. This is as truly admirable, as if the Stars should fall from Heaven, and Clods of Earth ascend and shine in the Firmament. The Apostle who acknowledged his insufficiency of himself to think a good Thought, yet triumphantly declares, I can do all things (within the compass of his Duty) through Christ that strengthens me. The Love, Fidelity and Power of God are a sure Fountain of Assistance to every Christian, that sincerely resolves and endeavors to prosecute his last and blessed End.

CHAPTER VII.

An Account how Men are induced to choose a false Happiness, and reject the true.

Directions for the regulating our Choice. The Senses and Passions are the worst Counselors. The Example of the multitude is contagious.

I Shall now come to the Directions how to fix our Choice aright.

This is a matter of everlasting Consequence, it therefore becomes us with the most intense application of Mind to consider it, and according to the advice of Wisdom, to keep the Heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of Life.

Indeed the choice were not difficult between lying Vanities and substantial Blessedness, if uncorrupted reason had the Superior sway: but in this lapsed state of Nature, the Understanding and Will are so depraved, that present things pleasing to sense, ravish the Heart into a Compliance. Men are deceived, not compelled into ruin: the subtle Seducer prevails by fair Temptations. This will be evident by reflecting upon the frame and composition of Man, as he consists of Spirit Soul and Body, and the manner of his acting. The Spirit is the intellective discerning Faculty, the Seat of Reason, capable to compare and judge of the qualities of things, and foresee their issues. The Body includes the lower Faculties, the Senses Fancy and Passions, that are conversant about present things. The Soul is the Will, the principle of Election, in the midst of the other, as the Centre to which all their Addresses flow. Now upon the proposal of the spiritual and carnal Good in order to Choice, the Will is to be directed by the Mind, and by its own Authority to rule the lower Passions. But alas! The Mind has lost its primitive Light and Purity, Vigilance and Integrity, neglects its Duty, and from Ignorance, Error and carnal Prejudices often pleads for the Flesh: and the Will, the rational Appetite, is voluntarily subordinate and enslaved by the Sensitive. From hence it is that in the competition, Heaven with all its Glory is despised, and the present World embraced. To open this more particularly, Consider.

1. The Senses can only taste and enjoy grosser dreggy Pleasures.
2. The Fancy that depends upon them in its Operations, and is guided by their report, conceives of Felicity only under the notion of sensitive Pleasure. We may illustrate this by the practice of Aretius a

Painter recorded with Infamy, who being often employed to Paint the Goddesses to be set in the Pagan Temples, always drew their Pictures by the Faces and Complexions of his Harlots, that the Objects of his impure Love might have Veneration and a Divinity attributed to them, under the Titles, and Pretense of Minerva, Juno, Diana, and the other Goddesses adored by the Heathens. This Impiety in an Idolater is resembled by Men, who fancy Happiness, (that is a spiritual divine Perfection enjoyed in the glorious Vision of God) to be a carnal Fruition, and having with sensible Colors and Lineaments represented it agreeable to their brutish Faculties, place it in their Hearts, and Sacrifice all their Thoughts Affections, and Service to it.

The Fancy is very powerful in Men upon a double account.

1. The Understanding naturally receives the notions of things by Phantasms that are still mixing in its Contemplations. While the Soul is confined to a Tabernacle of Flesh, it apprehends no Object without the precedent excitation of the Senses. From whence it is impossible, that a Person absolutely deprived of Sight from his Birth, should have an Idea of Light or Colors, or that is born deaf, should conceive what Sound is, the Sense never having imparted an account of it to them. And the Image of the Object is not immediately transmitted from the Sense to the Mind, but first to the Imagination, that prepares it for its view. And from hence the sensual Fancy is so predominant in swaying the Judgment, and inclining the Will. As those Counselors of state that have the Ear of the Prince, and are continually with him, by specious Information's, and disguising Truth, influence him to approve or reject Persons and Things according to the various Aspects given by them. The same Object propounded in a dark confused manner, weakly moves us, but varnished and beautified with lively and pleasant Colors by the Imagination, is armed with such Power that ravishes the esteem of the Mind, and consent of the Will. Now Celestial Happiness being purely Spiritual, such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, though some discoveries be made of it by Revelation, yet the Imagination makes such an

obscure detracting Idea of it, that it affects no more, than a dead shadow drawn in some imperfect Lines of an exquisite Beauty: but when the Fancy is warned and enlivened by the presence of sensible Objects, it makes a vigorous impression of them upon the Mind, and that represents the Pictures of Pleasure as very lovely and delightful to the Will, which presently embraces them.

2. The Fancy has a marvelous force upon the sensitive Appetite, that eagerly desires what is represented as pleasant, though the enlightened Mind sees through the Temptation, and knows 'tis a mere Dream that brings neither solid nor durable Joy. One in a Fever is pleased by imagining Fountains and Streams though he knows that imaginary Waters cannot quench his Thirst, nor afford the least real Refreshment. Now the sensitive Appetite being inflamed by the Fancy, imparts a contagious Fire to the Will, and that induces the Mind, either to concur with it, and palliate the deceit, and to judge favorably according to its Inclinations, or makes it slack or remiss in its Office, diverting the Thoughts from what might control the Appetite, or if the Understanding still contradicts yet 'tis in so cold and speculative a manner, that the Law of the Members rebels against the Superior Light, and is too strong for the Law of the Mind, and that Saying is verified,

Video meliora probóque, Deteriora sequor.

I see what is worthy to be chosen, but pursue what is to be abhorred. Thus miserably weak are the rational guiding Powers in Man since his Fall, thus imperious and violent the brutish Faculties. In short, illusion and concupiscence are the principal causes why the most noble and divine Good is undervalued and rejected in comparison of inferior transitory Vanities. O the cheap Damnation of beguiled Souls! A Mess of Pottage was more valuable to Esau, than the Birth-right that had annexed to it the Regal and Priestly Dignity. Unwise and unhappy Wretches! That follow lying Vanities, and forsake their own Mercies.

Thus I have briefly set down the process of men's foolish choice in this degenerate state. Now that we may with a free uncorrupted Judgment compare things in order to a wise choice of true Felicity, it follows from what has been said, that as the Apostle in obeying his Heavenly Commission, conferred not with Flesh and Blood; We must not in this matter of infinite importance, attend

1. To the suggestions and desires of the Senses and carnal Appetite, which are the worst Counselors, as being incapable of judging what is our proper Happiness, deceitful and importunate.

First, They are incapable of apprehending Spiritual Eternal Things, which alone bring fit and complete satisfaction to the Soul: and cannot look forward to the end of sinful Pleasures, and balance the terrible Evils they leave at parting, with the slight vanishing content that springs from their Presence. Therefore as blind Persons lay hold on things they feel, so the sensitive Faculties adhere to gross present enjoyment, not understanding the pure spotless Felicity that is to come, and despising what they do not understand. Now who would in an Affair upon which his All depends, advise with Children and Fools, whose Judgment of things is without Counsel, their Counsel without Discourse, their Discourse without Reason? There is nothing more contrary to the order of Nature, than for Men that should affect with Judgment, to judge by their Affections.

2. The carnal Appetite with its Lusts are very deceitful, a Party within holding correspondence with our Spiritual Enemies, the Armies of evil Angels, so active and assiduous in conspiring and accomplishing the Damnation of Men. The Devil in Scripture is called the Tempter by way of eminence, who manages and improves all Temptations, and his pernicious design is by the Objects of Sense ordered and made more alluring and killing by his various Arts, to engage the Affections into a compliance and so to gain the Will. Now our great danger is not so much from Satan the Enemy without, as from the carnal Appetite, the Traitor within, that gives him the first and easy entrance into the Soul. He can only entice by representing what is

amiable to Sense, but the corrupt Appetite inclines to the closing with it. He tempted Jesus Christ but was repelled with shame, having found nothing within him to work upon. The perfect regularity of Faculties in our Blessed Savior was not in the least disordered neither by his fairest Insinuations, or most furious Assaults. And we might preserve our innocence inviolable notwithstanding all his Attempts, did not some corrupt Affection cherished in our Bosoms lay us naked and open to his poisoned Darts. The Apostle Peter who had a Spiritual Eye, and discerned wherein the strength of our great Enemy lies, admonishes Christians, Dearly Beloved I beseech you, as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, that war against the Soul. And we are told by him, That the Corruption that is in the World, is through Lust. The outward Objects are useful and beneficial in their kind, the abuse of them is from Lust. The Poison is not in the Flower, but in the Spider. 'It is therefore infinitely dangerous to consult, or trust our carnal Faculties in this matter, for they are bribed and corrupted, and will commend temporal things to our choice.

3. The sensual Affections are so numerous and clamorous, so vehement and hasty, that if they are admitted to counsel and give the decisive Vote, the Voice of Conscience will not be heard or regarded. In concernments of a lower Nature, 'tis constantly seen, that nothing more disturbs Reason, and makes Men improvident and precipitant in their Determinations, than a disordered Passion. From hence, 'tis a prudent Rule, That as 'tis not fit to eat in the height of a Fever, because the Meat feeds the Disease, by increasing the feverish not the vital heat: so 'tis not good to deliberate in the heat of any Affection. For then the Thoughts strongly blow up the Passion, and smother Reason, and the Mind is rather a Party than a Judge: but after the declination of that Fever in the Soul, in a quiet interval, 'tis seasonable to consider. Now if any simple Passion when moved, transports and confounds the Mind, and makes it incapable of judging aright, much more the love of the World, an universal Passion that reigns in Men, and has so many swarming desires answerable to the variety of sensible things, and therefore is more

unruly, lasting and dangerous then any particular Passion. In short, sensual Affections captivate the Mind, and hinder its due considering the folly and obliquity of the carnal choice, and when incensed (as distracted Persons whose Strength grows with their Fury) violently break all the restraints the understanding can apply from reason and revelation.

2. In order to make a right choice, we must be very watchful lest the general Example of Men taint our Reason, and cause an immoderate esteem of temporal things. The whole World lies in Wickedness, in a sensual Sty, without Conscience of its Misery, or care of regaining its Happiness, deceived and pleased with shows of Felicity. The way to Hell is broad as the inclinations of the licentious Appetite, pleasant as the delights of Sense, so plain and easy that Men go to it blindfold, and so frequented that it would force Tears from any considering Person, to see Men so hasty to meet with Damnation. When Calisto the Harlot reproached Socrates that there were more followers of her Beauty than his Wisdom, the Philosopher replied, that was not strange, because it was much easier to draw them in the way of Pleasure, that is steep and slippery, than to constrain them to ascend to Virtue, seated on a Hill, where the ascent is slow, and with toil and difficulty. Now there is nothing more contagious than Example. We blindly consent with the Multitude, and are possessed with foolish Wonder, and carnal admiring of worldly Greatness, Treasures and Delights, neglecting to make a due estimation of things. 'It is the ordinary Artifice of the Devil to render temporal things more valuable and attractive to particular Persons, from the common practice of Men who greedily pursue them as their Happiness. As some crafty Merchants, by false reports raise the exchange, to advance the price of their own Wares. The Men of the World are under the direction of Sense, and think them only to be wise and happy that shine in Pomp, abound in Riches, and overflow in Pleasures. The Psalmist tells us of the prosperous Worldling, that while he lives, he blesses his Soul; and Men will praise thee when thou dost well to thyself. By vicious imitation our Judgments are more corrupted, and our Passions raised to higher degrees for

painted Vanities. The Affections in the pursuit of earthly things are inflamed by the contention of others. And when holy Desires and Resolutions spring up in Men, yet so powerful is the custom of the World, that they often become ineffectual. As a Ship whose Sails are filled with a fair Wind, but makes no way, stopped by the force of the Current. Now to fortify us against the pernicious influence of Example, Consider,

1. 'It is most unreasonable in this Affair of so vast moment to be under the direction of the Multitude. For the most are sottish and sensual, governed by the uncertain motions of a giddy voluble Fancy, and roving impetuous Passions, so that to be led by their example, and disregard the solid immortal rules of heavenly Wisdom, is as perfect madness as for one to follow a herd of Swine through the Mire, and leave a clean Path that lies before him. If there were but few in an Age or Country, that were deluded with false Appearances, it would be a disgrace to imitate the practice of the Foolish: and shall the great numbers of the Earthly-minded give Reputation and Credit to their Error. He were a strange Fool indeed, that should refuse a single piece of counterfeit Money, and receive a great heap in payment, as if the number added a real value to them. 'It is therefore a necessary point of Wisdom to devest all vulgar Prejudices, to separate ourselves from the Multitude, that we may see the vanity of things that dazzle inferior Minds.

2. Consider the universal judgment even of the worldly Men in their last and serious Hours, when the Prospect of Eternal Things is open before them. How vastly different are their Apprehensions of temporal Things in the review, from what they were in their vicious Desires? How often do they break forth in the sorrowful Words of the Apostle, We have been toiling all Night and caught nothing? When there are but a few remaining Sands in the Glass of Time, and Death shakes the Glass before them, how powerfully do they preach of the emptiness and uncertainty of things below, and sigh out in Solomon's phrase, All is Vanity? And this is more singularly observable in those who have had the fullest enjoyment of earthly

things. How do they complain of the vain World, and their vainer Hearts, when Experience has convinced them of their woeful Folly? Solomon who was among other Princes, as the Sun in the midst of the Planets, that obscures them by his illustrious Brightness, He that had surveyed this Continent of Vanity, to make an Experiment whether any satisfaction could be found in it, at last sadly declares, that all things here below are but several kinds and ranks of Vanities, as ineffectual to make Men happy, as counterfeit Jewels of several Colors are to enrich the Possessor. Nay they are not only Vanity, but Vexation, an empty show that has nothing real, but the vexation of disappointment. And shall we not value the judgment of Men when they are best instructed, and give credit to their Testimony when they are sincere? Certainly in their Approaches to the Divine Judgment they are most considerate and serious, they have the truest and justest thoughts of Things, and most freely declare them. O the astonishing Folly of Men! They will not be convinced of the error of their ways, till they come to the end of them, and the Sun is set, and no time remains for their returning into the way of Life.

CHAPTER VIII.

The steadfast belief of Eternal Things requisite to direct our Choice.

The power of Faith illustrated. Infidelity, total or partial, the cause of Men's neglecting Eternal Salvation.

I Shall proceed to show further what is necessary to direct us in our choice, that we may not fall into the double Misery, of being deceived with a false Happiness for a little time, and deprived of true Happiness forever. Three things are requisite for this.

1. A sound and steadfast belief of unseen Eternal Things.

2. Serious Consideration of the vast difference between things that are the objects of Sight, and that are the objects of Faith.

3. Humble and ardent Prayer to God, that he would turn away our Eyes and Hearts from Vanity, to the solid durable Good.

First, the sound and steadfast belief of Eternal Things is requisite to direct our choice aright. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It assures us of their reality and worth as if they were before our Eyes, and in our actual Possession. This Divine Light governs and conducts the Will to choose wisely, and excites all the practical Powers for the preventing the greatest Evils, and the obtaining perfect Felicity. When the Devil, the deadly Flatterer, by inviting representations of the World entices the Heart, the serious belief of the future reward so glorious and eternal, disgraces the most splendid Temptations, and makes them ineffectual. This is the Victory that overcomes the World, even our Faith. If tempted to Lasciviousness by the allurements of an earthly Beauty, Faith represents the angelical luster of the Saints, when they shall come with the unspotted Lamb in his glorious appearance, and this unbinds the Charm, and makes the tempting Person an object not of Desire, but Aversation. If tempted with Honor to a sinful compliance, Faith represents so convincingly the Glory which all those who preserve their Conscience and Integrity inviolable, shall receive at the universal Judgment, in the presence of God, and the holy Angels, (as our Savior has promised, He that serves me, him will my Father honor) and the confusion wherein the most honorable Sinners shall then be covered, that with a generous disdain all secular honors will be despised. And it is as powerful to enervate the Temptation of temporal Profit. We read of Moses, that by Faith, when he was come to Years, (and therefore more capable to understand and enjoy what Felicity the brightest Honors and greatest Riches could afford) refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter; choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt: for he

had respect to the recompense of Reward. And all the Evils which a wicked World, inspired with rage from Satan, can threaten to fright us from our Duty, Poverty, Disgrace, Banishment, nay Torments and Death, those terribles visu formae, so heightened by the carnal Fancy, are easily overcome by a sincere and strong Believer. Thus some who were urged by such motives to renounce their Religion, told the Persecutors, that Life was not sweet to them if they might not live Christians, nor Death bitter if they must die for Christ. A lively firm persuasion of the excellence and eternity of the Reward, what miraculous effects would it produce? Nothing would be impossible within the compass of our Duty, either to do or suffer in order to a glorious Immortality. Faith has a celestial Power, a magnetic Virtue to draw up the Heart from the Earth, and fastens it to things above. It is not imaginable that a clear sighted Soul, that sees a Good infinitely great, should reject it for mean things to please the lower Desires. We may as probably imagine, that a skillful Jeweler would part with the richest Oriental Pearls, for Cherry Stones to play with Children.

From hence we may discover the true cause of the neglect of the great Salvation offered in the Gospel, the Word preached does not profit, not being mixed with Faith in them that hear it. It is astonishing to consider that Earth should contend with Heaven for our Affections, and prevail against it; that Vanity should turn the Scale against the exceeding and eternal weight of Glory; that Men should pursue fleeting Shadows, and neglect the most excellent Realities, as if they could be happy here, and continue forever, and hereafter there were neither Happiness nor Eternity. But this releases the wonder, that all Men have not Faith. Eternal Things are not of conspicuous moment in the carnal Ballance. Some are Infidels in Profession, openly declaring themselves to be without Religion, without God, and have the same credit of the Heaven and Hell discovered in the Gospel, as of the Elysian Fields, and Stygian Lake, the Fables of the Poets. These live as if they should never die, and die as if they should never live in the other World, as if Death caused so deep a sleep, that the Voice of the Son of God could not awaken them

at the last day. Their unbelief is not from reason, but vicious opposite Affections; for the truth of the Eternal State is so clearly revealed, and strongly established in the Gospel, that the sincere Mind must readily assent to it. But the Wicked cannot delight in the discovery of that for which they are unprepared, and therefore try all ways to elude the force of the most satisfying Arguments. They do not fear Hell, but are afraid they should be fearful of it. This is such a piece of Folly as that of the West Indians, who at the first Invasion by the Spaniards, were so terrified with the glittering of their Swords that they presently fled, and very advisedly resolved to hide themselves in the day, and assault their Enemies in the night. They were fearful to see their Danger, and rash to encounter it, and fighting in the dark were killed in the dark. The Threatening's of Eternal Death are the brandishing's of God's glittering Sword before he strikes, and sensual Infidels are afraid lest the belief of those terrible Truths should enter into their Breasts; therefore are utterly careless of what may convince them of their danger, and will not foresee what they shall certainly suffer. This is obstinate, and the most incurable Infidelity. An instance whereof we have in the Pharisees, who rejected our Savior. Though all the Characters of the Messiah were conspicuous in his Person, though his Doctrines were confirmed by Miracles, yet they would not yield up themselves to that omnipotent conviction, so strong were their carnal prejudices against his humble State, and holy Doctrines. That reproach is more justly due to Infidels under the Gospel, than to Israel in the Prophet: Who is blind as my Servant? The Heathens who are blind from their Birth, and have only some glimmering apprehensions that Eternity succeeds Time, are less culpable than those who have infinitely more reason to believe it, and yet believe it less. The Plea for them will be a terrible Accusation against such Unbelievers. If a blind Person falls, it moves compassion; but if one voluntarily shuts his Eyes against the Sun, and refuses the direction of the Light, and falls from a Precipice, his Ruin is the just consequence of his Folly. Simple Ignorance excuses as to the degrees of the Fault, but affected willful Ignorance, now Reason and Revelation with united Beams give so clear a prospect into the Eternal World, aggravates the Guilt, and Sentence of such

Unbelievers. 'It is in vain to offer Arguments to convince them; for they are as deaf as Adders to the wisest Instructions, till Sense extort a belief from them. They have hardened their Hearts and Faces against all Reproofs, and by an open contempt of Scripture-Threatening's, are past reclaiming. There are many degrees of Sins, many steps in the descent to Hell, but the lowest and nearest the Gates of that infernal Prison, is the scornful derision of God's terrible preparations for the Wicked hereafter.

Besides, the most who are Believers in Title, are Infidels in Heart. Our Savior tells the Jews, who pretended the highest Veneration to the Writings of Moses, That if they had believed Moses, they would have believed him; for Moses wrote of him. If Men did seriously believe such an excellent Reward, as the Gospel propounds, would it be a cold unpersuasive motive to them? The depravation of the Will argues a correspondent defect in the Mind, though not absolute total Infidelity, yet such a weakness and wavering in the Assent, that when Temptations are present and urgent, and it comes to actual choice, Sense prevails over Faith. This will be clear by Universal Experience in temporal things. The probable hope of Gain, will make those who are greedy of Gold, prodigal of their Lives, and venture through tempestuous Seas to accomplish their Desires. And if the belief were equal, would not Men do or suffer as much for obtaining what is infinitely more valuable? A firm Assent would produce adherence, and Faith in the Promises, Fidelity in obeying the Commands of Christ. Tertullian propounds it as a powerful incentive to the Martyrs, *Quis ergo non libentissime tantum pro vero habeat erogare, quantum alii pro falso?* Who would not joyfully sacrifice Life and all its endearments, to obtain true Blessedness, which others do for the vain Appearance of it? On the contrary, the fear of a present destructive Evil will control the most eager Appetites. 'It is recorded that when the Army of Israel were in pursuit of the Philistines, Saul to complete his Victory, forbid upon pain of Death that any should taste Food till the Sun was down. In the chase of their Enemies, they passed through a Wood abounding with Honey, yet notwithstanding their Hunger and Faintness, and the easy Provision before them, no

Man so much as tasted it; for the People feared the King's Oath. And did Men truly believe and fear the Law of God threatening Hell for Sin, would they dare to commit it, though invited by pleasant Temptations? Nay not only a strong fear, but the mere suspicion of great danger will restrain the most vehement desires of Nature. What Person though inflamed with Thirst, would drink a Glass of cool Liquor if he suspected that deadly Poison were mixed with it? And if Men were persuaded that Sin is attended with Death, would they drink in Iniquity like Water? The Devils themselves are not able to conquer the Fear of Judgment to come, they believe and tremble. Therefore when it is not active upon the Conscience, it is either because Men do not believe the thing itself, or that Holiness is necessary to prepare for it. Indeed even in true Believers the apprehension of Eternal Things has such great allays, that temporal things are over-valued and over-feared. A strong Faith in the Truth and Power of God, would make the glorious World so sure and near in our Thoughts, that with indifferent Affections we should receive good or evil things here, rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and mourn as if we mourned not. Our Lives would be so regular and pure, as if the Judge were to come the next hour, as if the Sun did now begin to be darkened, and the Trumpet of the Arch-angel were sounding, and the noise of the dissolving World were universally heard. Infidelity dead's the Impression, and suppresses the reigning Power of Eternal Things in our Hearts. In short, Men are heavenly or earthly in their Choice and Conversation, as they are directed by the sincere Light of Faith, or misled by the false beams of Sense.

CHAPTER IX.

Consideration is requisite in order to a wise Choice.

How it must be managed that it may be effectual. It must be serious, frequent, and with application to the Soul. Motives to it. The true Causes why Carnal Men are averse from it.

The second thing requisite in order to a wise Choice is Consideration. For as by Faith the virtue of the Reward is diffused through all the Faculties, and the Powers of the World to come are felt in the Soul; so, by consideration, Faith is exercised and becomes effectual. This unites and reinforces the beams of Eternal Truth, and inflames the Affections. As the Psalmist expresses himself, My Heart was hot within me while I was musing, the Fire burned. Heaven is a Felicity so glorious and attractive, that if duly considered, no Man can possibly refuse it: and Hell is a Misery so extreme and fearful, that if seriously laid to Heart, none can possibly choose it. The last End is to be conceived under the notion of an infinite Good, without the least mixture of Evil, to which the human Will has a natural tendency. The liberty of indifference is with respect to some particular good Things, which may be variously represented, so as to cause inclination or aversion. That Men who believe Eternal Life is the Reward of Holiness, yet with a careless inadvertency pass over their Duty; and that Eternal Death is the Wages of Sin, yet securely continue in it, is more wonderful than to see Martyrs sing in the Flames, and the great cause of it is the neglect of Consideration. This is assigned to be the cause of that unnatural and astonishing Rebellion of Israel against God their Father and Sovereign: Hear O Heavens, and give Ear O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up Children and they have rebelled against me. The Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.

This Duty as it is of admirable Advantage, so 'tis universally necessary: for all are equally concerned, and it is within the power of all to perform. Though Men cannot convert themselves, yet they may consider what is preparatory to Conversion. For the Will may turn the Thoughts of the Mind to any sort of Objects.

I will briefly show the nature of this Duty, and how to manage it for spiritual profit, and those Objects from whence our Thoughts derive vigor for the swaying of the Will and the conduct of the Life.

1. The nature of Consideration is discovered by its end, which is this; that the Mind being satisfied in the just Reasons upon which the choice of Heaven is to be made, the Will and Affections may be engaged in an earnest joyful and constant pursuit of it. And in this respect it differs from simple Knowledge, and naked Speculation, that informs the Mind without influence and efficacy upon the Heart. Like a Garland of Flowers that adorns the Head without any benefit and refreshing to him that wears it. And practical meditation differs from the study of divine things in order to the instructing of others. That is like a Merchant's buying of Wine for Sale, this like providing it for our own use.

2. That the Consideration of Eternal Things may be effectual, it must be,

1. Serious and deliberate. For the Affair is great in reality above all possible conception or comparison. All other things, how considerable soever in themselves, yet respectively and in parallel with this, are of no account. Our Savior told Martha, One thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the better part, that shall not be taken from her. What Instance can be of equal moment with that of entertaining the Son of God? Yet a serious attention to the Words of Eternal Life dropping from his Lips, was more necessary than making Provision for him. The greatest and most weighty Affairs in the World are but a vain Employment, but irregularity and impertinence, in compare with Eternal Salvation. And the greatest solemnity of Thoughts is requisite, to undeceive the Mind, and engage the Will for Heaven. 'It is very observable that Errors in Judgment and Choice spring from the same causes, the not sincere and due weighing of Things. In the decisions of Questions, Truth is discovered by comparing, with an equal staid Attention, the Reasons of the one and the other part: but when some vicious Affection

contradicts the Truth, it fills the Mind with Prejudices, that it cannot impartially search into things, and is deceived with specious fallacies, with the image of Truth. For according to the present application of the Mind 'tis determined, and Passion strongly applies it to consider that which is for the carnal Interest, and consequently Inclination, not Reason, is the principle of the Persuasion. And this is more evident in Men's foolish Choice. As the Eye cannot see but what is visible, nor the Understanding conceive what is not Intelligible, the Will cannot love and choose what is not amiable at least in show. If the Devil did appear without a disguise, he would have no power to persuade, but in all his Temptations there is the mixture of a Lie to make it pleasant. He presents a false Perspective, to make what is but superficial appear solid and substantial. And the carnal Heart turns the Thoughts to what is grateful, without seriously considering what is infinitely better, and accordingly chooses by the Eye of Sense, the Happiness of this World. Therefore till Eternal Things are opened in the view of Conscience, and the Mind calmly considers by the Light of Faith their reality and greatness, no right valuation, nor wise choice can be made.

Besides, the most clear and rational enforcements by the acting's of the Thoughts, are necessary to make a strong impression on the Affections, and rescue them from the captivity of the Flesh. In other things as soon as the Mind is enlightened, the Will resolves, and the inferior Faculties obey; but such is the resistance of the carnal Heart, that although 'tis evident from infallible Principles there is an everlasting Glory, infinitely to be preferred above the little appearances of Beauty and Pleasure here, yet the most piercing reasons enter heavily without earnest inculcation. Slight or sudden Thoughts may produce vanishing Affections of complacence, or distaste, and fickle resolutions, that like sick Feathers drop away, and leave the Soul naked to the next Temptation; but solemn and fixed Thoughts are powerful on the Heart, in making a thorough and lasting Change. When the Clouds dissolve in a gentle Shower, the Earth drinks in all, and is made Fruitful; but a few sprinkling Drops, or a short storm of Rain, that wets only the Surface, without sinking

to the Root, is little beneficial. In short, there may be some excitations to Good, and retractions from Evil, some imperfect faint essays towards Heaven, from an impulse on the Mind; but solid Conversion is produced by deliberate Discourse, by the due consideration and estimation of things, 'tis rational and perpetual.

2. Consideration must be frequent to keep eternal Objects present, and powerful upon us. Such is the natural Levity and Inconstancy, Sloth and Carnality of the Mind, That the Notions of Heavenly Things quickly pass through, but of Earthly abide there. If a Stone be thrown upwards, it remains no longer in the Air, than the impression of the force by which it was thrown continues; but if it falls on the Earth, it rests there by Nature. When the Soul is raised in contemplation to Heaven, how apt is it to fall from that height, and lose the esteem, the lively Remembrance and Affections of Eternal Things? But when the Thoughts are excited by the presence of what is pleasing to Sense, the withdrawing the Object does not deface the Idea of it in the Memory, nor lessen the Conceit, nor cool the Desires of it, because the Heart is naturally inclined to it. Therefore 'tis necessary every day to refresh and renew the conceptions of eternal Things, that although they are not always in act, yet the efficacy may be always felt in the Heart and Life. The Soul habituated to such Thoughts will not easily yield to Temptations, that surprise and overcome others that are Strangers in their Minds to the other World: Nay the presence of Temptations, as by Antiperistasis, will reinforce the Resolutions for Heaven; like the pouring Water upon Lime, that revives a hidden Fire in it, which seems a natural Miracle. 'It is therefore of great advantage frequently to sequester ourselves from the World, to redeem Time from secular Affairs, for the recollecting of our Thoughts and their solemn exercise upon the Eternal World. Sense that reveals natural things, darkens spiritual. How can the Thoughts be fixed on invisible things so distant from Sense, if always conversant with secular Objects that draw them down? In the silence of the Night a small Voice is more distinctly heard, and a little distant Light more clearly seen: so when the Soul is withdrawn from the noisy throng of the World, and outward things

are darkened, the Voice of Conscience is better heard, and the Light of Heaven more perfectly received.

3. Consideration of Eternal Things must be with present Application to the Soul. 'It is not the mere conviction of the Mind, but the decree of the Will that turns Men from Sin to Holiness, from the Creatures to God. The Heart is very deceitful, and by variety of shifts and palliations is disposed to irresolution's and delays in spiritual Concernments. How often does the miserable Sinner contend with himself, and while Conscience urges him to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Affections draw down to the Earth, the carnal part prevailing over the rational, he overcomes, and is overcome, he is convinced and condemned by his own Mind. Till Consideration issues in this, that with settled Judgment and Affections the Soul determines for God and Heaven, 'tis without profit. Therefore in the managing this Duty, 'tis our Wisdom not to be curious and inquisitive after subtle Conceptions, and exalted Notions of the future State, that little confer to the making the Heart better, but to think seriously on what is plain and evident, and most useful to produce a present lasting Change. It were egregious Folly in a Man, that for the use of his Garden should with great labor fetch Water from distant Fountains, and neglect that which springs up in his own Ground. That Meditation is profitable which produces not new Thoughts, but holy and firm resolutions of obeying God in order to the full enjoying of him forever.

To persuade us to the serious practice of this Duty, there are many enforcements.

Is any Man so foolish, so regardless of his convenience, to purchase a House wherein he must live all his Days, and will not first see whether it will be convenient, and secure for his Habitation? Shall we not then consider Heaven the Mansion of Blessedness, and Hell the Seat of Misery and Horror? For according as we choose here, we shall be in the one or other place forever. I shall in a particular Chapter endeavor to represent something of the inexpressible Misery

of the Wicked hereafter, and show how congruous and powerful the Thoughts of it are to restrain Men from Sin, but at present shall briefly excite to the Meditation of the Heavenly Glory, as the most noble, delightful and fruitful work of the Soul, whiles confined to the Body of Flesh. 'It is the most exalted exercise of the Mind, the purest converse with God, the Flower of consecrated Reason. 'It is most like the Life of glorified Spirits above, who are in continual contemplation of the Divine Excellencies, and 'tis most raised above the Life of carnal Men, that are sunk into sensuality and brutishness. 'It is the most joyful Life, in that it sheds abroad in the Soul delights that neither satiate, nor corrupt, nor weaken the Faculties, as the delights of Sense do, but afford perfection as well as pleasure. 'It is the most profitable Life. As in those parts of the Earth where the beams of the Sun are strongly reflected, precious Metals and Jewels are produced, wherein the refulgent resemblance of that bright Planet appears: so the lively and vigorous exercise of the Thoughts upon the heavenly Glory, will produce Heavenly Affections, heavenly Discourses, and a heavenly shining Conversation. This will make us live like the blessed Society above, imitating their Innocence and Purity, their joyful, entire and constant Obedience to God. This confirms the holy Soul in its Choice, with an invincible efficacy against the Temptations and Lusts of the World. The serious considering Believer is filled with ravishing Wonder of the Glory that shall be revealed, and looks down with Contempt upon the Earth, and all that has the Name of Felicity here. All the Invitations, nay Terrors of the World, are as unable to check his pursuit of his blessed End, as the Breath of an Infant to stop the high flight of an Eagle.

But how rare and disused a Duty is this? How hardly are Men induced to set about it? Business and Pleasures are powerful Diversions. Some pretend Business as a just cause, but in vain; for the one thing necessary challenges our principal Thoughts and Care. Besides, there are intervals of Leisure, and the Thoughts are always streaming, and often run waste, which directed aright, would be very fruitful to the Soul. The true cause of this neglect is from the inward temper of Men. Carnal Pleasures alienate the Mind, and make it unfit

for the deep serious acting's of the Thoughts upon Eternal Things. I have said of Laughter, thou art mad, it makes the Mind light and vain and desultory. As a distracted Person by every motion of Fancy flies from one thing to another without coherence. The Heart filled with cloudy Cares, and smoky Fires, with Thoughts and Desires about worldly Things, is unprepared for such a clear, calm and sedate Work. A Carnal Person can taste no sweetness, feel no relish in the Meditation of Heaven, nor any spiritual Duty. 'It is as if one should take some delicious Fruit into his Mouth, a Peach or the like, without breaking the Skin; it would be rather a trouble, than pleasant. Nay the Gospel expressly declaring, that without Holiness no Man shall see God; those who by vicious Affections are engaged in any sinful way, being conscious of their guilt and unpreparedness, and that while such, they are under a peremptory exclusion from celestial Glory, cannot endure the thoughts of Heaven. The Divine Presence is their Torment, and the serious Consideration of it, is to bring them before God's holy and just Tribunal, to accuse and condemn them.

CHAPTER X.

The Objects of Consideration specified.

The End of Man's Creation considered. The Things of the World and Heaven that solicit our Choice, considered in their Quality and Duration.

I Shall next proceed to a more particular view of those Objects, from whence Consideration derives vigor, for the inclining of the Will to a right Choice, and for regulating the Life.

1. Consider the End for which Man was designed in his Creation, why endued with rational and noble Powers of Soul, and placed by the

Sovereign Maker in the highest rank of so numerous and various Natures that fill the Universe. Is it to raise an Estate, to shine in Pomp, to enjoy sensual Pleasures for a little while, and after the fatal term to be no more forever? Was he sent into the World upon as mean a Business as that of the foolish Emperor, who employed an Army, furnished with all Military Preparations, to gather Shells upon the Sea-shore? This were, according to the passionate expostulation of the Psalmist, to charge God that he had made all Men in vain. Reason and Scripture tells us the End of Man is to glorify and enjoy God, the obtaining whereof makes him perfectly happy, and the missing of it perfectly miserable. This is a fundamental Truth, upon which the whole Fabric of Mans Duty and Felicity is built. Without this Foundation, our Faith presently sinks. If the clearness of this principle be obscured, we shall wander from the way of Eternal Life, and not only lose the way, but the remembrance and desire of it. Thinking is the property of the reasonable Soul, and the just order of Consideration is, that the Mind primarily regards this supreme directive Truth that is to govern all our Actions. 'Twas prudent Counsel that one of the Ancients gave for composing a Book, that the Author frequently reflect upon the Title, that it may correspond in all the parts with his original Design. Thus it becomes a Man often to consider the End of his Being, that the course of his Life may have a direct tendency to it; and the more excellent our End is, the more constraining is the necessity to prosecute it. 'It is of great Efficacy to reflect upon ourselves, Whither do my Thoughts and Desires tend? For what do I spend my Strength and consume my Days? Will it be my last Account how much by my Prudence and Diligence I have exceeded others in temporal acquisitions? If a General were at play while the Armies are engaging, would it be a noble Exploit for him to win the Game, whiles his Army for want of conduct loses the Victory? Will it be profitable for a Man to gain the World, and lose his Soul? Let Conscience answer in Truth.

'It is observable what is reported of a noble Foreigner, that reflecting upon his Birth-day, and the Age of his Life, he was surprised with grief, and struck with Astonishment, that without a due Sence of the

proper Business and End of Life, he was arrived to that Age, when our Days begin to decline. In an instant all things seemed to change appearance in his view. Then first (says he) I perceived I was a Man, for before I had not resolved for what I should employ my Life. The issue was, his serious Resolution unfeignedly to honor God, sincerely to confess Christ, to place his Felicity in Holiness of Life, and most zealously to follow it. Let any one that is not of a reprobate Mind, and an incorrigibly depraved Heart, duly consider the sublime and supernatural End of Man. O what a marvelous change will it make in him, of Carnal into Spiritual? Nay it would be a kind of Miracle if he continued in his sinful State. How will it transform him into another Man, with new Valuations, new Affections and Resolutions, as if he were born again with a new Soul? How will it amaze him that his whole course has been a contradiction to the wise and gracious design of God, that all his Industry has been a race out of the way, a perpetual diversion from his main Business, that his Life has been fruitless and dead to the true End of it? How will he be confounded at his former Folly? Then alone we act with Understanding, when moved by our blessed End, and our Actions by a strict tendency without variation issue into it.

2. Consider attentively the Objects that stand in competition for our Choice, the present World and Heaven, to make a judicious comparison between them in their Quality and Duration.

First, in their Quality. The things of the World, according to the judgment of God himself, who is only Wise and Good, and has the highest Authority to decide in the case, are but fallacious appearances of Happiness, mere Vanity. And certainly the Creator knows the true worth of all things, and would not disparage his own Works, but would undeceive Men that are apt to judge and choose by the Eye of Sense. The Apostle tells us, that an Idol is nothing in the World; although the matter of it may be of Gold, or Marble, or Wood, yet it has no divine Perfection which the Idolater attributes to it. So all worldly things, in which Men place their chief Care and Confidence and Joy, though they have some degrees of Goodness,

and are a transient relief to us in our passage to Eternity, yet they are nothing as to perfect Felicity. 'It is merely Opinion and Conceit that makes them so valued and pleasing, like a rich Dye to a slight Stuff from whence its price arises. Reason is either obscured, or not obeyed, when the World is the Object of our Choice. Now what are these appearances of Beauty and Pleasure compared with a Blessedness that is truly infinite? Carnal Joy smiles in the Countenance, flatters the Fancy, touches the Sense, but cannot fill the Heart, but the Favor of God satisfies the Soul. Thou hast put Gladness into my Heart, more than when their Corn and Wine increased. Carnal Joy in its highest elevation in the time of the Harvest and Vintage, is incomparably less than Spiritual Joy that springs from the Light of God's Countenance. The World cannot fill the narrow capacity of our Senses, but divine Joys exceed our most enlarged comprehensive Faculties. The Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing; but the Peace of God passes all Understanding. The Things of the World are of a limited Goodness, Wisdom is not Strength, nor Learning Riches, nor Beauty Fruitfulness: But God is a Universal Good, in whom are all attractives to raise and satisfy our Desires. If Men did consider, they would distinguish and despise in comparison all that is named Felicity here, with the Favor of God. To seek for satisfaction in the Creature and forsake him, is as if one desirous to see the Light should withdraw from the presence of the Sun, to borrow it from a weak Ray reflected by some obscure matter. Now if there be so vast a difference in their Nature, as between a painted Vapor, and the solid glorious Good, between Finite and Infinite, why is there not a difference accordingly in our Esteem, Affections and Respects to them? How unreasonable is it that a Soul capable of God, should cleave to the Dust? It would be most egregious Folly to hang a Weight, that is able to turn a great Engine, upon a small Clock: 'tis incomparably more Foolish, when the love of Happiness, the Weight of Human Nature, which applied aright, will turn our Desires to Heaven, is only used to give vigorous motion to our endeavors about earthly things.

2. Consider their Duration. The Apostle tells us that the main scope of his actions was things invisible; and gives the reason of it, for the things that are seen are Temporal, and the things that are not seen are Eternal. To insist upon the vast difference between temporal and eternal may seem needless: for the first notions of things are of such uncontrollable Clearness, that an attempt to prove them, is to light a Candle to discover the Sun. Yet this principle drawing after it such powerful Consequences for the government of our Hearts and Lives, and Conscience being so remiss, and the sensual Affections so rebellious, 'tis needful to consider this seriously, that what is really assented to in Speculation, may not be contradicted in Practice. Now who can unfold the infinite volume of Ages in Eternity? The Understanding of an Angel can no more comprehend what is incomprehensible than the Mind of a Man. A Snail will pass over an immense space as soon as an Eagle: for though one dispatches more way than the other, yet both are equally distant from arriving to the end of what is endless. But that the conception of Eternity may be more distinct, and affecting, it is useful to represent it under some temporal resemblances, that sensibly though not fully express it. Suppose that the vast Ocean were distilled drop by drop, but so slowly that a thousand years should pass between every drop, how many Millions of years were required to empty it? Suppose this great World in its full compass from one Pole to another, and from the top of the Firmament to the bottom, were to be filled with the smallest Sand, but so slowly that every thousand years only a single Grain should be added, how many Millions would pass away before it were filled? If the immense Superficies of the Heavens, wherein are innumerable Starrs, the least of which equals the magnitude of the Earth, were filled with Figures of Numbers without the least vacant space, and every Figure signified a Million, what created Mind could tell their Number, much less their Value? Having these Thoughts, I reply; the Sea will be emptied drop by drop, the Universe filled grain by grain, the Numbers written in the Heavens will come to an end, and how much of Eternity is then spent? Nothing; for still infinitely more remains. In short, whatever is temporal, extend the continuance of it to the utmost possibility of conception, is infinitely

short of Eternity. A Day, an Hour, a Minute, has some proportion with a thousand years; for that duration is determined by a certain number of Days, and Hours, and Minutes: but Millions of Ages have no proportion to Eternity, because 'tis an indeterminable Duration. The Mind is soon tired and lost in searching after numbers to represent it: 'tis confounded and struck with amazing Horror, and can only direct the Eye upward or downward to the two Habitations of Eternity, the glorious and the miserable, Heaven and Hell. Now let us compare the Things of the present World with those of the future State. The first are measured by flying Time, the other remain in an immovable Eternity. The Comforts that spring from the Earth, suddenly wither and fall to it: the Tree of Life flourishes only above. Frequent changes from Prosperity to Adversity are the Properties of this mortal State. As those who are in Voyages at Sea, sometimes are in a calm and presently suffer a storm, and are forced to alter their course by the changing of the Winds. So 'tis with us in our passage here; but upon the first entrance into another World, all the variations of this are at an end. Verily every Man at his best estate is altogether Vanity. Surely every Man walks in a vain show, surely they are disquieted in vain. The visible Felicity of Man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the Evening, a Cloud by the reflection of the Sun invested with so bright a Luster, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of Colors, that in the judgment of our Eyes, if an Angel were to assume a Body correspondent to his Glory, it were a fit matter for it. But in walking a few Steps, the Sun is descended beneath the Horizon, and the Light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaming appearance, nothing remains but a dark Vapor, that falls down in a Shower. Thus vanishing is the show of Felicity here. In this, Sense assists Faith; for the Experience of every day verifies what the Scripture declares, that the fashion of this World passes away. And therefore the guilty folly of Men is aggravated, to set their Eyes and Hearts upon that which is not. To see one passionately dote on a Face ruined and deformed with Age, to be enchanted without a Charm, raises wonder, and exposes to contempt. Yet such is the stupidity of Men to embrace with their most entire Affections the withered Vanities of the World, that are

hastening to their period. 'Twas a stinging reproach to Idolaters from God, None considers in his Heart, neither is their Knowledge nor Understanding, to say, I have burnt part of it in the Fire, yea I have also baked Bread upon the Coals thereof, I have roasted Flesh and eaten it, and shall I make the residue an Abomination; shall I fall down to the stock of a Tree? And are not sensual Men equally guilty of such monstrous Folly? For though universal Experience convince them, that all things under the Sun are fading, and that many times their dearest Comforts are snatched away from their Embraces, yet who does advisedly consider, and say to himself, shall I give my Heart to transient Shadows? Shall I cherish vain hopes, vain aims and desires of obtaining Happiness in a perishing World? Although the worshipping a Stock be Idolatry of grosser Infamy, yet 'tis as foolish and as destructive to set our chief Love and Joy, that is only due to God, upon the Creature. And what follows in the Prophet is justly applicable to such Persons; He feedeth on Ashes (that not only afford no nourishment, but is very hurtful to the Body) a deceived Heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his Soul, nor say, is there not a Lye in my right Hand? Thus carnal Men are so blinded with their Affections to these short lived Pleasures, that they cannot take the true liberty of judging and reflecting that they are deceived and delighted with empty Shadows that will suddenly end in disappointment and sorrow? Briefly, these glittering Fictions and false Joys cannot please without an error in the Mind, that shall last but a little while. And if you saw a distracted Person Sing and Dance, with a conceit that he is a Prince, would you be willing to lose sober Reason for his fantastic Pleasure, especially if you knew that his cheerful fit should suddenly change into a mournful or raging Madness forever? But the Blessedness above is unchangeable as God the Author and Object of it, Eternal as the Soul that enjoys it. And shall the World that passes away with the Lusts thereof, turn our Affections from the undefiled immortal Inheritance? Shall the vanishing appearance, the fleeting Figure of Happiness be preferred before what is substantial and durable? Astonishing Madness! That God and Heaven should be despised for painted Trifles. If a spark of true Reason, of sincere Love to our Souls be left, we shall count all

things but dross and dung, that we may gain the Kingdom of Glory. Thus Eternity enlightens, thus it counsels us.

CHAPTER XI.

Other Motives propounded. God desires the Eternal Happiness of Men.

All that unfeignedly seek it, shall enjoy it. The terms are gracious and easy upon which 'tis offered to Men.

To excite us further to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, I shall propound other Motives to Consideration.

1. God is very willing that Men should be saved and partake of his Glory. For this end, he has brought Life and Immortality to light in the Gospel. The Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, has dispelled the darkness of the Gentiles, and the shadows of the Jews, and rendered the blessed and eternal State so clear and so visible, that every Eye may see it. Our assurance of it is upon infallible Principles. And though the excellent Glory of it is inexpressible, yet 'tis represented under variety of fair and lovely Types to invite our Affections. Besides, God makes an earnest offer of Life to us in his Word, he Commands, Counsels, Excites, Urges, nay Intreats and Beseeches with infinite Tenderness, that Men will accept of it. Thus the Apostle declares, Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God. Is it not evident then beyond the most jealous suspicion, God is desirous of our Happiness? Can we imagine any design any insincerity in his Words? Why should Heaven court a Worm? 'It is his love to Souls that expresses itself in that

condescending compassionate manner, to melt and overcome the perverse and hardened in Sin.

And as his Words so his Works are a convincing Argument of his Will: His most gracious sustaining and supporting of sinful Men, his innumerable Benefits conferred upon them, in the provision of Good, and preservation from Evil, are for this End, that by the conduct of his merciful Providence they may be led to Repentance, and received to Grace. And the temporal Judgments inflicted on Sinners, are medicinal in their Nature, and in his design to bring them to a sight and abhorrence of Sin, to prevent their final ruin: if they prove mortal to any, 'tis from their obstinate Corruption. The time allowed to those who are obnoxious to his Justice every hour, is not a mere reprieve from Torment, but a space of Repentance to sue out a Pardon: They are spared in order to Salvation. The Lord is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.

But above all his other Works, the giving of his Son to be a Sacrifice for Sin, is an incomparable demonstration, how much he delights in the Salvation of Men. Since God has been at such cost to put them into a capacity of obtaining the Kingdom of unchangeable Glory, far transcending the earthly Paradise that was forfeited by Sin, we have the strongest assurance that he desires their Felicity. And how guilty and miserable will those Sinners be that when Christ has opened Heaven to us by his Blood, refuse to enter into it. When Brutus propounded to a Philosopher his design to restore Rome to Liberty, he replied, That the action would be glorious indeed, but that so many servile Spirits that tamely stooped under Tyranny, were not worthy that a Man of Virtue and Courage should hazard himself to recover that for them, which they did so lightly esteem. The Redemption of Mankind is without controversy the most glorious work of God, wherein the concurrence and concord of his Attributes appear in that excellent manner, that only his miraculous Wisdom could find out. But how astonishing is the unworthiness of Men, who wretchedly neglect Salvation, which the Son of God purchased by a

Life full of Sorrows, and a Death of infinite Sufferings? Blessed Redeemer! May it be spoken with the humble affectionate and thankful sense of thy dying Love, why didst thou give thyself a ransom for those who are charmed with their Misery, and with the most foul Ingratitude disvalue so precious a Redemption? How justly shall they be forever deprived of it? Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.

2. Consider, this glorious Blessedness shall be the Portion of all that unfeignedly choose it, and earnestly seek it. This motive was enclosed in the first, but deserves a separate Consideration. And of this we have infallible assurance from the Word of God, who cannot lie. Godliness has the Promise of the Life to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. The hope of a Christian is so certain that 'tis compared to an Anchor fastened in Heaven. And besides the Fidelity of his Word, God has given us Security of the Reward, the Life of his Son. This methinks should turn the Current of our Desires and Endeavors to Heaven. For notwithstanding all our toil and sweat, the labor of the Day and the watching's of the Night for the obtaining earthly things, yet we many times fall short of our aims and hopes. 'Twas the observation of the wisest Man, I returned and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favor to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to all. Indeed such is the order of Divine Providence in the World, there must be different conditions of Men here, some Rich, others Poor, some Noble, others Mean, some in Command others in Subjection. And from hence it is also evident, that neither Dignity nor Riches nor Pleasures are the Happiness of Man. For 'tis not becoming the Wisdom and Goodness of God to make that the last end of the reasonable Creature, which though sought with Sincerity and Diligence, may not be obtained, or of which without his own consent he may be deprived. But civil distinctions and qualities are of no value and consideration with respect to the obtaining or excluding from Heaven. The rich and honorable that are in an exalted State, have not a more easy ascent

and entrance into the Kingdom of God than those who are in the lowest degree. The Starrs appear with the same bigness to him that stands in the deepest Valley as on the highest Hill. Is there any difference between the Souls of the rich and great in the World, and the Souls of the poor and despised? Are they not equally the Offspring of God, and equally ransomed by the most precious Blood of his Son? Are they not equally capable of Eternal Rewards? Are not the Promises of the heavenly Kingdom, equally addressed to everyone that has an immortal Soul, that is faithful to his Duty and Covenant with God. This should inspire all with flaming Desires, and draw forth their utmost Industry, and make them steadfast and immovable, always to abound in the Work of the Lord, knowing our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. I know the carnal Will is impetuous and impatient of delay; and earnest for what is present with the neglect of the future Glory. But the unreasonableness of this is evident to all, for 'tis not a new and strange thing to sow in hopes of reaping a Harvest, for Men to be industrious and active on Land and Sea for future Advantage. Nay 'tis the constant practice of the World: The Merchant, the Husbandman, the Student, the Soldier, and every Man in the circle of his Calling are visible instances of this; and though many times the most flourishing hopes are blasted, they are not discouraged. And is it not a sight full of wonder to observe Men cheerful in Labors and Hardships in the Service of the World, to carry it so lightly as if they had Wings, and all for a poor and uncertain Recompence, and to be slow and languid in their endeavors for a Reward as great and as sure as God is glorious and true? How many ambitiously strive to please a Prince, and wait long in his Service, who is but a Man, and therefore variable in his Temper and State, sometimes is not willing to do what he can, and sometimes cannot do what he would to reward his Servants? And is there not infinitely more reason we should labor to please God, who is the most liberal, and rich, and certain Rewarder of all that seek him?

3. Consider, How gracious the terms are upon which Heaven is promised in the Gospel, Our Savior's Laws are so holy, just, and in

their own Nature so good to Men, even in their present performance, that their own excellence and equity and sweetness is sufficient to recommend them without a respect to the glorious Reward of Obedience. For what can be more desirable than conformity to the Nature of the blessed God? What Pleasure is comparable to that which springs from a pure Conscience, from a godly righteous and sober Conversation? How joyful is the performance of that Service which more immediately is directed to the honor of the Divine Majesty? In Prayer and other sacred actions we draw near to the Fountain of Felicity, and receive from his fullness. In the affectionate Praises of God we are Companions of the Angels. And is not Integrity and Honesty in our dealings with Men more easy and comfortable than Fraud and Oppression? Is it not troublesome to be always under a Mask, to use arts and disguises to avoid the reproach and revenge that attends unjust actions when discovered? Are Temperance and Chastity as hurtful to the Body, as Luxury and Lasciviousness the essential parts of carnal Felicity? How miserably distracted is Man when the Heart is rent with numberless Vanities, the Affections divided between various Objects! How quiet and composed, when the Heart is united to God as the supreme Good, and the Affections joyfully conspire in his Service! Can it then be pretended that the Yoke of Christ is heavy, and his Law hard? Or are his Promises uncertain, and his Reward small? No, his Commands are not grievous; in the keeping them there is a great Reward, a present Paradise. Religion will make us happy hereafter in the enjoyment of God, and happy here in Obedience to his Holy Will. Such is his Goodness that our Duty and Happiness are the same.

But it will be said, that the Gospel requires us to pluck out the right Eye, and to cut off the right Hand, and to take up the Cross of Christ, that is, to mortify the dearest Lusts, and to submit to the sharpest Sufferings for his Honor that we may be eternally Happy. To this I answer.

'It is true, the human Nature in this depraved State, only relishes such Objects as pleasantly insinuate with the carnal Senses, and 'tis

bitter as Death to bind up the Affections from them. But Grace gives a new divine Nature to the Soul, and makes it easy to abstain from fleshly Lusts. To make this more clear by a sensible Instance: Suppose a diseased Person whose Stomach is oppressed with corrupt Humors, and his Throat and Mouth so heated with Choler and continual Thirst, that he thinks it impossible, though for his Life, to abstain from immoderate Drinking. If a Physician by some powerful Medicine cleanses the Stomach, and tempers the internal heat, he then can easily restrain himself from Excess. Thus a carnal Man that is full of false Estimations, and irregular Desires, while there are Pleasures without, and Passions unsubdued within, though his Salvation depends on it, thinks it impossible to restrain the exorbitant Appetites of Flesh and Blood. The Gentiles thought it strange, Christians did not run with them to the same excess of Riot. But Divine Grace so clarifies and enlightens the Mind, so purifies and elevates the Affections, that 'tis not only possible but easy to abstain from unlawful Pleasures. St. Austin before his Conversion was astonished that many in the vigor of Youth, and in a frail World lived Chastely; and reflecting upon himself, was encouraged by this Thought, that which such and such observe, why shall it be impossible to me to observe? And upon serious trial, by the prosperous influence of Heaven, was a Conqueror over all carnal Temptations. Nay after his holy Change, the withholding his Heart from vicious Delights, was inexpressibly more sweet than his former enjoying of them. And are there not many visible examples of holy heavenly Christians, to whom grosser sensual Pleasures are unsavory and contemptible? You may as well tell the number of the Stars, as of those who have practiced Religion in its strictness and purity, and by their enlightened Conversations directed us in the way to Heaven. And are their Bodies taken from the Vein of a Rock, and not composed of Flesh and Blood as well as others? Are their Passions, like Solomon 's brazen Sea, immovable by any Winds of Temptations? Are they entirely exempted from the impression of Objects, and the lower Affections? No, they are alive, and sensible of those things that ravish the Affections of carnal Men, but by the power of Grace despise and overcome them. And this Grace is

offered in the Gospel to all that sincerely desire it, so that 'tis a vain wretched pretense that Religion binds to hard Service.

To the other part of the Objection, that sometimes Religion exposes the Professors of it to heavy Sufferings. I answer, Indeed the Gospel is plain and peremptory in this, if we will reign with Christ, we must suffer with him, when we are called forth to give a noble testimony to his Truth. 'It is no extraordinary Elevation, no point of Perfection, but the duty of every Christian to be always ready in the disposition and resolution of his Mind, and by actual Martyrdom to sacrifice his Life, when the honor of Christ requires it. But 'tis no hard condition to suffer transient Afflictions for the obtaining a Happy Immortality, to be conformable to the Image of our suffering Redeemer, that we may be crowned with his Glory. How many Christians esteemed themselves honored in the Disgrace, and blessed in the Injuries they suffered for Christ, and with an invincible Patience, and astonishing Joy, endured the most cruel Persecutions, though yet the human Nature in them was as tender and sensible of Pains as in others: but the natural aversion and repugnance to suffering was overruled by the determination of the rational Will, upon the account of their Duty, and the Reward attending it. They gave a most convincing sensible Testimony how much more valuable Heaven is than this present World, willingly exposing themselves to all Evil here, and rejoicing in hope of a glorious issue.

In short, the Reward of Obedience is a triumphal Crown; and where there is no Victory there can be no Triumph; and where no Combat no Victory; and where no Enemy, no Combat. Therefore we are commanded to fight against our internal Enemies, our corrupt Affections, to kill the Lusts of the Flesh, and to encounter and overcome by Humility and meek Submissions the cruelty of malicious Enemies without us, in a direct order of obtaining the Crown of Life. And a Believer that has Heaven in taste and expectation, will easily renounce the most pleasant, and willingly endure the sharpest Temptations, for the blessed Reward of his Obedience.

CHAPTER XII.

The Gospel threatens Hell to all that prefer the Pleasures of Sin before Heaven.

How congruous and powerful a Motive this is to work on carnal Men. The Misery of an everlasting Hell represented.

4. Consider, if Men choose the Pleasures of Sin that are but for a season, before Heaven, that infinitely exceeds this World, then an everlasting Hell shall be their Portion. There is no middle State in the next World, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary States, yet alike in this, that the Happiness and Misery are equally Infinite and Eternal. And by the most wise righteous Will of God, there is an inseparable connection between the Choice and Actions of Men here, and their future Condition forever. The equity of this cannot be denied without renouncing the Light of Reason. For when by a Chain of Consequences sinful Pleasures are linked with eternal Punishments threatened in the Divine Law, he that will enjoy those forbidden Pleasures, binds himself to suffer all the pains annexed to them. And 'tis just that those who err without Excuse, should repent without Remedy. Now the threatening of eternal Punishment is the most proper Argument to work on carnal secure Sinners.

1. Because they are more capable to conceive of the Torments of Hell, than the Joys of Heaven. Storms and Darkness are more easily drawn by a Pencil, than a calm bright Day. Fire and Brimstone are very painful to Sense, and the imagination strongly represents its vehemence in tormenting the Body, and what an evil the uncessant remorse of the guilty Conscience will be hereafter, is in part understood by the secret accusations and twinges of self-condemning

Sinners here: but they are absolutely Strangers to the Joys of the Holy Ghost, the Delights of the Soul in the Contemplation and Love of God, the peace and contentment of Conscience in his Favor. They cannot without Experience know how good the Lord is, no more than see a taste. To discourse to them of the Spiritual Pleasures that flow from the divine Presence, of the Happiness of the Saints that are before the Throne of God, and serve him Day and Night in his Temple, is to speak with the Tongue of an Angel unintelligible things. Their Affections and Minds and Language are confined to sensible things. The natural Man receives not the things of the Spirits of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. There may be in a carnal Person a conception of Heaven as a Refuge from Miseries, and some smothering confused thoughts of its Felicity, as the Idea of Light and Colors in one Blind from his Birth; but only the pure in Heart can see God, as in the perfect Vision of Glory in Heaven, so in the imperfect reflection of it in the Gospel.

2. Carnal Men are more disposed to be wrought upon by representing the Torments of Hell, than the Joys of Heaven. For we cannot love but what is known, nor enjoy but what is loved. And as the purification of the Heart from vicious Affections, is the best means to clear the Mind, so the illustration of the Mind is very influential to warn the Heart. The true conception of Heaven in its amiable Excellencies, would convey such a sweetness as to change Hatred itself into Love; and of this only prepared Souls are capable. But those who are sunk into Sense are without relish of spiritual Felicity, and are either allured or terrified only with that is pleasant or painful to Sense.

'It is recorded as the unparalleled Folly of Nero, that when he was ready to cut his own Throat to avoid the fury of the Multitude, he broke forth into great expressions of Sorrow what an excellent Artist he died. 'Twas not the loss of the Roman Empire that so much troubled him, as that so much skill in Music died with him. He valued himself more as a Fidler than an Emperor. Thus carnal Men

with a folly infinitely more prodigious, when Death is near, are not so much affected with the loss of the Crown of Glory, and the Kingdom of Heaven, as with their leaving the present World and its Vanities. This makes Death intolerably bitter. Till the Love of God inflames and purifies the Heart, the fruition of his Glory is not esteemed nor desired. A Seraphim sent from the Presence of God with a flaming Coal from the Altar, touched the Lips of the Holy Prophet, and his Heart was presently melted into a compliance with the Divine Will. But if a Rebel Angel, that burns with another Fire than of Divine Love, were dispatched from Hell, with a Coal from that Altar, where so many Victims are offered to divine Justice as there are damned Souls, and touched obdurate unreformed Sinners, that they might have a lively sense what it is to burn forever; this were the most congruous and effectual way to reclaim them. Like stubborn Metals they are only made pliant by the Fire.

Indeed the fear of Hell though raised to the highest degrees, is not sufficient to convert a Sinner thoroughly to God. For that Religion that is the mere effect of Fear, will be according to the nature of its Principle, with resistance and trouble, wavering and inconstant when the violence of the fear is lessened. Whereas that which is from the inclination of Love and the hope of a desired Good, is fully voluntary and persevering. As a Scholar that applies himself to Learning by the constraint of Fear, his Study is uneasy, and whilst he is reading, his Fancy transports him to other things, and when his task is finished, he presently runs to Play. But a Lover of Learning with Diligence and Delight is intent in his Studies, and though engaged in other Affairs, yet his Thoughts are still conversant about Learning. In short, the fear of Hell may be only a natural Affection, that recoils from what is tormenting to the Body, and is consistent with the Love of Sin; but the hope of Heaven as 'tis revealed in the Scripture, is a spiritual Affection, and always joined with the hatred of Sin.

Now the great design of the Gospel is by the fear of Hell, as a powerful preparative, to make way for the love of Heaven. If carnal indulgent Sinners are not roused by a quick apprehension of Hell,

they will securely enjoy their pernicious Pleasures, and grow old in Sin, and at last die impenitent. No offers of Mercy will prevail, till they are stormed by the Terrors of the Lord. But when the fear of eternal Misery has made a breach, divine Grace victoriously enters and takes Possession. The convinced and contrite Sinner most humbly and willingly embraces the precious Promises, wherein not only Pardon and Indemnity is offered, but the richest favor, the advancing him into a State of Eternal Glory. Thus the sweetest Hopes succeed tormenting Fears, and the Obedience which before had a mixture of involuntary flows from the entire consent of the Soul, with filial Freedom.

Before the particular Description of the pains of the Damned, I shall observe in General, That the full representation of Hell is beyond all human Expression, nay our most fearful Thoughts cannot equal the Horror of it. Who knows the Power of thine Anger? What are the prepared Plagues by infinite Justice and Almighty Wrath for obstinate Sinners? It is impossible for the most guilty and trembling Conscience to enlarge its sad apprehensions according to the degrees of that Misery. The Lord will show forth his Wrath, and make his Power known in the Vessels fitted for Destruction. None can tell what God can do, and what Man shall suffer, when made capable to endure such Torments forever, as now would presently consume him. As the Glory of Heaven cannot be fully understood till enjoyed, so the Torments of Hell cannot be comprehended till felt. But we may have some discovery of those unknown Terrors, by the following Considerations.

1. The Wisdom of God requires that the Punishment threatened in his Law, as it must so be firmly decreed, that all obstinate Rebels shall of necessity undergo it, so it must incomparably exceed all temporal Evils, to which Men may be exposed for their Obedience to the divine Commands. Otherwise the threatening would not be an effectual restraint from Sin. For the propinquity of an Evil makes a strange impression on the Mind, and present Fear makes a Person solicitous to avoid the incursion of a danger ready to seize on him,

without forecasting to prevent an evil looked on at a distance. Therefore that the sanction of the divine Law may preserve the Precepts inviolable, that there may be a continual reverence of it, and a fixed resolution in the Heart of Men not to transgress, the penalty threatened must be in its own nature so terrible, that the fear of it may conquer the apprehension of all present Evils, that can be inflicted to force us to Sin. As on the other side, to confirm our purpose to please God in all things, the Reward of Obedience must be of infallible assurance, that all and only those who serve him faithfully shall enjoy in the future State, and so excellent, that all the allurements of the World, may in comparison with it, be of no consideration to divert us from our Duty. They command the Heart, and have its most prevailing Respects, from whom is expected the most desirable Good, and feared the most terrible Evils. Therefore our Savior warns his Disciples, Fear not them that can kill the Body, (make that part die that is mortal) but fear him that after he has killed, has power to cast into Hell, yea I say unto you, fear him. All the exquisite Tortures, that the most cruel contriving and powerful malice of wicked Men can inflict, is so much less than the Wrath to come, that avoid the one and venture on the other, is more brutish Stupidity, than that of the Horse or Mule, that starts at the shadow of a Bush, and springs over a Precipice.

2. The Judgments of God executed here, are light and tolerable in comparison of the punishment of Sinners in the next Life. 1. Temporal Evils of all kinds and degrees, as Pestilence, Famine, War, are designed for the bringing of Men to a sight and sense of their Sins, and are common to Good and Bad here. And if his anger be so terrible when he chastises as a compassionate Father, what is his fury when he punishes as a severe Judge? If the correcting Remedies ordered by his Wisdom and Love for the conversion of Sinners be so sharp, what is the deadly revenge of his irreconcilable Hatred?

2. The Miseries of the present State are allayed with some enjoyments. None are so universally afflicted, so desolate, but something remains to sweeten the sense of their Sufferings.

Judgments are tempered with Mercies. No Man is tortured with all Diseases, nor forsaken of all Friends, nor utterly without Comfort. And when the Affliction is irremediable, yet if our grief produces Sympathy in others, 'tis some ease to the troubled Mind, and by that assistance the Burthen is made lighter. But in Hell the Damned are surrounded with Terrors, encompassed with Flames, without anything to refresh their Sorrows, not a drop of Water to a Lake of Fire. All that was esteemed Felicity here, is totally withdrawn. Death puts a period to their Lives, and the Pleasures of Sin forever. For 'tis most just, that those Objects which were abused by their Lusts, and alienated their Hearts from their Duty and Felicity, should be taken away. And which is extreme Misery, in their most pitiful State they are absolutely unpitied. Pity is the cheap and universal Lenitive, not denied to the most guilty in their Sufferings here: for the Law of Nature instructs us to pity the Man, when the Malefactor suffers. But even this is not afforded to the Damned. All their Agonies and Crys cannot incline the Compassion of God, and the blessed Spirits in Heaven towards them: for they are not compassionable Objects, their Misery being the just effect of their perverse obstinate Choice. And in Hell all human tender Affections are extinguished forever. Now 'tis the perfection of Misery, the excess of desolation to be deprived of all good things pleasing to our Desires, and to suffer all Evils from which we have the deepest aversation and abhorrence. As in Heaven all good is eminently comprised, and nothing but Good, so in Hell all Evil is in excessive degrees, and nothing but Evil.

3. Temporal Evils are inflicted by the mediation of second causes that are of a limited power to hurt: but in the next World he more immediately torments the Damned by his absolute Power. The Apostle tells us, that the wicked are punished with everlasting Destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power. What is the lashing with a few Rushes, to a blow given by the hand of a Giant that strikes dead at once? This comparison is below the Truth.

More particularly, the state of Misery is set forth in Scripture by such representations as may powerfully instruct and terrify even the most carnal Men. Nothing is more intolerably painful, then suffering the violence of Fire enraged with Brimstone: and Hell is described by a Lake of Fire and Brimstone, wherein the Wicked are tormented. Whether the Fire be Material or Metaphorical, the reality and intensesness of the Torment is signified by it. But the ordinary Fire, though mingled with the most torturing Ingredients, is not an adequate representation of it. For that is prepared by Men, but the Fire of Hell is prepared by the Wrath of God for the Devil and his Angels. The Divine Power is illustriously manifested in that terrible preparation: So that, as some of the Fathers express it, if one of the Damned might pass from those Flames into the fiercest Fires here, it were to exchange a Torment for a Refreshment. The Scripture speaks of the vehement heat and fiery Thirst, and outer Darkness in which the Damned suffer, to satisfy the rights of Justice in the torment of those Senses, for the Pleasure of which Men willfully broke the Laws of God.

But the Soul being the chief Sinner, shall be the chief Mourner in those Regions of Sorrow. An Image of this we have in the Agonies of Spirit, which sometimes the Saints themselves are in here, and which the most stubborn Sinners can neither resist nor endure. Job was afflicted in that manner that he complains, The Arrows of the Almighty are with me, the Poison whereof drinks up my Spirit, the Terrors of God set themselves in Array against me. If a Spark of his Displeasure falls on the guilty Conscience, it tears and blows up all, as a Fire-ball cast into a Magazine. All the Diversions in the World, Business, Pleasures, Merry Conversation, Comedies are as ineffectual to give freedom from those Stings and Furies in the Breast, as the sprinkling of Holy Water is to expel a raging Devil from a possessed Person. Those who in their Pride and Jollity, have despised serious Religion, either as a fond Transport and Extasy towards God, or a dull Melancholy and Dejection about the Soul, or an idle Scrupulosity about indifferent things, yet when God has set their Sins with all their killing circumstances in order before their Eyes, how

changed, how confounded are they at that Apparition? How restless with the dreadful expectation of the doom that attends them! Belshazzar in the midst of his Cups, and Herd of Concubines, by a few Words written on the Wall, containing his Process and Judgment, was so terrified by his guilty jealous Conscience, that his Joints were loosed, Nature sunk under the apprehension. Now all these troubles of Mind, are but the beginnings of Sorrows, but the Smoke of the infernal Furnace, but earnest of that terrible Sum which divine Justice will severely exact of the Wicked in Hell.

Indeed these Examples are rare, and not regarded by the most, and by some looked on as the effects of Distraction; but to convince the bold and careless Sinners who never felt the stings of an awakened Conscience, what extreme terrors seize upon the Wicked in the other World, Consider,

1. The Apprehension shall be more clear and enlarged than in the present State. Now the Soul is oppressed with a weight of Clay, and in Drowsiness and Obscurity. The great things of Eternity are of little force to convince the Conscience, or persuade the Affections. But then the Soul shall work with the quickest activity. The Mind shall by an irresistible Light take a full view of all afflicting Objects. The most stupid and unconcerned Sinners shall then see and feel their ruined State, what a glorious Felicity they have lost, what a Misery they are plunged into, without any possibility of lessening it by false Conceits, and receiving any relief by the error of Imagination.

2. The mournful Thoughts shall be always fixed upon what is tormenting. The Soul in conjunction with the Body cannot always apply itself to one sort of Objects. For the Ministry of the sensible Faculties is requisite to its Operations. And the Body must be supported by Eating and Drinking and Rest, which interrupts troublesome Thoughts. Besides the variety of Objects and Accidents here avert the Mind sometimes from what is afflicting. But the separate Soul is in no dependence on the Body, and after their reunion, there shall be no necessity of Food or Sleep, or any other

animal actions to support it, but it shall be restored to a new capacity for new torments, and preserved in that miserable State by the power of God. There will be nothing then to divert the lost Soul from sad Reflections upon its Misery. There are no lucid intervals in Hell.

3. All the passionate Powers will then be let loose at once upon the guilty Creature. And if there be no single Passion so weak, but heightened, will break the Spirit, and render Life so miserable, that a Man will take Sanctuary in the Grave to escape, how miserable is the Condition when the most fierce and united Passions war against the Soul? This is signified by the never dying Worm that gnaws on the tenderest parts, and of quickest sense. Shame, Sorrow, Despair, Fury, Hatred and Revenge are some of that Blood of Vipers that torment the Damned.

1. Shame is a Passion of which human Nature is very sensible, and this in the highest degree of Confusion shall seize on the Wicked. For all the just causes of Shame shall then meet. The inward source of it is the consciousness of Guilt, or Turpitude and Folly in the Actions; and all these are the inseparable Adjuncts of Sin. The guilty Soul by a piercing reflection upon its Crimes, has a secret shame of its Degeneracy and Unworthiness. The Passion is increased, when a discovery is made of vile practices that defile and debase a Man, expose to Contempt and Infamy, before Persons of high Quality and eminent Virtue, whom we admire and reverence, and whose esteem we value. To be surprised in an unworthy Action by such a Person, disorders the Blood, and transfuses a Color into the Face, to cover it with a Vail of Blushing. And the more numerous the Spectators are, the more the Disgrace is aggravated. And if Derision be joined with the Ignominy, it causes extreme Displeasure. O the universal Confusion, the overpowering amazement that will seize on Sinners in the great day of Discovery, when all the Works of Darkness, all their base Sensualities shall be revealed before God Angels and Saints? When all the covers of Shame shall be taken off, the excuses and denials, to extenuate or conceal their Sins shall vanish, and their Breasts be transparent to the Eyes of all: How will they be ashamed

of their foul and permanent Deformity in the Light of that glorious Presence? How will they be astonished to appear in all their Pollutions before that bright and immense Theatre? How will they be confounded to stand in all their Guilt before that sublime and severe Tribunal? How will they endure the upbraiding's for all the Sins which they have so wickedly committed, and the derision for the punishment they so deservedly suffer? The holy Judge will laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their fear comes. The Righteous also shall see, and shall laugh at them, Lo these are the Men that made not God their Portion, but perishing Vanities, that preferred sweet Folly before severe Wisdom. The Devils will reproach them for that scornful advantage they had over them, that as Children are seduced for things of Luster to part with real Treasures, so they were easily persuaded for the Trifles of Time to exchange Eternal Happiness. Whither will they cause their Shame to go? Those black Sinners that here never change color for their Filthiness, that hardened by custom in Sin, are impenetrable to Shame, as the brute Beasts that are absolutely destitute of reason, nay that have not only overcome all tenderness, but glory in their Shame, shall glow at the manifestation of their sordid Lusts, their vile Servilities, and be covered with Confusion, and the sense of it shall be revived in their Minds forever.

2. To open Shame is joined the greatest inward Sorrow. This Passion when violent penetrates the Soul in all its Faculties, and fastens it to the afflicting Object. When it dwells in the Bosom, it gives an easy entrance to whatever cherishes and increases it, and rejects what might assuage and lessen the sense of the Evil. The most pleasant things do not excite desire or joy, but exasperate Grief. Like those Animals that convert the best nourishment into their own Poison; so deep Sorrow receives mournful impressions from all things, and turns the sweetest Comforts of Life into Wormwood and Gall. The causes of Sorrow are either the loss of some valued Good, or the sense of some present Evil. And the Sorrow is more violent, as the Cause is great in itself, and in the apprehension and tenderness of the Sufferers. Now both these Causes with all the heavy

Circumstances that can multiply and aggravate Sorrow, meet in Hell the Centre of Misery.

The loss is inconceivably great. If Cain when banished from the Society of the Saints, where God was publicly worshipped, and by spiritual Revelations and visible Apparitions, graciously made himself known, cried out in anguish of Soul, My punishment is greater than I can bear, from thy Face shall I be hid, and I shall be a Fugitive upon the Earth, how intolerable will be the final separation from his glorious and joyful Presence? 'It is often seen how tenderly and impatiently the human Spirit resents the loss of a dear Relation. Jacob for the supposed Death of Joseph, was so overcome with Grief, that when all his Sons and Daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, and said, I will go down to the Grave unto my Son mourning. This is a Sin and a punishment. 'It is established by the righteous and unchangeable Decree of God, that every inordinate Affection in Man should be his own Tormentor. But if the loss of a poor frail Creature for a short time be so afflicting, how insupportable will be the Sorrow, for the loss of an infinite Eternal Good? It may be a carnal Wretch may think comfortably of this now, whilst he lives in Pleasures, but in the next World he shall be totally deprived of all things that please his voluptuous Senses, and shall understand what a misery it is to lose the favor and enjoyment of the blessed God. Our Savior told the Jews, There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth (the Symptoms of extreme Sorrow) when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. The sight of that blessed Company entering into the sacred Mansions of Light, will make the loss of Heaven infinitely more discernible and terrible to the Wicked, who shall be cast into outer Darkness, and forever be deprived of Communion with God and his Saints.

With the loss of the most excellent Good, the suffering of the most afflicting painful Evil is joined. The Sentence is, Depart ye cursed into everlasting Fire. And if an imaginary Sorrow conceived in the Mind without a real external Cause, as in Melancholy Persons, when

gross Vapors darken and corrupt the brightness and purity of the Spirits that are requisite for its cheerful Operations, is often so oppressing that Nature sinks under it, how insupportable will the Sorrow of condemned Sinners be, under the impression and sense of God's Almighty and avenging Hand, when it shall fully appear how pure and holy he is in his Anger for Sin, how just and dreadful in punishing Sinners? It may be the indulgent Sinner may lessen his fear of Hell, by fancying the number of Sufferers will assuage the sense of their Misery. But this is a foolish mistake. For the number of Sufferers shall be so far from affording any relief, that the Misery is aggravated by the Company and Communication of the Miserable. Everyone is surrounded with Sorrows, and by the sights of Woe about him, feels the universal Grief. The weeping and wailing, the cries and dolorous expressions of all the Damned, increases the torment and vexation of everyone. As when the Wind conspires with the Flame 'tis more fierce and spreading.

3. The Concomitant of Sorrow will be Fury and Rage against themselves, as the true causes of their Misery. For God will make such a discovery of his righteous Judgment, that not only the Saints shall glorify his Justice in the condemnation of the Wicked, but they shall be so convinced of it, as not to be able to charge their Judge with any defect of Mercy, or excess of Rigor in his proceedings against them. As the Man in the Parable of the Marriage-Feast, when taxed for his presumptuous intrusion without a Wedding Garment, how camest thou in hither? Was speechless: so they will find no plea for their Justification and Defense, but must receive the eternal Doom with Silence and Confusion. Then Conscience shall revive the bitter remembrance of all the methods of divine Mercy for their Salvation, that were ineffectual by their Contempt and Obstinacy. All the compassionate calls of his Word, with the holy Motions of the Spirit, were like the sowing of Seed in the Stony Ground, that took no root, and never came to perfection. All his terrible Threatening's were but as Thunder to the Deaf, or Lightning to the Blind, that little affects them: the bounty of his Providence designed to lead them to Repentance, had the same effect, as the Showers of Heaven upon

Briers and Thorns that makes them grow the faster. And that a Mercy so ready to pardon, did not produce in them a correspondent affection of grateful obedient Love, but by the most unworthy provocations they plucked down the Vengeance due to obstinate Rebels, will so enrage the Damned against themselves, that they will be less miserable by the Misery they suffer, than by the conviction of their torn Minds, that they were the sole Causes of it. What Repenting's will be kindled within them, for the stupid neglect of the great Salvation so dearly purchased, and earnestly offered to them? What a fiery addition to their Torment, that when God was so willing to save them, they were so willful to be Damned. They will never forgive themselves, that for the short and mean Pleasures of Sense, which if enjoyed a thousand years, cannot recompense the loss of Heaven, nor requite the pains of Hell for an Hour, they must be deprived of the one and suffer the other forever.

4. The Sorrow and Rage will be increased by Despair: for when the wretched Sinner sees the Evil is peremptory, and no Outlet of Hope, he abandons himself to the violence of Sorrow, and by cruel Thoughts wounds the Heart more, than the fiercest Furies in Hell can. This Misery that flows from despair shall be more fully opened under the distinct consideration of the Eternity of Hell.

And as from Despair the condemned Creature turns Enemy to himself, so to God. 'It is said of the Worshippers of the Image of the Beast, that they gnawed their Tongues for Pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their Pains. The Torment and Blasphemies of those impenitent Idolaters, are a representation of the state of the Damned, where the just and dreadful Wrath of God upon Men, and the impious Rage of Men against God is in the highest degrees. For when the guilty Sufferers are so weak, that they neither by Patience can sustain their Torments, nor by Strength resist the Power that inflicts them; yet are wicked and stubborn; they are irritated by their Misery, and foam out Blasphemies against the righteous Judge. They hate God with a direct Enmity, and are always under his invincible tormenting Power. Hatred takes pleasure in Revenge, either real or

imaginary. The Damned Wretches were they as Omnipotent to Effect, as they are malicious to Desire, would dethrone God, and destroy his Being. But he is infinitely above the transports of their Fury. All their rancorous cursed imprecations, are reflexively pernicious to themselves; like Arrows shot up against the Sun, that fall down upon their Heads that shot them. Now what more enrages a stubborn malicious Spirit, than to be utterly unable to reach and hurt an irreconcilable Enemy, the object of its habitual detestation? Briefly, as the blessed Spirits are in Heaven, and Heaven is in them, by those holy and joyful Affections that are always exercised in the Divine Presence, so the Damned are in Hell, and Hell is in them by those fierce and miserable Passions that continually prey upon them.

4. The Eternity of their Misery makes it above all other Considerations intolerable. Our Savior repeats it thrice in the space of a few Verses, to terrify those who spare some favorite Corruption, that in Hell their Worm dies not, and the Fire is never quenched. God will never reverse his Sentence, and they shall never change their State. How willingly would carnal Men raze the Word Eternal out of the Scriptures, but to their grief they find it joined with the Felicity of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell. The second Death has all the terrible qualities of the first, but not the ease and end it brings to Misery. All the Tears of those forlorn Wretches, shall never quench one spark of the Fire. Where are the delicious Fair, the Music, the Purple, and all the carnal Delights of the rich Man? They are all changed into a contrary state of Misery, and that state is fixed forever. From his vanishing Paradise he descended into an everlasting Hell. In this the Vengeance of God is infinitely more heavy than the most terrible execution from Men. Human Justice and Power can inflict but one Death (that will be soon dispatched) upon a Malefactor worthy to suffer a hundred Deaths; if he be condemned to the Fire, they cannot make him live and die together, to burn and not be consumed: But God will so far support the Damned in their Torments, that they shall always have Strength to feel, though no Strength to endure them. Those extreme Torments which would extinguish the present Life in a Moment, shall be

suffered forever. This Consideration infinitely aggravates the Misery. For the lost Soul racked with the fearful Contemplation of what it must suffer forever, feels as it were at once all the Evils that shall torment it in its whole duration. The perpetuity of the Misery is always felt by prevision. This is as the cruel breaking of the Bones upon the Wheel, when the Soul is tormented by the foresight of Misery that without allays shall continue in the circulation of Eternal Ages. To make this more sensible, let us consider, that pain makes the Mind observant of the passing of the hours. In Pleasures, Time with a quick and silent motion insensibly slides away: but in Troubles the Hours are tedious, in violent pains we reckon the minutes as long. 'It is observable how passionately the afflicted Psalmist complains, Will the Lord cast off forever? Will he be favorable no more? Doth his Promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender Mercies? In what various pathetic forms does he express the same Affection? Though he had assurance that the gracious God would not be always severe, yet his anguish forced from him complaints as if the moment of his Trouble were an Eternity. But what strains of Sorrow are among the Damned, who besides the present sense of their Misery, have always in their Thoughts the vast Eternity wherein they must suffer it?

When three terrible Evils were propounded to David 's choice, pining Famine for three years, or bloody War for three Months, or devouring Pestilence for three days, he chose the shortest, though in itself the heaviest Evil.

Many sad Days must pass under the other Judgments, where Death by anticipation in such variety of Shapes would be presented to the Mind, that the lingering expectation of it would afflict more than the sudden stroke: whereas the fury of the Pestilence would be soon over. But the Damned have not this relief, but shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. How earnestly do they seek for Death, but cannot find it? What a favor would they esteem it to be annihilated? For certainly, if when the Evils in the present State are

so multiplied, that no Comfort is left, or so violent that the afflicted Person cannot enjoy them, and refresh his sorrowful Spirit, Death is chosen rather than Life, it cannot be imagined that in the future State where the Misery is extreme, and nothing remains to allay it, that the Damned should be in love with the unhappy good of simple being, and not choose an absolute extinction if it might be.

If anyone should be so foolish to think that custom will render that State more tolerable, he may find a terrible confutation of his vain Fancy. Indeed continuance under light Evils, may arm the Mind with patience to bear them, but in great extremities it makes the Evil more ponderous and intolerable. He that is tortured with the Stone, or on the Rack, the longer the Torture continues, the less able he is to sustain it. In short, as the Joy of Heaven is infinitely more ravishing, that the Blessed are without fear of losing it; so the Misery of Hell is proportionably tormenting, that the Damned are absolutely destitute of hopes of a release. O 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who lives forever, and can punish forever. Now the serious Consideration of this Misery, is the most proper and powerful means to awaken indulgent Sinners, and make them resolved to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right Eye, to part with the dearest Lusts rather than be exposed to it. According to the judgment of Sense, would anyone in his Wits choose the enjoyment of the most intense and exquisite Pleasures for a Year, and afterwards be content to burn in a Furnace for a Day, much less to enjoy them for a Day, and to burn for a Year? What stupid Beasts are they who for momentary Delights incur the Fiery and Eternal Indignation of God? Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Try but the Finger with the Flame of a Candle, or touch but a hot Coal; you will soon discover your weakness. But alas, how hardly are Men induced to exercise their Minds on this terrible Object. He thinks least of Hell, who has most reason to consider it: so unwilling is the carnal Heart to have represented to it the evil to come. Yet this is the first Motive that compels Sinners to change their course, and turn from Sin to Holiness, from the Creatures to God. The Joys of Heaven being Spiritual and Divine (as was before

observed) have no attractive influence upon their Affections, would never convert and reform any, but the torment of Fire being most evident and vehement to Sense, is strongly represented by the Imagination, and affects carnal Men. How many abound with vicious obstinate habits, that by solemn and believing thoughts of the unquenchable Fire, have felt the Miracle upon the three Children in the Furnace, renewed in themselves, their strong Cords burnt asunder, and all their Powers restored to the freedom of Duty, the blessed liberty of Obedience. The Truth is, if God had not formed Hell for the Punishment of Sin, and only prepared the Celestial Kingdom for the Reward of Holiness, the blessed Angels would be the sole Possessors of it, and Heaven would be as empty of human Souls as 'tis full of Glory: so foolishly and violently is the corrupt nature of Man drawn by what is pleasing to Sense, though with the certain loss of the most precious and eternal good things in the Divine Treasury. But the belief that within a little time nothing will remain of their sinful Pleasures, but the never dying Worm, and ever living Flames, makes them considerative of their imminent danger, and as it were by necessity to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, as a secondary Object to escape from Hell. As the virtue of the Load-stone when encompassed and armed with Iron, is increased, and draws a far greater weight than when 'tis single, thus the attractives of Heaven are more powerful to move our obdurate Hearts, when enforced from the terrors of Hell. In this respect, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, of the active and best Wisdom, that directs us in the way to Blessedness.

CHAPTER XIII.

The last Direction. Earnest Prayer to God, to enlighten our Minds to believe the Eternal World, and effectually turn our Wills, to desire

and prosecute the Blessedness to come.

Having a discovery so clear and certain in the Holy Scriptures of the everlasting recompenses in the next World, of the Kingdom of Heaven, (prepared by God to show his excellent Glory to his faithful Servants) where Love and Peace and Joy dwell forever, and of the infernal Prison, where despair and Rage and Sorrow, and whatever is signified under the terrible allusions of Fire and Brimstone, are ordained by Divine Justice for the Wicked, it might be justly hoped, that all Men would by a holy violence take Heaven, and by the swiftest Motion flee from the Wrath to come. The instinct of Nature and the light of Reason excite them to secure their most precious Interest. Can there be an Expectation, Desire or Capacity in Man of enjoying a Blessedness beyond what is Infinite and Eternal? And can there be any Evil so formidable as Everlasting Misery? Now both these Objects are set before Men, and propounded to their Choice. And we are infallibly assured from God himself, that all who are sincere and constant in their Choice and Pursuit, shall obtain Heaven, and that none shall be cast into Hell, but those who choose it, and therefore most worthily suffer it. But, O astonishment! If with a serious Eye we regard the course of Men's Actions, 'tis visible that incomparably the greatest number of Christians in Profession love Death, and hate Eternal Life. Not that 'tis possible for the reasonable Creature to do this directly, with an explicit aim, but virtually and by interpretation. They intend Happiness, but choose Misery. For he that voluntarily breaks the Law of God, chooses the known Penalty of its Violation. He that prefers this perishing World before Heaven, rejects it in the most contumelious manner. And such is the depravation of Man since his Fall, the Mind being diverted by vain Thoughts, and the Heart prepossessed with sensual Desires, that till the Spirit of his Mind be renewed, and his original Affections to the Supreme Good be revived and restored by Divine Grace, he is regardless of it, and only applies himself to what is pleasing to Sense. Therefore a most necessary Duty incumbent upon us, is by humble and fervent Prayer to address ourselves to God for his Spirit, to enlighten our Minds, that we may believe the reality and greatness of

the Eternal Reward, and to reform our Wills that we may feel its attractive Force. Both these acts of the Spirit are requisite, that the Love of God, as our chief Felicity, may be the regent Principle of our Hearts and Lives.

1. For this end the Holy Spirit convinces Men thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible Happiness. Indeed the Heathens saw something of this as it were in a Dream, they had some transient Glances, and volatile Wishes, concerning it, but miserably weak and ineffectual. And in the most of Christians the convictions of a future State are not so clear and strong as to govern their Hearts and Lives. How many of eminent intellectual Faculties are stupid as to their great Interest, and spend themselves about Trifles, and are equally tractable to Eternal Ruin, as the Ox to the Slaughter? He that is destitute of the illuminating Grace of the Spirit, is blind and cannot see afar off. Now by the Analogy between the corporal and the intellectual Faculties, we may understand in some measure how the Mind is illuminated by the Spirit of God. For as to the act of Seeing, two things are requisite, 1. External Light in the Air, without which the Colors, Figures and Beauties of Objects are not visible to the sharpest Eye, but lie obscured under impenetrable Darkness. 2. Internal Light in the Eye in which the visive Power consists: if this be extinguished the clearest Light of Heaven is of no use for the discovery of Things. Thus the Understanding is enabled to see Spiritual Things. 1. By the revelation of the Object: in this respect Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel. Till that bright discovery was made of Eternal Blessedness, it was above the desires and hopes of sinful Man. *Coelum, homo nec optare poterat ex ignorantia, nec sperare ex propriae miseriae conscientia.* 2. By the inward enlightening from the Spirit of Wisdom, that removes the Ignorance, Prejudice and Inadvertency of the Mind, which as Scales darkened its Sight, and disposes it to perceive the verity and excellency of spiritual and future Things, though not with comprehensive evidence, yet with that assurance, that no doubtfulness or suspense remains concerning them. 'It is observable that Faith is expressed in Scripture, by Prudence, Wisdom, and

Knowledge, whereby a Man knows the grounds and motives of his Judgment and Actions. And Sin is called Folly. For as when the understanding Faculty, either from the indisposedness of the Organs, as in Idiots, or from the disorder of Fancy by the inflammation of the Humors, as in distracted Persons, cannot weigh and compare, and therefore makes a perverse judgment of things; so the carnal Mind by not due measuring and pondering, judges falsely of Spiritual Things. If something no bigger than the Hand were put before the Eye, it would intercept the Sight of the Heavens; and he that not considering the properties of things near and distant, should conclude that piece to be bigger than the Heavens, were justly reputed a Fool. And the Folly of carnal Men is more gross, who prefer things present to Sense, before what is future and of everlasting consequence to the Soul. But there are some actions which if done by a Natural, would be counted Folly, yet being done by those who in the reputation of the World are Wise, are esteemed Prudent, but they are the most deplorable Folly. Now as the restoring the Laesum principium, the broken Mind to its sound State, whereby 'tis able to consider, discern and conclude of things according to their Nature, such is the action of God's Spirit upon the corrupt Mind, clarifying and enlightening it, so that it receives full conviction by the clearest marks of divine Authority shining in the Gospel of the Truth of all the great and precious Promises therein contained, and causing it by a steady application of the Thoughts to see the vast difference between what is Temporal, and Eternal, how despicably light all the Vanities of this World are found, when put in the Ballance against the infinite inestimable Happiness of the next. In short, the renewed Mind knows Spiritual Things according to their Nature and Qualities, believes, esteems, and determines that they are of Eternal moment, and absolutely necessary for the Happiness of Man. And as when the natural Faculty of seeing is perished, 'tis irreparable by human Skill, and without a Miracle can never be restored, so the intellectual Faculty when darkened by sinful Lusts, without the renewing power of the Spirit can never know Spiritual Things as they ought to be known. Therefore as the blind Men in the Gospel who despaired of help from the Physicians, hearing of the miraculous

Power of Christ, importunately begged his healing Mercy, so let us pray to the Light and Savior of the World, but in a more noble and higher Sense, Lord that we may receive our sight. Let us with the most zealous Affections call upon the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, that he would give unto us the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him, the Eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.

2. The efficacious Influence of the Holy Spirit is requisite to change the Will, that with a free and full consent it may desire and prosecute the Spiritual Eternal Good. Without this, the conviction of the Mind is not powerful enough to convert the Soul from the love of the World, to choose Heaven. There may be an enlightened Conscience, without a renewed Heart. Though the Judgment assents that God is the Supreme Good, yet till the Heart be circumcised, the sensuality of the Affections taken away, divine Love that directs the Life to God as our blessed End, can never possess it. Suppose that Men had a sensible and strong assurance of the Eternal State hereafter, if all those who lived godly in a visible manner ascended with Elias to Heaven, and if all who continued in their Sins visibly descended into Hell, as Corah and his Company were swallowed up alive by the Earth, before the Israelites, if Men could hear the joyful Exultations of the Saints above, their high Praises of God, and hear the desperate Crys and deep Complaints of the Damned: if one according to the desire of the rich Man were sent from Hell, and with his Fiery Tongue should preach a Sermon of those Torments, not describing them at a distance, but by a sensible demonstration in himself, yet this alone were not sufficient to draw off their Hearts from the deceitful Happiness of this World, and fasten them on the perfect and Eternal Happiness in the next. Indeed they could not then indulge their Lusts so securely, but they would be Strangers to the Life of God, such an inveterate alienation of Heart is in Men from real Holiness. Till the sanctifying Spirit by a directive persuasive Light that represents the Truth and Goodness of Spiritual Things,

transforms the Soul, and makes it Spiritual in its Valuations and Affections, 'tis inwardly averse from Grace and Glory. The Lord direct our Hearts into the Love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe.

FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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