

The extravagant Mirth of Youth expos'd, from the Consideration of a Judgment to come.

A

Funeral Sermon

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

OF

Mr. George Stennett,

PREACH'D

The 17th of September, 1709.

ECCLES. XI. 9.

Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth; and walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.

IN this Book we have a large account of the various Experiments that were made by *Solomon* in his Searches after Happiness, together with his Refutation of the several mistaken Opinions, which he and others had formerly entertain'd about it. The Royal Preacher had a Genius fitted to enterprize great things: He seems to have had a strong Passion for Philosophy, and to have thought that the Study of Nature would have rais'd him to a considerable Pitch of Happiness. For, says he, *I gave my Heart to seek and search out by Wisdom, concerning all things that are under Heaven.*¹ But after his utmost Application and Diligence, he inscribes upon them, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*²

The wise Man also turn'd his Thoughts to the Study of Politicks, and enter'd deep into the Mysteries of Government: and tho he had a Largeness of Soul that render'd him capable of the nicest Disquisitions, and constantly furnish'd him with the noblest Views; yet he himself found, that *in much Wisdom is much Grief, and he that increaseth Knowledg, increaseth Sorrow.*³

Now *Solomon* having not succeeded in these Attempts, was so unhappy as to abandon himself to Vice, and ransacks the whole Creation to minister to his Senses: *I said in my Heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth; therefore enjoy Pleasure.* He ran a prodigious length in his Sensualities, and ventur'd very far in the chase of forbidden Pleasures; *I gave my Heart to know Wisdom, and to know Madness and Folly.*⁴ Well, and what Satisfaction do his bold Adventures in Sin produce? Does Enjoyment answer the height of Expectation? No, for he presently adds, *Behold this also is Vanity. I said of Laughter, It is mad; and of Mirth, What doth it?*⁵ Yet after all his Disappointments, his uneasy Mind pushes him on to make further Trials, and to carry his Searches after Happiness, thro every thing that Men either court or admire in this World. He turns his Thoughts to Architecture, and enters on Works of Pomp and Magnificence: *I made me great Works, I builded me Houses, I planted me Vineyards. I made me Gardens and Orchards, and I planted Trees in them of all kind of Fruits, &c.* And he stops not here, but goes on to enlarge his Retinue, and to raise the Glory and Grandure of his Court: *I got me Servants and Maidens, and had Servants born in my House: I gather'd me also Silver and Gold, and the peculiar Treasure of Kings and of the Provinces: – I got me Men-singers and Women-singers, and the Delights of the Sons of Men, as Musical Instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increas'd more than all that went before me in Jerusalem; also my Wisdom remain'd with me.*⁶ q. d. I yet retain'd my intellectual Accomplishments, tho I had been so rash and foolish as to sully my Moral Character; for he immediately subjoins, *And whatsoever mine Eyes desir'd, I kept not from them, I withheld not my Heart from any Joy.* Yet after all, when the Wise-Man comes sedately to review what he had done, he pronounces, *That all was Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, and there was no Profit under the Sun.*⁷

Now *Solomon*, who exceeded all the Sons of Men for Wisdom as well as Riches, and the Circumstances of whose Reign had given him the greatest Advantages in the World to examine the Nature of all sublunary things, does, after the utmost Trial, lay down in this Book the best

1 Eccl. 1. 13.

2 Ver. 14.

3 Ver. 18.

4 Ver. 17.

5 Eccl. 2. 1, 2.

6 V. 7, 8, 9.

7 Ver. 11.

Observations he had form'd, for the Service and Use of all succeeding Ages; that others might shun the Mischiefs he had plung'd himself into, and no longer weary themselves, by seeking Happiness where it is not to be found; For the wisest of Men hath assur'd us, not only from Experience, but Inspiration, That Religion is the only Happiness. *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter: Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for this is the Whole of Man:*⁸ i. e. herein lies the whole of his Interest, as well as the sum of his Duty. Now to promote this excellent end, the wise Man gives many admirable Rules thro every part of this Book, one of which is contain'd in the words of the Text.

Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth; and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth; and walk in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes: but know, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.

These words are principally address'd to young People, tho they are not improper to instruct those that are advanc'd in years.

Interpreters are not agreed about the Sense of the former part of this Text: some are of Opinion, that when the Wise-Man says, *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, &c.* 'tis a Concession or Allowance which he gives young People to use the Divertisements and Pleasures of Life, so they do but keep within the Bounds of Innocence and Moderation: *q. d.* "Don't think I am so strict as to make it criminal for you to be cheerful and merry in Conversation: You may use the good Creatures that God hath given you; Religion does not restrain you from any Pleasures that are manly and rational, it only obliges you to manage your self after such a manner, as becomes those that believe they shall shortly give an account of all their Talents and Advantages to the Judg of the Quick and Dead." To this* Interpretation I think 'tis very justly excepted, *That walking in the way of one's Heart, and in the sight of one's Eyes, cannot be easily accommodated to a moderate use of worldly Enjoyments. Moreover, it cannot be deny'd, but that these Phrases are us'd in the Scripture in a Sense extremely different; namely, to signify a dissolute and sinful Course of Life, and not a temperate use of lawful Pleasures. Therefore,*

Others think, that the Wise-Man in these Words speaks by way of Irony, and that he derides and exposes the Absurdity of those Principles, by which the generality of young People govern themselves; who imagine, that nothing can render 'em so happy as Mirth and Jollity: therefore 'tis as if he had said, "Take thy fill of Pleasure, give a loose to thy Passions, follow the swinge of Appetite and Sense; but then consider what will be the consequence of such a Course of Life, remember the Day is hastening, and will come, when *every Man shall give an account of him self to God*; and then thy youthful Crimes will be severely animadverted⁹ upon, for thou shalt exchange thy temporary Pleasures for eternal Pains: *Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.*"

There is yet another Sense given of these words by a very learned Divine*, who observes, "That *Solomon* having declar'd his main Scope and Design in the beginning and conclusion of this Book, brings in sometimes " the different Senses which Mankind are apt to have concerning the Happiness of Life; and that is the Reason we meet with such different Expressions concerning it. In one place 'tis said, *There is no better thing under the Sun, than to eat, and drink, and be merry*; but in another he saith, *Sorrow is better than Laughter, and by the Sadness of the Countenance the Heart is made*

8 Eccl. 12. 13.

* Vid. *Mr. Stennett's Advice to the Young*, p. 10.

9 Animadvert, v. intransitive. To turn the attention officially or judicially, take legal cognizance of anything deserving of punishment or censure. Also: to proceed by way of punishment or censure (also with on, upon). Now merging with sense. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

* *Bishop Stillingfleet*.

better. How can such Passages as these be reconcil'd, if we look on them as expressing the Sense of the same Person? But if we allow them to be the different Notions of two sorts of Men in this World, they are easy to be understood, tho not to be reconcil'd. And the one sort is of those who place all Happiness in this Life, without regard to Religion, or Vertue, or another World: and the other, of those who look on this Life only as a Passage to another; and that all Persons ought to behave themselves here, so as conduces most to their Happiness hereafter."

Now according to these different Views, supposing this Book to be Dramatical, the Advice given to young People in the Text is very different. The Advice of the Sensualist, we are sure, the Wise-Man did never design to recommend to young People: so that whether we understand the Words as an Irony, or as the Sentiments of an Epicure, the Design of the Royal Preacher is to expose the extravagant Mirth of those Sinners, *who walk in the way of their Hearts, and in the sight of their Eyes*; i. e. who are intirely influenc'd and govern'd by what pleases their Sight, or is sutable to the vicious Inclinations of their sensual Minds; forgetting that they must shortly die, and after that be brought to Judgment. For as the Wise-Man admonishes in the words immediately preceding the Text, *But if a Man live many Years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the Days of Darkness, for they shall be many*: q. d. If that happen, which is not very likely, viz, that so frail a Creature as Man should arrive to a very great Age; yet 'tis very improbable that all things should run smoothly on thro a long Succession of Years, without any interruption; that he should have nothing but occasion of Joy in every Stage and Period of Life: Yet if any one should be favour'd after this unusual manner, let him remember his Sun must set, his long Day of Prosperity will come to an end, and a long Night of Darkness succeed it. *Let him remember the Days of Darkness, for they shall be many*.

Rejoice, O young Man, &c. From the words thus explain'd, I have a fair Occassion to discourse on these two Heads:

First, Concerning the Unreasonableness and Absurdity of the extravagant Mirth of young Sinners, *who walk in the way of their Hearts, and in the sight of their Eyes*.

Secondly, The excellent Advice that is given to young People, to check and restrain 'em in their Mirth and Riot; *i.e.* by recommending to 'em the Consideration of a Judgment to come. *Know thou that, &c.*

First, We are to discourse concerning the Unreasonableness and Absurdity of the extravagant Mirth of young Sinners, who walk in the way of their Hearts, and in the sight of their Eyes.

Young People are naturally addicted to Mirth and Jollity; and partly by the strength of Inclination, and the allurements of Company, back'd with the sollicitations of the Devil, they are very apt to be excessively transported with the love of Pleasure, and to place their Happiness in the Gusts and Relishes of the Animal Nature.

Now that Mirth, which is occasion'd by such Methods as are recited in our Text, viz. *by walking in the way of one's Heart, and in the sight of one's Eyes*, is unreasonable and absurd: and however People at present may please themselves with the transient Glories of this World, and forbidden Pleasures of Sin, and imagine they are very happy; the near approaches of Death, and the consideration of a Judgment after it, would help Men to form truer Notions both of Persons and Things, and show them the Unreasonableness and Extravagancy of their sensual Joy and Triumph.

Suffer me therefore a little to expose the Folly of such who govern themselves by the vicious Inclinations of their Minds, and the deceitful Appearances of things; who are so vain as to place their Happiness in the Gratification of their Senses, and in the Enjoyment of what this World can afford; when the Pleasures they so much admire do but debase the Soul, and delude the poor Sinner with false Appearances of Happiness.

That is not a real Happiness, which impenitent Sinners enjoy, because it will not endure Examination. If we enquire what is the true Cause of a Sinner's Mirth, we shall find it has no solid Foundation, and that such a one pleases himself only with Dreams of Happiness. For the Man that enjoys true Happiness, enjoys that which will bear the strictest trial. The more good Men think of God, and the Perfections of his Nature, the more they are convinc'd that he is every way fit to support the weight and stress of their Souls; and that to know, love, and enjoy him, is the Happiness of reasonable Creatures. But the farther wicked Men search into the grounds of their Happiness, the more they discover the Badness of the Foundation upon which it was built. So that indeed you ordinarily find that vicious Men are unwilling to turn their Eyes inward, and impartially to examine their State: for such People dread to be alone, and therefore chuse either to live in a hurry of Business, or amidst a multitude of Diversions, that they may not be put upon examining the Grounds upon which their imaginary Happiness is built. Now for People to rejoice in sensual Gratifications, and to place their Happiness in 'em, when they will not bear the Scrutiny of Reason, is the most absurd thing in the World.

Again, The capacious Desires of an immortal Spirit can never be fully satisfy'd with terrene¹⁰ Enjoyments. A Man cannot satisfy his Senses with those material Objects that strike 'em most agreeably, much less the large Desires of his Mind. 'Tis as easy to paint a Sound to please the Ear, or to appease vehement Thirst with the Image of a Fountain, as to render our Souls happy by the sensual Delights of this World. The Eye is not satisfy'd with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing. Now if all the Glitter and Pomp of this lower World cannot satisfy our Eyes, nor the most charming Musick and agreeable Sounds our Ears, how is it likely that any of these things alone should render a Soul happy, that is capable of higher Enjoyments, and was made for Rational and Divine Pleasures?

Men will be always fluctuating, till they have found an Object which is adequate to the Desires of their Minds; for tho our Minds are finite, yet we have powerful Affections, and strong and vehement Desires; which nothing can satisfy, but that God who possesses all imaginable Perfections: and therefore the Psalmist, when he had made the strictest inquiry after Happiness, concludes that God was the Supreme Good, and consequently the only Happiness, and the proper Rest and Center of his Soul: *Whom, says he, have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee!*

One reason why no sensual Pleasures can render us happy, is, because we are always desiring more than we enjoy; tho after we have attain'd what we most importunately desir'd, we find the Observation of the Wise-Man true, *That all cometh is Vanity*, as well as all that is past. Which also confirms the Truth of the following Remark, which I have somewhere met with, *viz.* That all sensual Pleasures are founded upon Ignorance, and that a wise Man can find no Paradise here, tho the Fool imagines he can.

Again, The Enjoyments of this present World that excite the extravagant Mirth of Sinners, are uncertain; they have no Security that they shall enjoy them a moment to come. It has been

¹⁰ Terrene: Belonging to the earth or to this world; earthly; worldly, secular, temporal, material, human (as opposed to heavenly, eternal, spiritual, divine). *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

frequently observ'd, even by the Pagan Philosophers, that those Objects that are enjoy'd but a little time, and are subject to Corruption, cannot merit the Desire, nor are they worthy the Esteem of Immortal Spirits.

Now all earthly Enjoyments perish in the using; they insensibly and suddenly slide from us: and if it were not so, we cannot continue here long to possess 'em. *For what is our Life! 'tis even a Vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* And the Apostle tells us, that the Pleasures of Sin are but for a season. And the Wise-Man calls the Things of this World, Things that are not: *Why wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not! For Riches certainly make to themselves Wings, they flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* Those that have had the highest Posts of Honour, have suddenly slid into Disgrace; for such stand in slippery Places. What Diseases has the Intemperance of some brought upon 'em? So that the little time they have enjoy'd their sensual Pleasures, has convinc'd 'em, that their Happiness was but imaginary and very incomplete. *Who hath Woe? Who hath Sorrow? Who hath Contentions? Who hath Babbling? Who hath Wounds without Cause? Who hath Redness of Eyes? they that tarry long at the Wine, they that go to seek mixt Wine.*¹¹

'Tis an excellent Observation of a modern Divine, who, speaking of Intemperance, says, "It is very visible, that all sensual Excess is naturally attended with a double Inconvenience: as it goes beyond the Limits of Nature, it begets bodily Pains and Diseases; as it transgresses the Rules of Reason and Religion, it breeds Disquiet and Remorse in the Mind: and these are beyond comparison, the two greatest Evils in this World; a diseased Body, and a discontented Mind."

How foolish then is it for Men to place their Happiness in the Pleasures of Sin, that are constantly mix'd with some present Trouble, and without Repentance will be certainly follow'd with exquisite and eternal Misery?

That can't be a complete Happiness, which depends upon ten thousand Uncertainties; yet this is the Condition of all Sinners, who place their Happiness in the things of this Life. Let a wicked Man have ever such vast Possessions, he has no Security that he shall enjoy 'em one Minute; and when his Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures are gone from him, all his Happiness is departed, and he is a miserable forlorn undone Man. Therefore for Young or Old to spend their time in extravagant Mirth, *walking in the way of their Hearts, and the sight of their Eyes,* is the most unreasonable thing in the World; because those Pleasures they pursue (tho they were much greater than they are) they have no security of enjoying long. Now every poor Sinner has a Soul that shall out-last this World, and all the Enjoyments of it; so that if he could please his Senses, and gratify his Lusts, and have all that his Heart desir'd as long as he liv'd, yet at Death he would be undone; for then he and his Happiness must part, and part for ever too: whereas those that are truly Religious, and have chosen the better part, have chosen such a part as shall never be taken from them.

Again, The Absurdity of these Sensualists will further appear, if we consider, that their extravagant Mirth has a tendency to make 'em insensible and stupid. When Men abuse the Blessings of Heaven to Vanity and Pride, Idleness and Luxury, they lay aside that Reverence they owe to the Divine Majesty; for God is not in all their Thoughts: and instead of trembling at God's Judgments, they harden their Hearts from his Fear. With what Insolence did *Nebuchadnezzar* speak, when under the Transports of an excessive Joy, upon his observing his magnificent Buildings! *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the Might of my Power, and for the Honour of my Majesty?* Again, *David* is also a remarkable, but sad Instance, how sensual Pleasures stupify the Mind; for tho he must needs have sinn'd against the Light of his Conscience in the

11 Prov. 23, 29, 30.

matter of *Uriah*, yet he seems for several Months, to be insensible of his Folly: nay, tho he condemn'd the Action in a second Person, which he himself had been guilty of, yet his Mind was so stupid that he was not touch'd with a true sense of his Sin, till *Nathan* had the Courage to charge his Guilt home, and to tell him in express words, *Thou are the Man*. Carnal Pleasures enervate the Vigour of our Spirits, cloud the Mind, and corrupt the Affections, and make Men daring and bold in Sin. When People run on smoothly in Vice, and meet with very little interruption, they are soon lost to all sense of Religion; for as the Psalmist has observ'd of such, *Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God*.¹²

Again, The Folly of these Sensualists will further appear, if we consider them in a State of Nature, under the Curse of the Law, under the Wrath of God, and condemn'd already; how ill-suted is an extravagant Mirth to the Circumstances of such Persons?

Should we not think it a very unreasonable, a very unbecoming thing, to see a poor condemn'd Malefactor giving himself up to all kinds of Diversion, when he is hourly expecting the Officers of Justice to lead him to the place of Execution? But how much more unseemly and unreasonable is it, for a poor Sinner to continue his extravagant Mirth and mad Frolicks, when he knows not but the next Moment he shall have his Portion in that Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone?

Again, He that places his Happiness in sensual Enjoyments, acts the most unreasonable part, as will appear, by comparing the sordid Pleasures of Sin with the noble and rational Pleasures of Religion: I mean, not only the Pleasures of Communion with God in this World, but also the more refin'd Delights of the other. *The ways of Wisdom, now, are ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*; and good Men have that Joy which no Stranger can intermeddle with: but Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither has it ever enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive what God has laid up, what he has reserv'd and prepar'd in the other World for them that love him. But alas! all sensual Enjoyments are empty and unsatisfying, mix'd and fleeting; they effeminate and debase our Minds, occasion Anxiety and Trouble here: but that which is infinitely worse, they expose Persons hereafter to Miseries that shall be endless and eternal.

The Pain of a restless Desire does frequently over-balance the Pleasures of Enjoyment. The first Taste indeed a Man has of forbidden Delights, is usually grateful, tho it never answers the height of Expectation: But after the same Pleasures have been frequently repeated, they grow flat; and a few years trial of the Vanity of the World, makes a Man loath what he once fondly admir'd. All Excess in sensual Pleasures is an Enemy to Nature: for if our Pleasures are too intense, they certainly incommode us, because we don't so properly enjoy as suffer them. So that, in short, all the sensual Enjoyments of this Life, which Men falsly call Pleasure and Happiness, are rather an eager and importunate Desire of Happiness, than Happiness it self: for no sooner have we obtain'd our Wishes, but our Pleasures die; and then are we as restless in the pursuit of Happiness as we were before, in vain attempting to perpetuate our Pleasures in an endless Circle of Variety; tho this Scene of Vanity, with which the World presents us, has cheated and deceiv'd us times without number.

Whereas the Pleasures of the future State are of a rational and sublime nature, such as an eternal Enjoyment will not lessen, but improve; they will never tire, tho they may help to enlarge the Faculties of our Minds: for 'tis no less than an infinite Good, which the Righteous shall enjoy in the Life to come. Now the longer we enjoy so great a Good, the more we shall value it; and in proportion to our Knowledge will be our Love, Joy, and Satisfaction, which shall continue thro the Ages of Eternity. The Happiness of Heaven may, in some sense, be said every minute to comprehend in it the Pleasures of an Eternity; because we shall always have an Eternity of

12 Psal. 55. 19.

Pleasures before us. Now what comparison is there betwixt the transient Pleasures of Sin, and the eternal Delights of Heaven? The former are fleeting, but the latter never end; they are always improving, always fresh, such as shall never be interrupted, nor fall under any abatement or decay. Happiness not only comprehends a freedom from Diseases and Death, but also from all Anxiety and Trouble of Mind. And this is to be obtain'd by Religion, which frees a Man from the greatest Evils, and raises him to the Enjoyment of the highest and chiefest Good. The Favour of God is infinitely to be prefer'd to the Friendship of the World. Who would not then much rather chuse the former, tho it should be attended with present Sufferings, than the latter, tho it might be enjoy'd with some transient Pleasures, but infallibly succeeded with eternal Torments?

But finally, The Reproaches that all Sensualists meet with from Conscience now, and the dreadful Expectation of a Judgment hereafter, give them very great uneasiness within, tho they endeavour, before others, to appear with a great deal of Gayity and Mirth. A prosperous Sinner may make a shift for a little while to shake off his Fears, and pursue his carnal Delights; but if any grievous Calamity be in view, his Fears return with greater force: and tho he hurries from place to place, and uses all the little Arts of Diversion, he will be restless, and feel Pain and Uneasiness with in. *The Wicked are Like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Indeed such may dissemble their Condition, and make an appearance of Satisfaction; but God, that is acquainted with the Secrets of all Hearts, knows what Horror rages in their Breast.

Ask a young Debauchee (if his Conscience is not fear'd) what Relish remains upon his Mind of the Pleasures of the last Night, now the agreeable Taste of the Wine is gone? Let his sick Stomach, and his aching Head, and his guilty Conscience relate the Pleasures of the last drunken Frottick. The poor Wretch, it may be, will smile in the Morning, when he sees his Companions in Sin; because he would not seem to be so far tainted with what they call Superstition, and so troubled with Religion, as to truckle¹³ to Conscience. But what does the unhappy Man feel within! especially when he comes to lie upon a sick Bed, and has a near view of Death and Hell, and apprehends he is just ready to be seiz'd by the one, and sink into the other. Indeed some People stupify Conscience very early; yet those very Persons, when they come within the view of Eternity, are often awaken'd; and then they are ready to cry out after this dreadful manner: "Lord, what shall I do, whither shall I go, to whom shall I fly! What must I, what may I, what can I do! I am so sick, that I despair of Life; I am so guilty, that I am terribly afraid of Death: I have been so wicked, that I cannot pray; and if I could, I am afraid that God will never have Mercy on me: for I have defy'd his Power, believ'd his Truth, burlesqu'd¹⁴ his Patience, and constantly abus'd his Goodness. Good God! what have I done! Lord, what have I not done, that is vile and ingrateful to Heaven! Now I must feel what I would not believe, and my short merry Life must have a sorrowful Conclusion. I am now leaving this World; and all I can expect, is to be condemn'd for ever in the next, for ever to be condemn'd, for ever! And yet that is not all; for if there be any sharper Torments, any fiercer Damnation assign'd to some than others, that shall be my Portion: since I sinn'd against the clearest Light, the strongest Convictions of Conscience, and the highest Expressions of the Divine Love."

Tell me then, thou young and careless Sinner, whether thy sinful Mirth is not Madness, when it is likely to issue in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. *Wo unto you that laugh now, ye shall mourn and weep. For know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.*

13 Truckle. To take a subordinate or inferior position; to be subservient, to submit, to give precedence. Const. *under, to. Obsolete.* *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

14 Burlesque, v. transitive. To turn into ridicule by grotesque parody or imitation; to caricature, travesty. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

Secondly, Here is the excellent Advice which is given by the Wise-Man, to restrain young People in their vain Pursuits: He recommends to them the serious Consideration of a Judgment to come. *Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.*

The Royal Preacher knew very well, that young People were apt to be daring and bold, and, against the Remonstrance of Reason and Conscience, to rush into Sin; that they seldom enter into their own Breasts, to acquaint themselves with the Plague of their own Hearts; and that for want of Consideration and Reflection, Experience and a solid Judgment, they would be backward to entertain any grave Advice, and be impatient of all Restraints. For the extravagant Mirth, in which they who are in the Bloom of Youth do often indulge themselves, does usually put Reason besides its guard; and then no wonder if they are drawn into Sin by every tempting Object. Now, I say, the Wise-Man being very sensible of the danger young People were in, thought nothing more proper for their Consideration, than the Doctrine of a future Judgment. *Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.* This is an Article of Faith of the last Importance, and has something in it very solemn and awful, and commands our serious and reverent Attention: And certainly if ever we are serious, it's reasonable we should be so, when we are hearing a Discourse upon the last and general Judgment, that shall determine the everlasting State of all Mankind. Now concerning the future Judgment, there are several things that will afford us many profitable Reflections: As,

1. The Certainty of it.
2. The Extent of it.
3. The Impartiality with which it shall be administer'd.
4. The immediate Consequences thereof, both with regard to the Righteous and the Wicked.

Which four things, if duly weigh'd, will give an effectual check to the Jollity and extravagant Mirth of young People.

1. Let us seriously consider the Certainty of a future Judgment, what Reasons there are to induce us to believe there will be a Day wherein God will judg the World; for unless Men are fully persuaded of this, 'tis not likely to make any great Impression on their Consciences, or to have any considerable influence on the Reformation of their Lives. Indeed if Men could look into Heaven or Hell, while they are in this World, and observe the great difference there in the Condition and Circumstances of good and bad Spirits departed; if in this present State Men could discern what a vast Gulph is fix'd between the Souls that are in Prison, and the Spirits that are in Paradise, Men would not need to have the Certainty of a future Judgment prov'd to 'em by a chain of Arguments; for then the matter would be evident to Sense. But alas! the future State is invisible to us at present; and it must be Reason or Revelation, or both, that can convince Men they shall hereafter give an account of themselves to God.

I shall therefore touch on a few Arguments, from which we may infer the Certainty of a future Judgment: And in all these Arguments I must take it for granted, that you believe the Being of a God, who possesses all imaginable Perfections.

Now we may reasonably conclude, that there will be a future Judgment, if we consider our relation to God, as Creatures to a Creator. God being our Creator, has an absolute Right to govern us: And if we are under the Government of the Supreme Majesty, as we are certain he will govern us agreeably to the Perfections of his own Nature; so we are sure that the Laws he'll govern us by, shall be suted to the Faculties and Powers of our Natures. Since then God has endow'd us with Reason to judg of Right and Wrong, and has given us liberty of Choice, and subjected us to a Law as the Rule of our

Duty; I think 'tis evident, that we are accountable for our Actions: and if accountable, it may reasonably be expected, that he that made and governs us, will call us to an Account. I allow, if Men were under no Law, they could be guilty of no Transgressions, and consequently would be exempted from giving any account of their Actions to the Supreme Being. But since 'tis granted, that Almighty God does govern the World after the best manner, sutable to the Hopes and Fears of rational Creatures, which cannot be without the Assurance of Rewards and Punishments, agreeable to Mens Actions; 'tis highly reasonable to conclude, that Men, who have Rational Powers, and are under a Law, who have the liberty of Choice, and are dependent on Him that made them, will most certainly be judg'd by him. If it be thought reasonable amongst Men, that all Inferiors should be accountable to those that are their Superiors, on whom they depend; there is a much stronger Reason for as to believe, that all Mankind shall give an account to the God that made them, and does govern them.

Again, if there is a natural and absolute difference betwixt Good and Evil, antecedent to all positive Laws, whether Human or Divine; then 'tis reasonable to conclude, that the righteous Sovereign of the World will reward Vertue and punish Vice: unless we can suppose, that the Supreme Majesty will have less regard to his own Laws, than Men have to theirs. Indeed Mr. *Hobbs*,¹⁵ and some of his Admirers, have affirm'd, that Vertue and Vice are arbitrary things; but certainly if Holiness, Justice, and Goodness, are essential and necessary Perfections of the Divine Nature, then there must be a natural and eternal difference between Good and Evil. Some things in their own nature are intrinsically good, others in their own nature are absolutely evil; there is a real and essential difference betwixt adoring and blaspheming the God that made as, betwixt doing Justice to our Neighbour, and by Perfidiousness¹⁶ or Perjury depriving him of his Right: These things are so clear, that they carry their own Evidence with them. And if any Persons, thro a passionate regard to their Lusts, or the ill reasoning of Atheistical Men, should be so unhappy as to imagine that all Actions, in their own nature, are indifferent; that Vertue and Vice are arbitrary, and depend on the Pleasure and Caprice of Princes, and the establish'd Custom and Usage of Nations; I would intreat such at present only to put these two things to themselves: one is, Whether they are not better pleas'd with themselves, when they do Acts of Justice and Charity, than when they are guilty of Rapine and Violence?

Again, I would ask the Man that is for confounding the natural, necessary, and eternal Distinctions of Good and Evil, whether he would be willing that all who live in the same Kingdom with him should believe this? Whether he would persuade his Wife, and Children, and Servants, to entertain such Principles as these, viz. That Adultery, Rapine and Murder, are as eligible as Chastity, Honesty, and Charity? Now if a Man would not have all People believe this, it gives one a very shreud Suspicion, that he does not believe it himself: and had not some Men publish'd these dangerous Principles, one would have thought it impossible for reasonable Creatures to entertain an Opinion so contrary to the Ends of Government, so destructive to human Society, and so dishonourable both to the natural and moral Perfections of the Deity.

To close this Head: If the Distinction betwixt Vertue and Vice is justly founded, then that God, who necessarily loves Holiness and hates Sin, will call Men to an account for their Actions, so as to reward the Good, and punish the Bad.

Again, the Fears that possess the Minds of Men, after the commission of any gross Sins against the Law and Light of Nature, tho ever so secret, argue the certainty of a Judgment to come. Every Man has a Faculty or Power in his Mind that we call Conscience, which is the Judg of our moral Actions,

15 Likely, the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679); *Ed.*]

16 Perfidiousness, n. The quality of being perfidious; deceitfulness, unfaithfulness; treachery. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

and does acquit or condemn us according as our Actions are either good or bad, and so afford us either secret Pleasure or inward Remorse. I dare appeal to the most profligate and vicious Persons, whether there are not some fort of Actions which have that Turpitude¹⁷ and Baseness in them, tho they fall not under the cognizance of any human Tribunal, as to cause a secret Confusion, and an amazing Horror in their Minds. Now whence should these Fears spring, if there is no real difference betwixt Good and Evil, nor no Judgment to come? To this the Profane and Atheistical return, That these Fears are occasion'd by a superstitious Education. But that this is not a rational Account of this matter, will appear, if we consider how extensive these Fears are; they affect all Mankind, no Man can intirely shake them off: Such as are rais'd to the highest Dignity, and have made a considerable Progress in Infidelity and Atheism, cannot wholly chase away their guilty Fears. For those very Persons, who have pretended, by their Wit and Reason, to disabuse unthinking Men; by representing that the Doctrine of a future Judgment at best is but a State-Engine, to keep People in awe; I say, these very Men, when they have drawn near the brink of Eternity, have been quite dispirited,* and have been seiz'd with ten thousand guilty Fears, lest Hell should prove hotter than a painted Flame, and a future Judgment more terrible than an imaginary Assize. And I very much question, whether ever any Sinner in the World was perfectly freed from the Fears of the last Tribunal; and if there could be a few such Instances produc'd, it would not lessen the force of this Argument: especially if we consider, that if the Belief of a Judgment to come was not agreeable to natural Reason, it would be easy to eradicate those Fears which possess all mens Minds after they have violated the Divine Laws; for Men are very averse to every thing that occasions them Trouble and Disquiet. Now if the Fears of a future Judgment were not well founded, 'tis very strange that the Art, and Industry, and Reason of Mankind, have not long ago intirely scatter'd these Fears, since Men naturally desire Quiet and Peace within.

Moreover, if there was no real ground for these Fears, it would follow that Man, the noblest Being in this lower World, is so fram'd by the Almighty, as necessarily to torment himself, without any just reason or cause; while Creatures of an inferior Rank and Order enjoy what is sutable to their Natures without the same Anxiety or Trouble.

Again, we may conclude the certainty of a future Judgment from the disproportionate Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this World. We see that in some respects, in this Life, all things come alike to all; there is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked; as dieth the Fool, so dieth the righteous Man; he is swept away by the same common Calamity, drops by the same Disease, and his Dust mingles in the same Grave. Now if God is infinitely Just and Good, as all must acknowledg that own the being of a Deity; then for the display of these, as well as his other Attributes, 'tis of absolute necessarily there should be a future Judgment, that there may be a visible difference made betwixt the Righteous and the Wicked, betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. In this World the Wicked frequently prosper, and have all that Heart can wish; they flourish like a green Bay-Tree, and they have no Bands in their Death; they are not plagu'd like other Men, whereas Good Men, while here, meet with a thousand Disappointments, and have one Affliction treading close upon the heels of another, like the Messengers of *Job*; so that they pour out their Moisture in Floods of Tears, and spend their Years in Sighing. The Righteous often suffer in this World, in the common Calamities that are brought on Nations and Kingdoms, by Fire, and Plague, and Famine, and War: and not only so, but as *Job* observes, *The Tabernacles of the Robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure: The Proud are called happy, they that work Wickedness are set up, and they that tempt God are deliver'd.* And how does the prophet *Jeremy* expostulate upon this Head? *Wherefore doth the way of the Wicked prosper? wherefore are all they*

¹⁷ Base or shameful character; baseness, vileness; depravity, wickedness. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

* *Mr. Hobbs, a learned Advocate for Infidelity, as he us'd to be very uneasy if at any time alone in the dark, so when he was near expiring, was under such Amazement and Confusion, that the best account he could give of himself was, That he was about to take a Leap in the Dark.* [Possibly the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679); *Ed.*].

happy that deal treacherously? Now nothing can solve these Difficulties, and vindicate the Justice of the Divine Government, but the Certainty of a future Judgment, at which time God will reward every Man according to his Works. The Wise-Man tells us, that *he saw under the Sun the place of Judgment, that Wickedness was there.* He had observ'd that Corruption had crept into Courts of Judicature, so as that the Innocent had been condemn'd, but the Guilty discharg'd. Now from God's permitting of these things, he infers the Certainty of a future Judgment; for he presently adds, *I said in my Heart, God shall judg the Righteous and the Wicked:* q.d. From the promiscuous¹⁸ Dispensations of Divine Providence now, I am fully persuaded there will be another State, wherein there shall be a just Discrimination made betwixt good and bad Men, by rewarding the former, and punishing the latter, according to the Deeds done in the Body.

If there be a God, he must be Just; for the Attribute of Justice is so essential to the Godhead, that we may as well deny there is a God, as say that there is one, but he is not just. Now if God is Just and Good, and it does appear that Rewards and Punishments are not proportion'd to the Righteous and the Wicked here, 'tis infallibly certain there shall be a Judgment hereafter, wherein God's Love to the one, and his Displeasure against the other shall fully appear; so that his Justice and Goodness shall be conspicuous to Angels, Men and Devils. For the greater disproportion there is in the distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this World, the stronger is the Argument drawn from thence, that there will be a final Judgment in the World to come. For (as *Abraham* said) *shall not the Judg of all the Earth do right?*¹⁹ I'll allow that this Argument is commonly insisted on for the proof of a future Judgment (as an ingenious Modern has remark'd) "But 'tis nevertheless strongly conclusive and unanswerable; and hereby whoever denies a future State of Rewards and Punishments, must of necessity, by a chain of unavoidable Consequences,²⁰ be forc'd to recur to downright Athiesm."

Again, the Certainty of a future Judgment might be argu'd from the necessity there is of it, both to deter Men from Sin, and to encourage them in the practice of Religion. All Societies would soon disband, and all well-regulated Governments be exchange'd for Anarchy and Confusion, if the Belief of a future Judgment was banish'd from the Earth.

For if Men run into all Excesses of Riot now, tho they pretend to believe a future State, what inexpressible Mischiefs would follow the denial of this Doctrine? What then should restrain any Man from gratifying his Passions at the expence of another's Reputation and Life, provided he could carry it so privately, as not to expose himself to the Penalties of human Laws? Indeed the Atheistical are ready to acknowledg, that the Doctrine of a future Judgment is as well calculated for the good Government of the World, and the Preservation of Human Society, as any thing could be: which (as one observes) is a Concession of no small advantage to the Honour of our Holy Religion, considering that it proceeds from those that are open and avow'd Enemies to it. For by this acknowledgment they seem to own, that if the Doctrine of a future Judgment be not true, yet 'tis very fit it should be true, or at least 'tis very necessary that all reasonable Creatures that live in Society should believe it to be so.

Now if this Doctrine is so necessary to the good Government of the World, then 'tis more than probable there will be a future State of Rewards and Punishments; because it would reflect on the Perfections of God to suppose, that he has form'd Human Creatures after such a manner, that they cannot be conveniently govern'd without the belief of a Falshood.

18 Of an agent or agency: making no distinctions; indiscriminating. *Oxford English Dictionary*, online.

19 Gen. 18. 25.

20 Consequences. That which follows logically, or can be deduced or inferred; a logical result or inference. †Formerly, the conclusion of a syllogism as opposed to the premisses (obs.). *Oxford English Dictionary*, online.

I know some have advanc'd, That Vertue is its own Reward, and that Vice is Punishment enough to it self. But whoever reflects on the Conduct of those Philosophers that have inserted these Notions in their Writings, will find, that their Lusts and Passions were too strong for their Philosophy. I confess there are those Excellencies in Vertue, those powerful Attractives in real Goodness, that ought to determine our Choice, if there were no assurance of a future Reward: there is also something so unreasonable and so dishonourable to human Nature in Vice, that ought to make every Man abhor it, tho there were no Hell to punish it.

But alas, so great is the Depravity of human Nature, and so strong and violent are Mens Propensions to Sin, that even a Pagan has observ'd, That 'twas necessary to suppose a future State of Punishment, as the only effectual restraint from Vice; that (as he says*) *wicked Men might be under some Restraint in this Life: The Antients were of Opinion, there were certain Punishments appointed in the future State for impious Persons; well knowing, that if these were deny'd, Death it self would no longer be dreadful.*

Now if the Belief of a future Judgment is absolutely necessary to deter Men from Sin, and to furnish them with sutable Motives for Vertue and Religion; if 'tis necessary for the security and support of Human Society, we may reasonably conclude, that there will be a day when *every Man shall give an account of himself to God.*

Again, the Certainty of a future Judgment might be argu'd from the supposition of the Soul's Immortality; which Opinion has been almost universally believ'd and entertain'd in the World. It may also be infer'd from the strong Desires of Immortality, that seem to be interwoven with our Being, and implanted in the Minds of all Mankind. I might also add to these rational Considerations, a vast number of Testimonies from Pagan Writers: For 'tis remarkable, that the antient † Fathers in their Apologies for the Christian Religion, lay down the Doctrine of a future Judgment, as an Article which the *Gentiles* had already assented to.

Now over and above these rational Considerations to induce our Belief of a future Judgment, we have the most ample Testimonies of the Truth of this Doctrine in Divine Revelation; especially in the Writings of the New Testament, tho the Old is not without express proofs of this important Article of Faith. *Solomon* asserts it in our Text, and several other places in the same Book. And the Apostle *Jude* informs us, that there was a very early Discovery of this Truth, even to those that liv'd before the Flood: *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesy'd of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly Deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him.*

I know that many learned Men think, that this Text refers to God's Judicial Proceedings against the old World, when he destroy'd it with Water; yet such do not deny but that the Prophet *Enoch* might have a further meaning, and intend also to ascertain the final Judgment. But however that be, there are abundance of other Texts that do fully prove it: *St. Paul* is express, *That God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judg the World in Righteousness.*²¹ Our Saviour himself tells us, *The Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father with his Angels, and then he shall reward every Man according to his Work.*²² And the Apostle *Peter* affirms, that Christ gave his Disciples a special

* *Cic. Catil. 4.* – Ut aliqua in vita formido improbis esset, apud inferos ejusmodi quaedam illi antiqui supplicia impiis constituta esse voluerunt; quod videlicet intelligebant, his remotis, non esse mortem ipfam pertimefcendam.

† Justin Martyr, Tertullian, &c.

21 Acts 17. 31.

22 Mat. 16. 27.

Charge to preach this Doctrine of a Judgment to come: *And he commanded us to preach unto the People, and to testify that it is he which was ordain'd of God to be the Judg of Quick and Dead.*

Again, the Author to the *Hebrews* not only assures us, that 'tis appointed unto Men once to die; but he affirms also, *that after this is the Judgment.* Thus have I prov'd the Certainty of a Judgment to come, from Reason and Revelation; and can any one desire greater Assurance than this, for any future Event? We are as certain that there will be a future Judgment, as if it were already past, or as if we now saw the Heavens opening, and the Judg coming, and heard the Sound of the last Trump, that shall awaken the Dead. How should the Consideration then of this awful Truth strike a damp upon the criminal Mirth of Sinners, and cause young People frequently to ask themselves what is necessary to be done, that they may stand in Judgment! But I hasten to the second thing; and that is, to consider the Extent of this Judgment: which I shall do, both as to Persons and Things.

First, All human Persons shall be judg'd. The Scriptures indeed are very express concerning the fallen Angels, that they shall be judg'd; and therefore 'tis said, *They are reserv'd in everlasting Chains, under Darkness, to the Judgment of the Great Day.*²³ But my Text obliges me only to discourse of God's judging of Mankind. And that the whole Human Race shall be summon'd to Judgment, is abundantly evident from the Christian Revelation. St. Paul says, —*We shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me, and every Tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.*²⁴ That Generation of Men that shall be alive at our Saviour's second coming, shall not prevent those that sleep in the Dust; for as all the Dead shall be rais'd, so all the Living shall be chang'd, and all of both shall be judg'd. The Apostles were commission'd (as I hinted before) to *preach to the People, that Jesus shall be the Judg of Quick and Dead.*²⁵ The like Phrase we also meet with elsewhere: *Who shall give an account to him, who is ready to judg the Quick and the Dead;*²⁶ i.e. all that shall be alive when the Judg cometh, and all that have died from the beginning of the World to that day, shall be brought to Judgment. God is call'd, by way of Eminency, *The Judg of all the Earth.*²⁷ And 'tis represented, that *when Christ shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory, all Nations shall be gather'd before him.*²⁸

'Tis not the Quality or Circumstances of any, that will excuse them from appearing at the Bar of Christ: But all Persons of every Nation, Language, Kindred and Tongue, shall be summon'd to the Tribunal of the Son of God: High and Low, Rich and Poor, Male and Female, Young and Old, Learned and Ignorant, Barbarous and Civiliz'd, the Good and Bad, must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. Such as now refuse to approach a Throne of Grace, shall then, however unwilling, be forc'd to make their appearance before a Court of Justice. All civil Distinctions will be lost in the other World; Potentates and Princes shall stand upon the same level with Servants and Slaves. And agreeable to this is the Representation which St. John makes of the final Judgment: *And the Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the Rich Men, and the Chief Captains, and the Mighty Men, and every Bond-man, and every Free-man, hid themselves on the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains; and said to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb: for the great Day of his Wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* This will be a great Day indeed, not only with regard to the Appearance of the Judg, who shall come with all the ensigns of Pomp and Terror; but also with respect to that infinite number of Persons of all ranks and conditions, that shall then appear to be judg'd, and who notwithstanding all their vain attempts to conceal themselves, cannot go from the

23 Jude v. 6.

24 Rom. 13. 10, 11, 12.

25 Acts 10. 42.

26 1 Pet. 4. 5.

27 Gen. 18. 25.

28 Mat. 25. 32.

sight of their Judg, nor escape that Sentence which will determine their State for ever. And indeed if God should not call one Man to an account as well as another, it would be a Reflection upon his distributive Justice; and he would appear to be a Respector of Persons, than which nothing can be a greater reflection on the supreme Judg: *Who accepteth not the Persons of Princes, nor accepteth the Rich more than the Poor; for they are all the work of his hands.*²⁹ And St. John in his Vision tells us, *That he saw the Dead, both small and great, standing before God; and the Books were open'd, and the Dead were judg'd out of the things which were written in those Books; and the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it, and Death and the Grave gave up the Dead which were in them: and they were judg'd every man according to their Works.*

2. We are to consider the Extent of the Future Judgment, with respect to Things. For as it shall reach all Persons, so it shall be extended to all Things. The Wise-Man tells us, *That God shall bring every Work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* And shall the Sins of the Righteous as well as the Wicked be brought into Judgment? The Sins of the Righteous shall never be so mention'd at that day, as to bring them under any Shame and Confusion: for Shame and Confusion are part of the Punishment of the Damn'd; and we are assur'd that the Righteous shall not rise to be punish'd, but rewarded.

Again, If the Sins of the Righteous should be mention'd in Judgment, it shall be to illustrate the Glory of God's free Grace in the pardoning of them; and to engage and excite those blessed Souls to admire and adore the infinite extent of the Divine Love, as 'tis display'd in the Purchase of their Pardon by the Blood of the Lamb. Tho I confess, I am at present inclin'd to think, that those Sins which God casts behind his back here, and blots out as a thick cloud, will never be mention'd in the last Judgment; and that it will be only the Good-works of the Righteous and the Sins of the Wicked, that shall be brought into Judgment.

'Tis a gross mistake that most wicked Men indulge themselves in, who imagine that Thoughts are free, and that they may think what they please without being criminal; whereas the Apostle *Paul*, speaking of the Day of Judgment, calls it, *The Day when God shall judg the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ.* – All the vain Desires and ill Purposes that Men form in their Minds, every proud, lustful, blasphemous, revengeful Thought shall be accounted for in the great Day of Retribution, as well as their Words and Actions. And this may be argu'd from the Nature of these things: for if the Heart be the Source from which Sin springs, and if the Design and Intention, strictly consider'd, be the formal difference of moral Good and Evil; these, I say, being corrupt and bad, no other Consideration whatsoever can alter the nature of such things, and make them good: and therefore they being criminal, shall be accounted for when the Lord cometh, *Who will bring to light the hidden things of Darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Heart.*³⁰ The Pharisees of old imagin'd indeed that they might indulge themselves in wanton and revengeful Thoughts: but our Blessed Saviour tells them plainly in his Sermon on the Mount, *That if they indulge impure Desires and causless Anger, they break those Precepts that forbid Adultery and Murder.*

Again, We must give an account of our Words as well as our Thoughts. How disagreeable soever this may be to those who say their Tongues are their own, who is Lord over them! yet 'tis certainly true. For as the Apostle *James* observes, *Tho the Tongue is a little Member, it boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the Tongue is a fire, a world of Iniquity: so is the Tongue among our Members, that it defileth the whole Body, and setteth on fire the course of Nature, and it is set on fire of Hell.*³¹ Now if our Words have so ill an influence on Mankind, 'tis very reasonable that we should be accountable for these, as well as those sinful Actions consequent

29 Job 34. 18, 19.

30 1 Cor. 4. 5.

31 James 3. 5, 6.

upon them. When the Judg cometh, he shall not only *convince Men of their ungodly Deeds*, but of *all their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him*.³² How awful are those Expressions of our Saviour! *But I say unto you, that every idle word that Men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment; for by thy Words thou shalt be justify'd, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemn'd*.³³ If this be true, as certainly it is, what will those do, where shall they appear, that have represented our Lord as an Impostor, who make no other mention of his Blood and Wounds, than by their Oaths and Imprecations to profane them; and make that very Record which God hath given of his Son, the Subject of their Ridicule and Banter? If Men shall be accountable for all those words that do not answer the original Design of Speech, what a heavy account will they have to give, whose leud Discourses have led others into Sin; whose passionate and revengeful Expressions have made them appear more like Furies than Men; who by officious Lyes and malicious Slanders have stab'd the Reputation of Good Men, and drawn down an Odium on Religion it self? Again, all your secret Sins, as well as those that are visible to the world, must be accounted for: what you have committed in the Closet and in the Chamber, when you thought that no Eye had seen you, shall be publicly examin'd in the great Day of our Lord's appearing. *The ways of Man now are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*.³⁴ *He knoweth our paths and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways*.³⁵ *There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves*.³⁶ Now as all things you do in this World, tho ever so secret, are open to the view of an Omniscient God, they shall most certainly be consider'd, and severely scann'd at the last Tribunal. No secret Impurity, no dissembled Malice, no artificial Hypocrisy or subtle Fraud, can be conceal'd from the Judg of Quick and Dead. *For there is nothing cover'd that shall not be reveal'd, neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaim'd on the house-tops*.³⁷ Many People are so atheistical and foolish, as to imagine that if they sin secretly and in the dark, they are very secure; forgetting that *the Darkness hideth not from God, but the Night shineth as the Day; the Darkness and the Light are both alike to him*.

Again, We shall be call'd to an account for neglecting to do the good which was in our power to do, and for not improving the various Talents committed to our Trust: *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin*.³⁸ And (says our Saviour) *that Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepar'd not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many stripes*. The generality of People, 'tis to be fear'd, think that the frequent Neglects of Duty are but venial³⁹ Sins; or else why do so many content themselves, if they do but abstain from some notorious Vices, tho they take no care at all to practise the contrary Vertues? How few that have great Estates, ever consider what proportion of Tribute they own to the support of Religion, or what they are oblig'd to do in charity to the Poor! forgetting, without doubt, what our Saviour says, *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be requir'd*.⁴⁰ We find in the Representation that is given us of the final Process, that the Judg accuses and condemns Sinners for their Omissions: *Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels. For I was hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not*.⁴¹ We also learn from the Parable of the Talents, that not to improve what we are

32 Jude v. 15.

33 Mat. 12. 36, 37.

34 Prov. 5. 21.

35 Ps. 139. 2.

36 Job 34. 21. [The should be Job 34:22, Ed.]

37 Luke 12. 34.

38 Jam. 4. 17.

39 A venial sin or offence; a light fault or error. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

40 Luke 12. 48.

41 Mat. 25. 41.

intrusted with, will expose us to the displeasure of our Judge: The unhappy Man mention'd in the Parable had not squander'd away his Talent, but *hid it in the Earth*, never made any improvement of it; upon which his Talent is taken from him, he is pronounc'd an unprofitable Servant, and consign'd over to the dark and dismal Regions below, where there is perpetual weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. We likewise find that the foolish Virgins were deny'd entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, because they neglected to get *Oil in their Lamps*. How should this awaken the Consideration of those, who dream away the first and best part of their time in sloth and idleness, and wholly neglect to look after the one thing needful, and to prepare themselves for the last Tribunal! Remember, O stupid Man, that thou shalt be accountable for all the Advantages God gives thee of serving him in this World; for thy Power and Interest, thy Estate and Time, for thy Health and Strength, and for all thy intellectual Abilities. Moreover, consider that thou shalt be judg'd not only for thine own Sins, but the Sins of other Men, so far as thou hast been the cause of them: And if this be so, how much does it concern Ministers, Magistrates, Parents, and Masters of Families, to set good examples, and to do their utmost to prevent such Peoples falling into sin, who are under their special care? *Eli's* omitting to restrain the vile Practices of his Sons, drew down the Divine Displeasure upon himself. I would to God we all might seriously think of this, and be very cautious lest we contribute towards the Sins and Follies of other Men, either by consenting to them, or giving them advice and assistance to compass their ill designs, or by using any arguments to corrupt their Judgment, or stop the mouth of Conscience. To be damn'd alone, is dreadful beyond expression; but to go to Hell, drawing after us vast multitudes of those we have tempted to sin, will expose us to a double Damnation.

Finally, All the Aggravations of our Sins shall be look'd into and examin'd; and we shall be judg'd not only for those that have been committed against the Light of our Minds, and the Remonstrances of Conscience, but also for Sins of Ignorance: You shall not only be call'd to an account for what you know of your Duty, and yet have neglected, but for that which you have not known, yet might have known, because you were favour'd with the means and advantages of knowing it. If the Heathens are inexcusable for stifling the feebler Convictions of natural Light, and for the gross Conceptions they had of Almighty God, when they might have easily discern'd his Perfections from the Works of Nature; how much more inexcusable shall they be, who remain grosly ignorant in a Land of Light, and with that Book in their hands, *wherein Life and Immortality are brought to light*? Affected Ignorance must needs be criminal, notwithstanding the Honour that is confer'd upon it by the Roman Church, which makes it *the Mother of their Devotion*. That Man who is willingly ignorant, that he may indulge himself in Vice, and in the neglect of his Duty to God, chuses Sin with its penal effects; and if he is damn'd, he does but inherit his own Choice.

Now as all the Sins of the Wicked shall be look'd into and punish'd, so all the Good-works of the Righteous, how secretly soever they have been perform'd here, shall hereafter be openly rewarded. When our Saviour gives direction about secret Prayer, he adds this encouraging Motive; *Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*⁴² 'Tis remarkable that in the description of the last Judgment, our Blessed Saviour takes special notice of the Charity of Good Men, and before all the world acknowledges that he took it as kindly as if he himself had actually receiv'd their Alms; therefore after he had invited them to enter on their Inheritance, and to receive their Reward, he adds, *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*⁴³ God will not be unrighteous, to forget your Work and Labour of Love. But,

42 Mat. 6. 6.

43 Mat. 25. 35, 36.

3. We are to discourse of the Righteousness and Impartiality with which the last Judgment shall be administer'd.

The Administration of the future Judgment belongs to God; for he is the supreme Governour of the Universe: And as he has given Laws to the World, so 'tis a branch of his Sovereignty to judg Men by those Rules he has given them. But however, 'tis very plainly reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures, that the future Judgment shall be administer'd by our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is God-Man, or Mediator: *The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son.* And we are assur'd that *God has appointed a Day, in the which he will judg the World in Righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordain'd, whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath rais'd him from the dead.* Now Christ as God possesses all Perfections equal with the Father; and as Man he is *holy, harmless, undefil'd, and separate from Sinners.* And he is describ'd in Scripture by his *loving Righteousness, and hating of iniquity.* And the Prophet *Isaiah* speaking of him, says, *He shall not judg after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with Righteousness shall he judg the Poor.*⁴⁴ He will proceed with all Men impartially; no external Appearances shall engage his Favour, or increase his Severity. He'll examine every Cause thorowly, without any partial regard to one more than another; for as St. *Peter* observes, *He without respect of Persons judgeth all Men.* In human Judicatures, Justice is some-times perverted, the Innocent are condemn'd, and the Guilty acquitted; but at the last Judgment every one shall have a fair and equal trial: for the Judg will proceed with all Men according to the Laws they have liv'd under. *For as many as have sinn'd without Law, shall also perish without Law; and as many as have sinn'd in the Law, shall be judg'd by the Law.*⁴⁵ But such as have had the unspeakable Advantages of the Gospel-Revelation, shall be proceeded with according to that Rule: therefore says St. *Paul*, *God will judg the Secrets of Men by Christ Jesus, according to my Gospel.*⁴⁶ Every Man may know in this Life how it will go with him in the next, if he will impartially examine himself by the Divine Word: for all those whom the Gospel pronounces righteous, the Judg will acquit; but such whom the Gospel condemns for their Wickedness, shall not stand in Judgment. *God will render to every Man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality; Eternal Life. But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But Glory, Honour, and Peace to every Man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of Per/ons with God.*⁴⁷ Some have had the vanity and folly to say, that they doubted not but God Almighty would have some regard to their Extraction and Quality, and make some allowances to them more than to others of an inferior rank, when they should appear before his Tribunal: But the Scriptures are express, that God regards no Man in Judgment for his external Circumstances, but will proceed with the same steddiness and impartiality with the Rich as the Poor: *God it no Respector of Persons; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*⁴⁸ But,

4. We are to consider the immediate Consequences of the future Judgment, both with regard to the Righteous and the Wicked: *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*⁴⁹ To all good Men the Judg will say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you from the Foundation of the World:*⁵⁰ But to all the Wicked, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.*⁵¹ These

44 Isa. 11. 2, 3.

45 Rom. 2. 10.

46 Rom. 2. 16.

47 Rom. 2. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

48 Acts 10. 34, 35.

49 Mat. 25. 46.

50 Mat. 25. 34.

51 Ver. 41.

different Sentences shall determine the final State of good and bad Men for ever: Therefore 'tis call'd in Scripture the *Eternal Judgment*, from which there can be no Appeal. I shall not now go about to describe the Joy of those happy Souls who at that time shall be acquitted, or the Misery and Torment of those that shall then be condemn'd; but only observe, that the Sentence of the Judg will fix both the one and the other in an unalterable state.

Thus have I gone over the two general Heads of Discourse I propos'd to insist upon: It only remains, that I tell you what use we should make of this awful Subject, suitable to the sad Solemnities of a Funeral. And tho divers Inferences might be properly deduc'd from this Discourse, I shall only at present address my self to two sorts of Persons, and so conclude. And,

(1.) If it's so unreasonable, as you have heard, for young People to *walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes*; how much more is it so, for those to act thus, who are advanc'd in years? For antient People to act with the precipitation and rashness of Youth, to abandon themselves to extravagant Mirth and Jollity; is one of the most unreasonable and absurd things in the world. Yet how many, that are ready to drop into the grave, please themselves with the glitter and pomp of this World, and are continually running into all excesses of riot! Surely the time past is more than enough, that thou hast spent in Sin and Folly: is thy Sun just setting, and art thou as vain as in the heat of Youth? Art thou on the brink of the grave, and yet as prodigal of thy Time as if thou hadst an Age before thee? Good God! what folly, what madness are these People guilty of? *Oh that they did but know the things that belong to their Peace, before they are hid from their eyes!* Oh that I could but prevail with antient People, who have spent all their days in sin and folly, to pause a little, and think over what they have been doing, and what an account they are able to give of their Time and Talents to the Judg of the World! Methinks those that are old in sin should blush and be confounded, when they see young ones devoted to God betimes, who have made a progress in Religion, and are almost ripe for Heaven; while they, unhappy People! have not taken one step towards it, but have been all their lives *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the fearful Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. Awake, awake, thou that sleepest! Arise from the Dead, and Christ shall give thee Light!* Delay not one moment longer; flee to Jesus the only Saviour, lest your Hearts should be harden'd thro the Deceitfulness of Sin.

(2.) To you that are young, to whom the Wise-Man principally addresses himself. If the future Judgment is so certain and so extensive, and shall be impartially administer'd and attended with such awful Consequences as you have heard; then how reasonable is it, that you often think on this Judgment, and speedily prepare for it?

If you believe there shall be a future Judgment, often meditate upon it; and seriously consider *what manner of Persons ye ought to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, waiting for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.*⁵² Often think with your selves, that you see the Son of Man coming in flaming Fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, nor obey the Gospel; that you see the Throne fix'd, and the Books open'd, out of which you are to be judg'd; that you hear the sound of the last Trump, saying, *Arise ye Dead, and come to Judgment.* If thou didst but often think thus, and get thy Faith strengthen'd in this great Article, it would certainly have the same effect upon thee, as if all these things were actually present. And consider with thy self, that if this Day be so amazing at a distance, that the thoughts of it even chill your Blood and Spirits; with what inexpressible horror shall unprepar'd Sinners be struck, when it comes to be present! Will you not think of this, O ye dissolute Sinners? Now, it may be, you are admir'd and caress'd for the

52 2 Pet. 3. 11, 12.

Profane Sallies⁵³ of your Wit, when you reflect⁵⁴ on a crucify'd Saviour; but what will you do when the Judg cometh? and how near the last great and terrible Day is, we cannot tell: *For it will come as a Thief in the night, and as a Snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth.* But however that be, whenever you are seiz'd by Death, you'll be past all Opportunities of correcting the Disorders of Life; so that the danger of being unprepar'd for Death must needs be the same as to be unprepar'd for the Day of Judgment: for the Day of Death will as effectually determine the State of individual Persons, as the last Judgment shall that of the whole World. Therefore in the height of all your Pleasure, pause a little, and consider, *That for all these things God will bring you into Judgment;* and labour that, whether present or absent, you may be accepted of God in Christ: As was the Care of that young Person, who desir'd that this Text might be preach'd on at his Funeral, hoping probably that it would be of some use to those young People that might survive him.

Mr. *George Stennett* was well known to you in this Assembly, concerning whom I have several things to say that are praise-worthy, and that deserve the imitation of young People. He consecrated himself very early to the Service of the Sacred Trinity in Holy Baptism: and when he had thus evidenc'd his Love to the Redeemer, by submitting to his Authority and Example, he did not imagine that his Work was done, but did frequently look into his State, and examin'd himself by those Characters he found descriptive of true Christians in the Word of God.

It pleas'd God to exercise him with a languishing Sickness for several months, till his Body was wasted and decay'd: Sometimes he had Doubts and Fears, and thro the Temptations of Satan was ready to question his Interest in Christ, and did most importunately desire the Assurance of the Love of God: and, what was very remarkable in his Sickness, he retain'd an extraordinary Tenderness of Conscience, being afraid of every thing that look'd like Sin. In the former part of his Illness, he was desirous to live: but when he drew near the Period of his Days, and God had given a very signal Return to his Prayers, and had lifted up the Light of his Countenance upon his Soul, and heightned his Hope into full Assurance; he could then rejoice in the near Views of Death, with *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.* And now I am speaking of God's answering his Prayers, it may not be improper to mention, that about four Hours before his Death he pray'd with a great deal of Submission to the Divine Will, that his Passage into the other World might be easy, and that, as a Token for good, God would be pleas'd to grant him a little Rest. He had no sooner ended his Prayer, but he fell asleep for above two hours, which was more than he had done for some time before; and when he awoke, 'tis not to be express'd with what Thankfulness and Joy he spake of the Divine Goodness: "How good is God (says he) to me, that he should hear my Prayer, and condescend to answer my poor Petition in the very punctilio⁵⁵ of it? This is an Encouragement for us to believe, that God will answer the other part of my Petition also, and that I shall have an easy Passage."

And as 'twas said of *Stephen*, That his Face shone, so I am told by those who saw him expire, That the extreme Joy of his Mind spread such a Serenity and Alacrity in his Countenance, that no words can describe; much less can I tell you what Satisfaction reign'd in his Mind. He was got above the Fears of Death, or the Desires of Life; for he declar'd, "That he would not come back for a Thousand nor a Thousand, yea not for Ten Thousand Worlds. I am going, said he, where I long to be, in my Father's House that is not made with Hands, whose Builder and Maker is God, Eternal in the Heavens. Oh I am going to the blessed Jesus, and to the innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of Just Men made perfect! I am going just now, presently, presently, to see him Face to Face as he is, and not in a Glass. Oh I am in pain till I am there! I long to be at home with my

53 Sally. A sudden departure from the bounds of custom, prudence, or propriety; an audacious or adventurous proceeding, an escapade. Now rare. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

54 Intransitive. To make a negative remark or judgement about; to censure, blame; to criticize, disparage. Now rare. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

55 Punctilio. Strict observance of or insistence upon minutiae of action or conduct. *Oxford English Dictionary* online.

Heavenly Father, and with the Blessed Jesus, that I may enjoy him for ever!” Then bowing (as he sat in his Chair) to each Person in the room, he took his solemn leave of them, in hope, as he said, to meet them again in Heaven; but stretch’d out his Hand to one of his Brothers with more than ordinary earnestness, exhorting him more than once to forsake his Sins.

And as long as he could raise his dying Arms; he wav’d them to shew his Joy and Triumph; and while he sat smiling, the Union betwixt Soul and Body easily dissolv’d, and his Spirit fled to the Regions of Eternal Bliss. Let us not therefore sorrow as those without hope; for if we believe that Jesus dy’d and rose again, even so those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

This text was transcribed from image files generated from the Google Books version of John Piggott’s book, *Eleven Sermons Preach’d Upon Special Occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 424-472 (<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=ARkHAAAAQAAJ>). The original is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

Note: In the original text, there were a number of marginal references (mainly Scripture references). These have been rendered as footnotes in this text. The position of these footnotes were assigned by the transcriber and any inaccuracy in their positioning is his alone.

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