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A
CALL
TO
THE UNCONVERTED.

BY REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,
BY REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.



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DR. CHALMERS'
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

ABRIDGED.

The "Call to the Unconverted" by Richard Baxter, is characterized by all that solemn earnestness, and urgency of appeal, for which the writings of this much-admired author are so peculiarly distinguished. He seems to look upon mankind solely with the eyes of the Spirit, and exclusively to recognize them in their spiritual relations, and in the great and essential elements of their immortal being. Their future destiny is the all-important concern which fills and engrosses his mind, and he regards nothing of any magnitude but what has a distinct bearing on their spiritual and eternal condition. His business, therefore, is always with the conscience, to which he makes the most forcible appeals, and which he plies with all those arguments which are fitted to awaken the sinner to a deep sense of the necessity and importance of immediate repentance. He endeavors to move him by the most touching of all representations, the tenderness of a beseeching God waiting to be gracious, and not willing that any should perish; and while he employs every form of entreaty, which tenderness and compassion can suggest, to allure the sinner to "turn and live," he does not shrink from forcing on his convictions those considerations which are fitted to alarm his fears, the terrors of the Lord, and the wrath, not merely of an offended Lawgiver, but of a God of love, whose threatenings he disregards, whose grace he des-

pises, and whose mercy he rejects. And aware of the deceitfulness of sin in hardening the heart, and in betraying the sinner into a neglect of his spiritual interests, he divests him of every refuge, and strips him of every plea for postponing his preparation for eternity. He forcibly exposes the delusion of convenient seasons, and the awful infatuation and hazard of delay, and knowing the magnitude of the stake at issue, he urges the sinner to immediate repentance, as if the fearful and almost absolute alternative were "Now or Never." And to secure the commencement of such an important work against all the dangers to which procrastination might expose it, he endeavors to arrest the sinner in his career of guilt and unconcern, and resolutely to fix his determination on "turning to God this day without delay."

There are two very prevalent delusions on this subject, which we should like to expose; the one regards the *nature*, and the other the *season* of repentance; both of which are pregnant with mischief to the minds of men. With regard to the first, much mischief has arisen from mistakes respecting the meaning of the term *repentance*. The word repentance occurs with two different meanings in the New Testament; and it is to be regretted, that two different words could not have been devised to express these. This is chargeable upon the poverty of our language; for it is to be observed, that in the original Greek the distinction in the meanings is pointed out by a distinction in the words. The employment of one term to denote two different things has the effect of confounding and misleading the understanding; and it is much to be wished, that every ambiguity of this kind were cleared away from that most interesting point in the pro-

cess of a human soul, at which it turns from sin unto righteousness, and from the power of Satan unto God.

When in common language, a man says, "I repent of such an action," he is understood to say, "I am sorry for having done it." The feeling is familiar to all of us. How often does the man of dissipation prove this sense of the word repentance, when he awakes in the morning, and, oppressed by the languor of his exhausted faculties, looks back with remorse on the follies and profligacies of the night that is past? How often does the man of unguarded conversation prove it, when he thinks of the friends whose feelings he has wounded by some hasty utterance which he cannot recall? How often is it proved by the man of business, when he reflects on the rash engagement which ties him down to a losing speculation? All these people would be perfectly understood when they say, "We repent of these doings." The word repentance so applied is about equivalent to the word regret. There are several passages in the New Testament where this is the undoubted sense of the word repentance. In Matt. 27: 3. the wretched Judas repented himself of his treachery; and surely, when we think of the awful denunciation uttered by our Savior against the man who should betray him, that it were better for him if he had not been born, we shall never confound the repentance which Judas experienced with that repentance which is unto salvation.

Now here lies the danger to practical Christianity. In the above-cited passage, to repent is just to regret, or to be sorry for; and this we conceive to be by far the most prevailing sense of the term in the English language. But there are other places where the same term is employed to denote that which is urged upon

us as a duty—that which is preached for the remission of sins—that which is so indispensable to sinners, as to call forth the declaration from our Savior, that unless we have it, we shall all likewise perish. Now, though repentance, in all these cases, is expressed by the same term in our translation as the repentance of mere regret, it is expressed by a different term in the original record of our faith. This surely might lead us to suspect a difference of meaning, and should caution us against taking up with that, as sufficient for the business of our salvation, which is short of saving and scriptural repentance. There may be an alternation of wilful sin, and of deep-felt sorrow, up to the very end of our history—there may be a presumptuous sin committed every day, and a sorrow regularly succeeding it. Sorrow may imbitter every act of sin—sorrow may darken every interval of sinful indulgence—and sorrow may give an unutterable anguish to the pains and the prospects of a deathbed. Couple all this with the circumstance that sorrow passes, in the common currency of our language, for repentance, and that repentance is made, by our Bible, to lie at the turning point from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance with God; and it is difficult not to conceive that much danger may have arisen from this, leading to indistinct views of the nature of repentance, and to slender and superficial conceptions of the mighty change which is implied in it.

We are far from saying that the eye of Christians is not open to this danger—and that the vigilant care of Christian authors has not been employed in averting it. Where will we get a better definition of repentance unto life than in our Shorter Catechism? by which the sinner is represented not merely as grieving,

but, along with his grief and hatred of sin, as turning from it unto God with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience. But the mischief is, that the word repent has a common meaning, different from the theological; that wherever it is used, this common meaning is apt to intrude itself, and exert a kind of habitual imposition upon the understanding—that the influence of the single word carries it over the influence of the lengthened explanation—and thus it is that, for a steady progress in the obedience of the gospel, many persevere, to the end of their days, in a wretched course of sinning and of sorrowing, without fruit and without amendment.

To save the practically mischievous effect arising from the application of one term to two different things, one distinct and appropriate term has been suggested for the saving repentance of the New Testament. The term repentance itself has been restricted to the repentance of mere sorrow, and is made equivalent to regret; and for the other, able translators have adopted the word *reformation*. The one is expressive of sorrow for our past conduct; the other is expressive of our renouncing it. It denotes an actual turning from the habits of life that we are sorry for. Give us, say they, a change from bad deeds to good deeds, from bad habits to good habits, from a life of wickedness to a life of conformity to the requirements of heaven, and you give us reformation.

Now there is often nothing more unprofitable than a dispute about words; but if a word has got into common use, a common and generally understood meaning is attached to it; and if this meaning does not just come up to the thing which we want to express by it, the application of that word to that thing has

the same misleading effects as in the case already alluded to. Now, we have much the same kind of exception to allege against the term *reformation*, that we have alleged against the term *repentance*. The term *repentance* is inadequate—and why? because, in the common use of it, it is equivalent to regret, and regret is short of the saving change that is spoken of in the New Testament. On the very same principle, we count the term *reformation* to be inadequate. We think that, in common language, a man would receive the appellation of a reformed man upon the mere change of his outward habits, without any reference to the change of mind and of principle which gave rise to it. Let the drunkard give up his excesses—let the backbiter give up his evil speakings—let the extortioner give up his unfair charges—and we would apply to one and all of them, upon the mere change of their external doings, the character of reformed men. Now, it is evident that the drunkard may give up his drunkenness, because checked by a serious impression of the injury he has been doing to his health and his circumstances. The backbiter may give up his evil speaking, on being made to perceive that the hateful practice has brought upon him the contempt and alienation of his neighbors. The extortioner may give up his unfair charges, upon taking it into calculation that his business is likely to suffer by the desertion of his customers. Now, it is evident, that though in each of these cases there has been what the world would call *reformation*, there has not been *scriptural repentance*. The deficiency of the former term consists in its having been employed to denote a mere change in the deeds or in the habits of the outward man • and if employed as equivalent to repentance, it

may delude us into the idea that the change by which we are made meet for a happy eternity is a far more slender and superficial thing than it really is. It is of little importance to be told that the translator means it only in the sense of a reformed conduct, proceeding from the influence of a new and a right principle within. The common meaning of the word will, as in the former instance, be ever and anon intruding itself, and get the better of all the formal cautions, and all the qualifying clauses of our Bible commentators.

But, will not the original word itself throw some light upon this important question? The repentance which is enjoined as a duty—the repentance which is unto salvation—the repentance which sinners undergo when they pass to a state of acceptance with God from a state of enmity against him—these are all one and the same thing, and are expressed by one and the same word in the original language of the New Testament. It is different from the word which expresses the repentance of sorrow; and if translated according to the parts of which it is composed, it signifies neither more nor less than *a change of mind*. This of itself is sufficient to prove the inadequacy of the term reformation—a term which is often applied to a man upon the mere change of his conduct, without ever adverting to the state of his mind, or to the kind of change in motive and in principle which it has undergone. It is true, that there can be no change in the conduct without some change in the inward principle. A reformed drunkard, before careless about health or fortune, may be so far changed as to become impressed with these considerations; but this change is evidently short of that which the Bible calls repentance toward God. It is a change that may, and has

taken place in many a mind, when there was no effectual sense of the God who is above us, and of the eternity which is before us. It is a change, brought about by the prospect and the calculation of worldly advantages; and, in the enjoyment of these advantages it hath its sole reward. But it is not done unto God, and God will not accept of it as done unto him. Reformation may signify nothing more than the mere surface-dressing of those decencies, and proprieties, and accomplishments, and civil and prudential duties, which, however fitted to secure a man's acceptance in society, may, one and all of them, consist with a heart alienated from God, and having every principle and affection of the inner man away from him. True, it is such a change as the man will reap benefit from, as his friends will rejoice in, as the world will call reformation; but it is not such a change as will make him meet for heaven; nor is it, in its import, what our Savior speaks of, when he says, "I tell you nay, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

There is no single word in the English language which occurs to us as fully equal to the faithful rendering of the term in the original. *Renewedness of mind*, however awkward a phrase this may be, is perhaps the most nearly expressive of it. Certain it is, that it harmonizes with those other passages of the Bible where the process is described by which saving repentance is brought about. We read of being transformed by the renewing of our minds, of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, of being renewed in the spirit of our minds. *Scriptural repentance, therefore, is that deep and radical change whereby a soul turns from the idols of sin and of self unto God, and devotes every movement of the inner and the outer man*

to the captivity of his obedience. This is the change which, whether it be expressed by one word or not in the English language, we would have you well to understand; and reformation or change in the outward conduct, instead of being saving and scriptural repentance, is what, in the language of John the Baptist, we would call a fruit meet for it. But if mischief is likely to arise, from the want of an adequate word in our language, to that repentance which is unto salvation, there is one effectual preservative against it—a firm and consistent exhibition of the whole counsel and revelation of God. A man who is well read in his New Testament, and reads it with docility, will dismiss all his meagre conceptions of repentance when he comes to the following statements:—“Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God; and if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” “Be not then conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Such are the terms employed to describe the process by which the soul of man is renewed unto repentance; and, with your hearts familiarized to the mighty import of these terms, you will carry with you an effectual guarantee against those false and flimsy impressions, which are so current in the world, about the preparation of a sinner for eternity. * * * * *

We should like, moreover, to reduce every man to the feeling of repentance now or the alternative of

repentance never. We should like to flash it upon your convictions, that, by putting the call away from you now, you put your eternity away from you. We should like to expose the whole amount of that accursed infatuation which lies in *delay*. We should like to arouse every soul out of its lethargies, and give no quarter to the plea of a *little more sleep*, and a little more slumber. We should like you to feel as if the whole of your future destiny hinged on the very first movement to which you turned yourselves. The work of repentance must have a beginning; and we should like you to know that, if not begun to-day, the chance will be less of its being begun to-morrow. And if the greater chance has failed, what hope can we build upon the smaller?—and a chance to that is always getting smaller. Each day, as it revolves over the sinner's head, finds him a harder, and a more obstinate, and a more helplessly enslaved sinner, than before. It was this consideration which gave Richard Baxter such earnestness and such urgency in his "Call." He knew that the barrier in the way of the sinner's return was strengthened by every act of resistance to the call which urges it. That the refusal of this moment hardened the man against the next attack of a Gospel argument that is brought to bear upon him. That if he attempted you now, and he failed, when he came back upon you he would find himself working on a more obstinate and uncomplying subject than ever. And therefore it is that he ever feels as if the present were his only opportunity. That he is *now* upon his vantage ground, and he gives every energy of his soul to the great point of making the most of it. He will put up with none of your evasions. He will consent to none of your *postponements*. He will pay

respect to none of your more *convenient seasons*. He tells you, that the matter with which he is charged has all the urgency of a matter in hand. He speaks to you with as much earnestness as if he knew that you were going to step into eternity in half an hour. He delivers his message with as much solemnity as if he knew that this was your last meeting on earth, and that you were never to see each other till you stood together at the judgment-seat. He knew that some mighty change must take place in you ere you be fit for entering into the presence of God; and that the time in which, on every plea of duty and of interest, you should bestir yourselves to secure this, is the *present* time. This is the distinct point he assigns to himself; and the whole drift of his argument is to urge an instantaneous choice of the better part, by telling you how you multiply every day the obstacles to your future repentance, if you begin not the work of repentance *now*.

Before bringing our Essay to a close we shall make some observations on the mistakes concerning repentance, which we have endeavored to expose, and adduce some arguments for urging on the consciences of our readers *the necessity and importance of immediate repentance*.

1. The work of repentance is a work which must be done ere we die; for, unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish. Now, the easier this work is in our conception, we shall think it the less necessary to enter upon it immediately. We shall look upon it as a work that may be done at any time, and therefore put it off a little longer, and a little longer. We shall, perhaps, look forward to that retirement from the world and its temptations which we figure old age to

bring along with it, and falling in with the too common idea, that the evening of life is the appropriate season of preparation for another world, we shall think that the author is bearing too closely and too urgently upon us, when, in the language of the Bible, he speaks of "*to-day*," while it is called *to-day*, and will let us off with no other repentance than repentance "*now*," seeing that *now* only is the accepted time, and *now* only the day of salvation, which he has a warrant to proclaim to us. This dilatory way of it is very much favored by the mistaken and very defective view of repentance which we have attempted to expose. We have some how or other got into the delusion that repentance is nothing but sorrow; and were we called to fix upon the scene where this sorrow is likely to be felt in the degree that it is deepest and most overwhelming, we would point to the chamber of the dying man. It is awful to think that, generally speaking, this repentance of mere sorrow is the only repentance of a death-bed. Yes! we shall meet with sensibility deep enough and painful enough there—with regret in all its bitterness—with terror mustering up its images of despair, and dwelling upon them in all the gloom of an affrighted imagination; and this is mistaken, not merely for the drapery of repentance, but for the very substance of it. We look forward, and we count upon this—that the sins of a life are to be expunged by the sighing and sorrowing of the last days of it. We should give up this wretchedly superficial notion of repentance, and cease, from this moment, to be led astray by it. The mind may sorrow over its corruptions at the very time that it is under the power of them. A man may weep most bitterly over the perversities of his moral consti-

tion; but to change that constitution, under the workings of the Holy Spirit, is a different affair. Now, this is the mighty work of repentance. He who has undergone it is no longer the servant of sin. He dies unto sin, he lives unto God. A sense of the authority of God is ever present with him, to wield the ascendancy of a great master-principle over all his movements—to call forth every purpose, and to carry it forward, through all the opposition of sin and of Satan, into accomplishment. This is the grand revolution in the state of the mind which repentance brings along with it. To grieve because this work is not done, is a very different thing from the doing of it. A deathbed is the very best scene for acting the first, but it is the very worst for acting the second. The repentance of Judas has often been acted there. We ought to think of the work in all its magnitude, and not to put it off to that awful period when the soul is crowded with other things, and has to maintain its weary struggle with the pains, and the distresses, and the shiverings, and the breathless agonies of a deathbed.

2. There are two views that may be taken of the way in which repentance is brought about, and whichever of them is adopted, delay carries along with it the saddest infatuation. It may be looked upon as a step taken *by man as a voluntary agent*, and we would ask you, upon your experience of the powers and the performances of humanity, if a deathbed is the time for taking such a step? Is this a time for a voluntary being exercising a vigorous control over his own movements? When racked with pain, and borne down by the pressure of a sore and overwhelming calamity? Surely the greater the work of repentance

is, the more ease, the more time, the more freedom from suffering, is necessary for carrying it on; and, therefore, addressing you as voluntary beings, as beings who will and who do, we call upon you to seek God early that you may find him—to haste, and make no delay in keeping his commandments.

The other view is, that repentance is not a self-originating work in man, but *the work of the Holy Spirit in him* as the subject of its influences. This view is not opposite to the former. It is true that man wills and does at every step in the business of his salvation; and it is as true that God works in him so to will and to do. Take this last view of it then. Look on repentance as the work of God's Spirit in the soul of man, and we are furnished with a more impressive argument than ever, and set on higher vantage for urging you to stir yourselves, and set about it immediately. What is it that you propose? To keep by your present habits, and your present indulgences, and build yourselves up all the while in the confidence that the Spirit will interpose with his mighty power of conversion upon you, at the very point of time that you have fixed upon as convenient and agreeable? And how do you conciliate the Spirit's answer to your call then? Why, by doing all you can to grieve, and to quench, and to provoke him to abandon you now. Do you feel a motion toward repentance at this moment? If you keep it alive, and act upon it, good and well. But if you smother and suppress this motion, you resist the Spirit—you stifle his movements within you; it is what the impenitent do day after day, and year after year—and is this the way for securing the influences of the Spirit at the time that you would like them best? When you are done with the world,

and are looking forward to eternity because you cannot help it? God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." A good and a free Spirit he undoubtedly is, and, as a proof of it, he is now saying, "Let whosoever will, come and take of the water of life freely." He says so now, but we do not promise that he will say so with effect upon your deathbeds, if you refuse him now. You look forward then for a powerful work of conversion being done upon you, and yet you employ yourselves all your life long in raising and multiplying obstacles against it. You count upon a miracle of grace before you die, and the way you take to make yourselves sure of it, is to grieve and offend him while you live, who alone can perform the miracle. O what cruel deceits will sin land us in! and how artfully it pleads for a "little more sleep, and a little more slumber; a little more folding of the hands to sleep." We should hold out no longer, nor make such an abuse of the forbearance of God: we shall treasure up wrath against the day of wrath if we do so. The genuine effect of his goodness is to lead us to repentance; let not its effect upon us be to harden and encourage ourselves in the ways of sin. We should cry now for the clean heart and the right spirit; and such is the exceeding freeness of the Spirit of God, that we shall be listened to. If we put off the cry till then, the same God may laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

3. Our next argument for immediate repentance is, that we cannot bring forward, at any future period of your history, any considerations of a more prevailing or more powerfully moving influence than those we *may* bring forward at this moment. We can tell you now of the terrors of the Lord, we can tell you now

of the solemn mandates which have issued from his throne—and the authority of which is upon one and all of you. We can tell you now, that though, in this dead and darkened world, sin appears but a very trivial affair—for every body sins, and it is shielded from execration by the universal countenance of an entire species lying in wickedness—yet it holds true of God, what is so emphatically said of him, that he cannot be mocked, nor will he endure it that you should riot in the impunity of your wilful resistance to him and to his warnings. We can tell you now, that he is a God of vengeance; and though, for a season, he is keeping back all the thunder of it from a world that he would reclaim unto himself, yet, if you put all his expostulations away from you, and will not be reclaimed, these thunders will be let loose upon you, and they will fall on your guilty heads, armed with tenfold energy, because you have not only defied his threats, but turned your back on his offers of reconciliation. These are the arguments by which we would try to open our way to your consciences, and to awaken up your fears, and to put the inspiring activity of hope into your bosoms, by laying before you those invitations which are addressed to the sinner, through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, and, in the name of a beseeching God, to win your acceptance of them. At no future period can we address arguments more powerful and more affecting than these. If these arguments do not prevail upon you, we know of none others by which a victory over the stubborn and uncomplying will can be accomplished, or by which we can ever hope to beat in that sullen front of resistance wherewith you now so impreguably withstand us. We feel that, if any stout-hearted sinner shall rise

from the perusal of this "Call to the Unconverted" with an unawakened conscience, and give himself up to wilful disobedience—we feel as if, in reference to him, we had made our last discharge, and it fell powerless as water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. Therefore it is that we speak to you now as if this was our last hold of you. We feel as if on your present purpose hung all the preparations of your future life, and all the rewards or all the horrors of your coming eternity. We will not let you off with any other repentance than repentance now; and if this be refused now, we cannot, with our eyes open to the consideration we have now urged, that the instrument we can make to bear upon you hereafter is not more powerful than we are wielding now, coupled with another consideration which we shall insist upon, that the subject on which the instrument worketh, even the heart of man, gathers, by every act of resistance, a more uncompliyng obstinacy than before; we cannot, with these two thoughts in our mind, look forward to your future history, without seeing spread over the whole path of it the iron of a harder impenitency—the sullen gloom of a deeper and more determined alienation.

4. Another argument, therefore, for immediate repentance is, that the mind which resists a present call or a present reproof, undergoes a *progressive hardening* toward all those considerations which arm the call of repentance with all its energy. It is not enough to say, that the instrument by which repentance is brought about, is not more powerful to-morrow than it is to-day; it lends a most tremendous weight to the argument, to say further, that the subject on which this instrument is putting forth its efficiency, will op-

pose a firmer resistance to-morrow than it does to-day. It is this which gives a significancy so powerful to the call of "To-day while it is to-day, harden not your hearts;" and to the admonition of "Knowest thou not, O man, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after, thy hardness and impenitent heart treasureth up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of God?" It is not said, either in the one or in the other of these passages, that, by the present refusal, you cut yourself off from a future invitation. The invitation may be sounded in your hearing to the last half hour of your earthly existence, engraved in all those characters of free and gratuitous kindness which mark the beneficent religion of the New Testament. But the present refusal hardens you against the power and tenderness of the future invitation. This is the fact in human nature to which these passages seem to point, and it is the fact through which the argument for immediate repentance receives such powerful aid from the wisdom of experience. It is this which forms the most impressive proof of the necessity of plying the young with all the weight and all the tenderness of earnest admonition, that the now susceptible mind might not turn into a substance harder and more uncomplying than the rock which is broken in pieces by the powerful application of the hammer of the word of God.

The metal of the human soul, so to speak, is like some material substances. If the force you lay upon it do not break it, or dissolve it, it will beat it into hardness. If the moral argument by which it is plied now, do not so soften the mind as to carry and to overpower its purposes, then, on another day, the argu-

ment may be put forth in terms as impressive—but it falls on a harder mind, and, therefore, with a more slender efficiency. If the threat, that ye who persist in sin shall have to dwell with the devouring fire, and to lie down amid everlasting burnings, do not alarm you out of your iniquities from this very moment, then the same threat may be again cast out, and the same appalling circumstances of terror be thrown around it, but it is all discharged on a soul hardened by its inurement to the thunder of denunciations already uttered, and the urgency of menacing threatenings already poured forth without fruit and without efficacy. If the voice of a beseeching God do not win upon you now, and charm you out of your rebellion against him, by the persuasive energy of kindness, then let that voice be lifted in your hearing on some future day, and though armed with all the power of tenderness it ever had, how shall it find its entrance into a heart sheathed by the operation of habit, that universal law, in more impenetrable obstinacy? If, with the earliest dawn of your understanding, you have been offered the hire of the morning laborer and have refused it, then the parable does not say that you are the person who at the third, or sixth, or ninth, or eleventh hour, will get the offer repeated to you. It is true, that the offer is unto all and upon all who are within reach of the hearing of it. But there is all the difference in the world between the impression of a new offer, and of an offer that has already been often heard and as often rejected—an offer which comes upon you with all the familiarity of a well-known sound that you have already learned how to dispose of, and how to shut your every feeling against the power of its gracious invitations—an offer which, if discarded from your hearts at the present moment, may come back

upon you, but which will have to maintain a more unequal contest than before, with an impenitency ever strengthening, and ever gathering new hardness from each successive act of resistance. And thus it is that the point for which we are contending is not to carry you at some future period of your lives, but to carry you at this moment. It is to work in you the instantaneous purpose of a firm and a vigorously sustained repentance; it is to put into you all the freshness of an immediate resolution, and to stir you up to all the readiness of an immediate accomplishment—it is to give direction to the very first footstep you are now to take, and lead you to take it as the commencement of that holy career in which all old things are done away, and all things become new—it is to press it upon you, that the state of the alternative, at this moment, is “now or never”—it is to prove how fearful the odds are against you, if now you suffer the call of repentance to light upon your consciences, and still keep by your determined posture of careless, and thoughtless, and thankless unconcern about God. You have resisted to-day, and by that resistance you have acquired a firmer metal of resistance against the power of every future warning that may be brought to bear upon you. You have stood your ground against the urgency of the most earnest admonitions, and against the dreadfulness of the most terrifying menaces. On that ground you have fixed yourself more immovably than before; and though on some future day the same spiritual thunder be made to play around you, it will not shake you out of the obstinacy of your determined rebellion.

It is the universal law of habit, that the feelings are always getting more faintly and feebly impressed by every repetition of the cause which excited them, and

that the mind is always getting stronger in its active resistance to the impulse of these feelings, by every new deed of resistance which it performs; and thus it is, that if you refuse us now, we have no other prospect before us than that your course is every day getting more desperate and more irrecoverable, your souls are getting more hardened, the Spirit is getting more provoked to abandon those who have so long persisted in their opposition to his movements. God, who says that his Spirit shall not always strive with man, is getting more offended. The tyranny of habit is getting every day a firmer ascendancy over you; Satan is getting you more helplessly involved among his wiles and his entanglements; the world, with all the inveteracy of those desires which are opposite to the will of the Father, is more and more lording it over your every affection. And what, we would ask, what is the scene in which you are now purposing to contest it, with all this mighty force of opposition you are now so busy in raising up against you? What is the field of combat to which you are now looking forward, as the place where you are to accomplish a victory over all those formidable enemies whom you are at present arming with such a weight of hostility, as, we say, within a single hairbreadth of certainty, you will find to be irresistible? O the bigness of such a misleading infatuation! The proposed scene in which this battle for eternity is to be fought, and this victory for the crown of glory is to be won, is a death-bed. It is when the last messenger stands by the couch of the dying man, and shakes at him the terrors of his grisly countenance, that the poor child of infatuation thinks he is to struggle and prevail against all his enemies; against the unrelenting tyranny of habit—against the obstinacy of his own heart, which

he is now doing so much to harden—against the Spirit of God who perhaps long ere now has pronounced the doom upon him, “He will take his own way, and walk in his own counsel; I shall cease from striving, and let him alone”—against Satan, to whom every day of his life he has given some fresh advantage over him, and who will not be willing to lose the victim on whom he has practised so many wiles, and plied with success so many delusions. And such are the enemies whom you, who wretchedly calculate on the repentance of the eleventh hour, are every day mustering up in greater force and formidableness against you; and how can we think of letting you go with any other repentance than the repentance of the precious moment that is now passing over you, when we look forward to the horrors of that impressive scene on which you propose to win the prize of immortality, and to contest it singlehanded and alone, with all the weight of opposition which you have accumulated against yourselves—a deathbed—a languid, breathless, tossing, and agitated deathbed; that scene of feebleness, when the poor man cannot help himself to a single mouthful—when he must have attendants to sit around him, and watch his every wish, and interpret his every signal, and turn him to every posture where he may find a moment’s ease, and wipe away the cold sweat that is running over him—and ply him with cordials for thirst, and sickness, and insufferable languor. And this is the time, when occupied with such feelings, and beset with such agonies as these, you propose to crowd within the compass of a few wretched days the work of winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity!

5. But it may be said, “If repentance be what you represent it, a thing of such mighty import, and such

impracticable performance, as a *change of mind*, in what rational way can it be made the subject of a precept or injunction? you would not call upon the Ethiopian to change his skin—you would not call upon the leopard to change his spots; and yet you call upon us to change our minds. You say, "Repent;" and that too in the face of the undeniable doctrine, that man is without strength for the achievement of so mighty an enterprise. Can you tell us any plain and practicable thing that you would have us to perform, and that we may perform, to help on this business?"

This is the very question with which the hearers of John the Baptist came back upon him, after he had told them in general terms to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. He may not have resolved the difficulty, but he pointed the expectation of his countrymen to a greater than he for the solution of it. Now that Teacher has already come, and we live under the full and the finished splendor of his revelation. O that the greatness and difficulty of the work of repentance had the effect of shutting you up into the faith of Christ! Repentance is not a paltry, superficial reformation. It reaches deep into the inner man, but not too deep for the searching influences of that Spirit which is at his giving, and which worketh mightily in the hearts of believers. You should go then under a sense of your difficulty to Him. Seek to be rooted in the Savior, that you may be nourished out of his fulness, and strengthened by his might. The simple cry for a clean heart, and a right spirit, which is raised from the mouth of a believer, brings down an answer from on high which explains all the difficulty and overcomes it. And if what we have said of the extent and magnitude of repentance, should have the effect to give a deeper feeling than before of

the wants under which you labor ; and shall dispose you to seek after a closer and more habitual union with Him who alone can supply them, then will our call to repent have indeed fulfilled upon you the appointed end of a preparation for the Savior. But recollect now is your time, and now is your opportunity, for entering on the road of preparation that leads to heaven. We charge you to enter this road at this moment, as you value your deliverance from hell, and your possession of that blissful place where you shall be for ever with the Lord—we charge you not to parry and to delay this matter, no not for a single hour—we call on you by all that is great in eternity—by all that is terrifying in its horrors—by all that is alluring in its rewards—by all that is binding in the authority of God—by all that is condemning in the severity of his violated law, and by all that can aggravate this condemnation in the insulting contempt of his rejected gospel ;—we call on you by one and all of these considerations, not to hesitate, but to flee—not to purpose a return for to-morrow, but to make an actual return *this very day*—to put a decisive end to every plan of wickedness on which you may have entered—to cease your hands from all that is forbidden—to turn them to all that is required—to betake yourselves to the appointed Mediator, and receive through him, by the prayer of faith, such constant supplies of the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, that, from this moment, you may be carried forward from one degree of grace unto another, and from a life devoted to God here, to the elevation of a triumphant, and the joys of a blissful eternity hereafter.

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THE GREAT SUCCESS WHICH ATTENDED THE
CALL WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED.

It may be proper to prefix an account of this book given by Mr. Baxter himself, which was found in his study, after his death, in his own words:

“I published a short treatise on conversion, entitled, A Call to the Unconverted. The occasion of this was my converse with Bishop Usher while I was at London; who, approving my method and directions for Peace of Conscience, was importunate with me to write directions suited to the various states of Christians, and also against particular sins. I revered the man, but disregarded these persuasions, supposing I could do nothing but what is done better already: but when he was dead, his words went deeper to my mind, and I purposed to obey his counsel; yet, so as that to the first sort of men, the ungodly, I thought vehement persuasions meeter than directions only; and so for such I published this little book, which God hath blessed with unexpected success, beyond all the rest that I have written, except The Saint's Rest. In a little more than a year there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since, beside many thousands by stolen impressions, which poor men stole for lucre's sake. Through God's mercy I have information of almost whole households converted by this small book which I set so light by; and, as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God, since I was silenced, hath sent it over in his message to many beyond the seas; for when

Mr. Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian language, he next translated this my *Call to the Unconverted*, as he wrote to us here. And yet God would make some farther use of it; for Mr. Stoop, the pastor of the French Church in London, being driven hence by the displeasure of his superiors, was pleased to translate it into French. I hope it will not be unprofitable there; nor in Germany, where also it has been printed."

It may be proper further to mention Dr. Bates' account of the author, and of this useful treatise. In his sermon at Mr. BAXTER's funeral, he thus says: "His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more conversions of sinners to God than any printed in our time: and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them, that keeps the reader awake and attentive. His *Call to the Unconverted*, how small in bulk, but how powerful in virtue! Truth speaks in it with that authority and efficacy, that it makes the reader to lay his hand upon his heart, and find that he has a soul and a conscience, though he lived before as if he had none. He told some friends, that six brothers were converted by reading that *CALL*; and that every week he received letters of some converted by his books. This he spake with most humble thankfulness, that God was pleased to use him as an instrument for the salvation of souls."

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.

EZEKIEL, XXXIII. 11.

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye. turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

It hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man as well as me, to read in the Holy Scriptures how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore they must feel it; those that do believe it are forced to cry out with Paul, (Rom. 11. 13,) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But nature itself doth teach us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers; and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we would presently ask, Oh! who did this cruel deed? If the town was wilfully set on fire, you would ask, what wicked wretch did this? So when we read that many souls will be miserable in hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, how comes this to pass? and whose fault is it? Who is it

that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? and we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause; but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempts them to it, and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an alehouse and force open their mouths and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service; nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, whichever it is, for there is no other to lay it upon; and God disclaimeth it; he will not take it upon him; and the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them, and this is the controversy that is here managing in my text.

The Lord complaineth of the people; and the people think it is the fault of God. The same controversy is handled, chap. 18. 25: they plainly say, "that the way of the Lord is not equal." So here they say, verse 19, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, if we must die, and be miserable, how can we help it? as if it were not their fault, but God's. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use the means, and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is the fault of themselves; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the Judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judge of him

or of themselves, as wanting authority, and wisdom, and impartiality; nor is it the cavilling and quarrelling with God that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice, at which they murmur.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's purgation or clearing himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth not by disowning his law, that the wicked shall die, nor by disowning his judgments and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live; and this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them: Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two: First, To convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the fault of God if they be miserable. Secondly, To convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is the fault of themselves, and they die, even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following:—

Doctrine 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doctrine 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doctrine 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation: he

had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doctrine 4. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doctrine 5. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doctrine 6. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them; and asketh the wicked why they will die?

Doctrine 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they perish, but of themselves; their own wilfulness is the cause of their own damnation; they therefore die because they will die.

Having laid the text open in these propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though briefly.

DOCTRINE I.

It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn, or die.

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true which they apprehended to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law, might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it will but hasten it. If it were

not so, a hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law, and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But if there be any so blind as to venture to question either the truth or the justice of this law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both which methinks, should satisfy a reasonable man.

And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God, or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few:—Matt. 18: 3. "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3: 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 2 Cor. 5: 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Col. 3: 9, 10. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Heb. 12: 14. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Rom. 8: 8, 9. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Gal. 6: 15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." 1 Pet. 1: 3. "According to his abundant grace he hath begotten us to a lively hope." Ver. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

1 Pet. 2: 1, 2. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Psalm 9: 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm 11: 4. "And the Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth."

As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you be come to that pass, there is but small hopes of you: look to yourself as well as you can, for it is like you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless; for to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God; and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed. Gal. 1: 8. And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If He be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these

terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear. Though he entreat you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills; but God will make you feel against your wills.

But let us hear what reason you have why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted, or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful: you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments.

And first, I think you will not deny that it is most suitable to an immortal soul to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in cases of temporal punishment, if a law were now made that the most heinous crimes shall be punished with a hundred years' captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterward. So it is in our present case.

2. I suppose that you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory is not so unsuit-

able to the wisdom of God, or the case of man: and why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery!

3. When you find it in the word of God that so it is, and so it will be, do ye think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must Infinite Wisdom learn of folly, and Infinite Goodness be corrected by a sinner that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogance of senseless dust! shall ever mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you weré born, without desiring your advice; and you came into the world too late to reverse them, if you could have done so great a work. You should have stepped out of your nothingness and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and sustaining power, and let you drop into hell while you are quarreiling with his word, will you then believe that there is a hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it requireth the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sin of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sin of man?

6. And methinks you should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin; and you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the soul which it deformeth. 2. And the excellency of holiness which it obliterates. 3. The reason and excellency of the law which it violates. 4. The excellency of the glory which it despises. 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treadeth down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness and holiness of that God against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin besides. You know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceeding of his judge. We judge by feeling which blinds our reason. We see, in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own, and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise or just impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father is unmerciful, or dealeth hardly with them if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest wretch but thinketh the church doth wrong him if they excommunicate him: or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve their turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas, they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary

to God, they loathe that which he most loveth, and love that which he abhorreth. They are incapable of that imperfect communion with Him which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delight and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not your swine to bed and board with you: no, nor if you take away his life though he never sinned; and yet you will blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted to perpetual misery.

USE.—I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that, instead of quarrelling with God and with his word, you will presently receive it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted, take this as the undoubted truth of God:—You must, ere long, be converted or condemned; there is no other way but to turn, or die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears, to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me.—Verse 8. “When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” You see then, though this be a rough and unwelcome doctrine. it is such as we must preach. and

you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we would not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and go the narrow way of holiness, while they have time: and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in; and they are not awakened because they are loth to hear or think of it: and that is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self-love, and partly because they do not well believe the word that threatneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you, and give you no rest till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word by the voice of an angel, "Thou must be converted, or condemned: turn, or die!" would it not stick in your mind, and haunt you night and day? so that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, "Turn, or die!" O happy were your soul if it might thus work with you and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it have driven home your heart to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your mind, you cannot put it out of the Bible, but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but, "turn, or die."

O what is the matter then that the hearts of sin-

ners are not pierced with such a weighty truth? A man would think now, that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with himself, 'This is my own case,' and never be quiet till he found himself converted. Believe it, this drowsy careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things, and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretell it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, "What have I done? what a foolish wicked course have I taken?" The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while: as soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are likely to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labor, except they can be taken out of the way; and that is the misunderstanding on those two words, the *wicked* and *turn*. Some will think to themselves, 'It is true, the wicked must turn or die; but what is that to me, I am not wicked; though I am a sinner, all men are.' Others will think, 'It is true that we must turn from our evil ways, but I am turned long ago; I hope this is not now to do.' And thus while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labor in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here who are meant by the wicked; and who they are that must turn or die; and also what is meant by turning, and who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted; and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man and to be an unconverted man, is all one; and therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures. Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made flesh, without immortal souls, and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit, and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth but as his passage or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his Holy Angels, and to love him, and to be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two: First, the right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man unto his end, giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But

yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition, but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave him a perfect law, required him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and hereby blotted out the spiritual image of God from his soul; so that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it, and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost, and instead of it he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God and acquainted with the creature. And the course of this life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God; he sought the creature, for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; "for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job, 14 : 4. As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before he doth devour; and an adder hath a venomous nature before she sting, so in our infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springeth all the sin of our lives; and not only so, but when God hath, of his mercy, provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are

loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery: and though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good-will, yet carnal self persuades us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it; for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of wicked man; for every man that is in the state of corrupted nature is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be converted: to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being, in one person, God and man, to become a mediator between God and man; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil. And having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man, not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that, by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God; like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms and come in and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that, for all this, men will

not accept of the remedy if they be left to themselves, therefore the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office to inspire the Apostles, and seal the Scriptures by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the souls of the elect.

So by this much you see, that as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us, as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby; and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son for us were these: to ransom and redeem us by his suffering and righteousness; to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace: and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated; and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also doth by the Son.

The works of the Holy Ghost, for us, are these: to indite the Holy Scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the Apostles, and sealing the word, by his miraculous gifts and works, and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and so enabling them and helping them to publish that word; and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures, if the Father had not created you, nor have had any access to God, if the Son had not died, so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes

of this work. The Father sendeth the Son: the Son redeemeth us and maketh the promise of grace: the Holy Ghost inditeth and sealeth this Gospel: the Apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit to write it: the preachers of the Gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to open it: and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal self to which it is revolted, and so to turn the current of the life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly; and through this, embracing Christ by faith, who is the Physician of the soul.

By what I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which, I think, will yet be plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts. And for the first, a wicked man may be known by these three things:

First, He is one who placeth his chief affections on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity. He savoreth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoreth the things of the Spirit; though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet he doth not really so esteem it to himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness in the sight of God, and in his love and praises for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking with his heart as a life of health, and wealth, and honor here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loves God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on

worldly or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other hand, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God, and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up with it and set more upon it than any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasures of the world. He seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul; and therefore let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven, and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount upward, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone still turns to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him: nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said you may find in these places of Scriptures: Phil. 3 : 18, 21. Matt. 6 : 19, 20, 21. Col. 3 : 1, 4. Rom. 8 : 5, 9, 18, 23. Psalm 73 : 25, 26.

Secondly, A wicked man is one that makes it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read, and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins, yet this is all but by-the-by, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, and puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh

can spare, for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved, and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey toward another life, and useth the creature in subordination to God; he loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy; he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God, and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life; and therefore he riseth again and lamenteth it, and dares not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in Col. 3 : 1, 5. Matt. 6 : 20, 33. Luke, 18 : 22, 23, 29. Luke, 14 : 18, 24, 26, 27. Rom. 8 : 13. Gal. 5 : 24. Luke 12 : 21, &c.

Thirdly, The soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Savior, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as the Physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered to God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be outwardly religious, yet he never resigns up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully enter-

tain the tidings of redemption, and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Savior, resigns himself up to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth, is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved him, and gave himself for him; yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him. For these, see Job, 1 : 11, 12; and 3 : 19, 20. Rom. 8 : 9. Phil. 3 : 7, 10. Gal. 2 : 20. Job, 15 : 2, 3, 4. 1 Cor. 1 : 20. 2 : 2.

You see now, in plain terms from the Word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in his dealings, and if he come to church and say his prayers, he cannot be a wicked man. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, or gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think if a man that hath been an enemy, and scorner at godliness, do but approve it, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think that they are converted by taking up some new opinion, and falling into some dividing party. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions of conscience, and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and take up a life of civil behavior and outward religion, that this

must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions; and when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken to them, for they are not wicked, but are turned already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews who were greater and more civil than the common people, that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Christ before them." Matt. 21 : 31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion; but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, than the more civil sort, who delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to show man the amiable excellence of God, till he be taken up in such love to him that can never be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life changed; so that a man renounceth that which he took for his felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as he formerly did. In a word, he that is in Christ is a "new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5 : 17. He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speeches, new company, (if possible,) and a new conversation. Sin, that before was a jesting matter with

him, is now so odious and terrible to him that he flies from it as from death. The world, that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation: God, that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul: before he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him, but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him; the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve his turn better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery that is not to be ventured on, nor jested with. The works of holiness, of which before he was weary, and thought to be more than needful, are now both his recreation, and his business, and the trade that he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God; as a letter written to him, and subscribed with the name of the Eternal Majesty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happy on

earth. And the wicked that were his playfellows are now his grief; and he that could laugh at their sins is readier now to weep for their sin and misery, and to say with those of old, (Psalm 16 : 3; 15 : 4. Phil. 3 : 18.) "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavors, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end, and his pleasure and worldly profits and credit were his way; and now God and everlasting glory are his end, and Christ, and the Spirit, and word, and ordinances. Holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chief ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place; and now God, in Christ, by the Spirit, word and ministry, is the chief ruler, to whom both self and all the matters of self must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul, and in the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face the same way, and be still going toward the same place; but it is another matter to turn quite back, and take his journey quite the contrary way, to a contrary place. So it is here; a man may turn from drunkenness, and forsake other gross disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be still going to the same end as before, loving his carnal self above all, and giving

it still the government of his soul ; but when he is converted, this self is denied, and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way : and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now, by sanctification, devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before, he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them ; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him. Before, he would please God so far as might accord with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them ; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be never so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say, that the Holy Ghost is our sanctifier ; but do you know what sanctification is ? Why, this is what I have now opened to you ; and every man and woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, sirs, or do you not ? Surely you dare not say you do not ; for it is past a doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned pious man is of one mind, and another of another ; where one party saith this, and the other saith that. Every sect among us that deserve to be called Christians are all agreed in this that I have said ; and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party do believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state ? Do you know that you are converted ? and can you find this wonderful change upon your souls ? Have you been

thus born again, and made new? Are not these strange matters to many of you, and such as you never felt within yourselves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, that such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas! the most do follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. And if they be restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, "I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner; I go to church, and say my prayers;" they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas! this is foolish cheating of yourselves. This is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls; and every man or woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are. You will dwell in these houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer; you will sit in these seats and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with these eyes, and hear with these ears, and speak with these tongues, but a little longer, till the resurrection-day; and can you make shift to forget this? O what a place will you shortly be in of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in! to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable, with devils; and should all this

be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of your joys or sorrows: and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, sirs, most certainly true. When you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you: and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember that you had this call, and that, this day, in this place, you were reminded of these things, and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could here conceive; and yet shall they be now so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and to lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in a dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever; but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you as well as myself. If your eyes were so far opened as to see hell, and you saw your neighbors that were unconverted dragged thither with hideous cries: though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such danger themselves, such a sight would make you go home and think of it, and think again, and make you warn all about you, as that lost worldling, Luke 16 : 28, would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen. If I believe God, it is next to seeing; and therefore I beseech you excuse me if I be half as earnest with you about these matters as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen,

would you not be willing to hear me? and would you not believe, and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth, and would you not crowd to hear me, and would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by Scriptures and ministers, and he will not humor unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them, and alter his established way; if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humor him so far as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you regard me now as you would do if I should come from the dead to you; for I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you; the Word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed by miracles, and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not: That you would now remember what has been said, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say to yourselves—Is it so indeed; must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now? Why did I venturously put off or neglect so great a business? Was I awake, or in my wits? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, be-

ore I had any certain hope of eternal life! Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Savior, the love of Christ, and the excellences of God and glory? Is my heart broken or humbled within me for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Savior and Lord that offered himself with pardon and life for my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God? Do I love it and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world, and carnal self, and that I live for God and the glory which he hath promised? Hath heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services, which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hopes and heart in heaven? And is it not the scope, and design, and bent of my heart, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities? This is the state of converted souls. And thus it must be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed,

or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavor to know truly whether I be converted or not: that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: and if I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay. For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered; but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness or hardness, or till I be caught away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not? And if you cannot find it out by your own endeavors, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great; let not bashfulness, nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you, to advise you, for the saving of your soul, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands that they think they are in the way to salvation when they are not; and think that they are converted when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way

that they are in, at least if they pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps, when, alas! all this while they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life; and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Are there not many self-deceivers who hear me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or quarter of an hour, in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God, that will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell, and in the state of damnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold, and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever if you should die as you are, durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh, or be merry in such a state? What! And not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour? Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness and the communion of saints. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There are none of you that care for being damned. Well, then I beseech you

presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition, that if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, sirs, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labor for your own souls? Will you now enter upon this self-examination? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not. Resolve on it then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerneth your souls. I beseech you, for the sake of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will all shortly appear, that you do not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must turn or die, I beseech you deny me not; but make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know whether you are converted or not; and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, 'What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then?' This question leads me to my second Doctrine, which will do much to the answering of it, to which I now proceed.

DOCTRINE II.

It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn—unfeignedly and thoroughly iurn.

The Lord here professeth that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live, is as certain a truth as

turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home, and say I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that cavil at the preachers of the Gospel for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say, that they preach desperation; tell me if you can; when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, though you repent, and be converted? No, it is the direct contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord; and whoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, not death, that is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation, certain salvation; a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to every one of you; to the poorest beggar as well as the greatest lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by the Lord our Master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live; we are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer, and return; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ; what mercy stays for you; what patience

waiteth for you ; what thoughts of kindness God hath toward you ; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed also a message of wrath and death, yea, of a twofold wrath and death ; but neither of them is our principal message. We must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works ; but this is but to show you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know ; for who will seek for physic that knows not that he is sick ? Our telling you of your misery is not that which makes you miserable, but driveth you out to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment, that will fall on those that will not be converted. But as this is true, and must be told you, so it is but the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn ; and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we must foretell damnation. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you. I do here, in the name of the Lord of Life, proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, and full, and universal ; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then,

as you love your souls, remember what turning it is that the Scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ, the Rock, and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the Spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world, in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end; and to set your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no farther with you; for we would not so much as affright, or trouble you with the name of damnation, without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place; for there is no middle place between the two; you must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to show you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe that God doth mean, indeed, as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extended conditionally to you, as well as others; and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, Where is your commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of Scripture, I will show it to you in these few:

First, You see it here in my text, and the following

verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel, as plain as can be spoken; and in 2 Cor. 5 : 17, 21, you have the very sum of our commission : " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So Mark, 16 : 15, 16, " Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth," (that is with such a converting faith as is expressed,) " and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." And Luke, 24 : 46, 47 : " Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day : and that repentance" (which is conversion) " and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." And, Acts 5 : 30, 31, " The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree : him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And Acts, 13 : 38, 39, " Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And lest you think this offer is re-

strained to the Jews, see Gal. 6 : 15, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke, 14 : 17, "Come, for all things are now ready."

You see by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the foundation of this offer, (John, 3 : 16,) and the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good; miracles oft sealed the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession: so that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is, Return and live. The devil's promise is, You shall live whether you turn or not. The words of God are, as I have showed you, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18 : 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John, 3 : 3, 5. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12 : 14. The devil's word is, "You may be saved without being born again and converted; you may do well enough without being

holy, God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he saith, he will be better to you than his word." And, alas, the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God; just as our sin and misery came into the world. God said to our first parents, "If ye eat ye shall die;" and the devil contradicted him, and said, "Ye shall not die:" and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, Turn or die: and the devil saith, You shall not die, if you do but cry for God's mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin when you can practise it no longer. And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God.

And yet that is not the worst; but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of satan, who was a liar from the beginning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust in him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Show me such a word in Scripture. Why this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the sin that is commonly called presumption; and do you call this a believing and trusting in God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the heart of the sanctified, but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation, boldly and confidently; for he is engaged by his word to save you.

He will be a father to none but his children; and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints. But if they will not come in, it is the fault of themselves: his doors are open; he keeps none back; he never sent such a message as this to any of you, "It is now too late; I will not receive thee, though thou be converted." He might have done so and done you no wrong; but he did not; he doth not to this day. He is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fulness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall therefore next proceed to before I make any further application of this.

DOCTRINE III.

God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.

"The Lord is long suffering to us-ward," says the apostle, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3: 9. He unfeignedly willeth the conversion of all men, even of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder, and be hanged; but if, upon good reason, he forbear this, and do but

send to his subjects to warn and entreat them not to be murderers, he may well say that he would not have them murder and be hanged; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live, and if he do more for some upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all murderers and felons in the land, "I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live; but if you will not, I am resolved, for all this, that you shall die." The judge may truly say to the murderer, "Alas, I have no delight in thy death; I had rather thou hadst kept the law and saved thy life; but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust." So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing of his laws; and therefore he is, for all this, fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God was so much against the death of the wicked as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned; whereas Christ telleth you, that "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But so far God is opposed to your damnation as that he will teach you, and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to destroy yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse. But if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you, he is resolved on your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, verse 8, "O wicked man thou shalt surely die!" And Christ hath

little less than sworn it, over and over, with a " verily, verily, except ye be converted and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18 : 3. John, 3 : 3. Mark, that he saith, " you cannot." It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing for it ; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great Lawgiver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live ; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn ; and as a judge, even delighteth in justice, and in manifesting his hatred of sin, though not in the misery which sinners have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

And for the proofs of the point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God proclaimed " And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ;" (Exod. 34 : 6, 7 ;) and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, That he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death, than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word, to turn ; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt but turn : he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his Gospel proveth the point.

3. And his commission that he hath given to the ministers of the Gospel doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately: and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your sins, and foretell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are means "to lead you to repentance," (Rom. 2 : 4,) and bring you so often under his rod, to lead you to your senses; he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does from day to day, and year to year. These are not signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death. If his had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How oft, before this, could he have caught thee away in the midst of thy sins with a curse or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and sensuality? When thou wert last in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God, how easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with plagues, and made thee sober in another world! Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer,

and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms? If he should but frown upon thee thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! how easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways, and make thee send to beg their prayers whom thou didst despise in thy presumption? How easily can he lay that flesh under pains, and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth? That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeas'd, though God be displeas'd; and must be humored in meat, and drink, and clothes, whatever God say to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it? When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and showing thy spleen against the reprove, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God have snatched thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou shouldst see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting on his throne, and have called thee there to plead thy cause, and asked thee "What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all the mercies

thou hast had." O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance be appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries, if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against ! How easily can he at any time say to thy guilty soul, Come away, and live in that flesh no more till the resurrection, and it cannot resist ! A word of his mouth would take off the poise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still ; and if he say unto thee, Live no longer, or, live in hell, thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this, but hath patiently forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to thy flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou didst use to satisfy thy greedy throat : he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness ; and doth not all his patience and mercy show that he desired not thy damnation ? Can the candle burn without the oil ? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them ? No more can you live an hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live ? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy's hands to resist him, or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle servant that plays or sleeps the while ? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God hath so long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the suffering of his Son, that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead; and would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, as you find him in Mark, 3 : 21; or so long in fasting, as in Matt. 4; or all night in prayer, as in Luke 6 : 12; or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke 22 : 44; or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins—would you have thought these the signs of one that delighted in the death of the wicked?

And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect: for it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another. But it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and save any that would not, by faith and repentance, be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people: (Luke, 19 · 41, 42,) “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes”—or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matt. 23 : 37, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered

thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do—would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? When God hath so loved, (not only loved, but so loved,) as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him (by an effectual faith) should not perish, but have everlasting life, I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would "turn and live."

6. Lastly, If all this will not yet satisfy you, take His own word that knoweth best his own mind, or at least believe his oath : but this leads me to the fourth doctrine.

DOCTRINE IV.

The Lord hath confirmed to us by his Oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; (Matt. 18 : 3; John, 3 : 3;) so God hath sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the apostle saith, (Heb. 4 : 13, 18,) because he can swear by no greater, he sware by himself. "For men verily swear by the greater : and an oath for confirma-

tion is to them an end of strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to question or deny therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points: but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow minds hardly discern the agreement.

USE.—I do now entreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldst ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly it is not God; he hath sworn for his part that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend. You dare not say that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they

must be like minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard-heartedness, and carelessness, and presumption; such wilfulness in evil, and such unteachableness and stiffness against the ways of life and peace; they know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know, from the word of God, what is like to be the end of them, and therefore it is no more pleasure to them than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks broke out upon his patient. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it and consider it. To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing. How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! but you will not do it; if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to it. We study day and night what to say to you that may convince and persuade you, and yet it is undone: we lay before you the word of God, and show you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you. We hope you will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and regard it when we show you the plain Scripture for it; but we hope in vain, and labor in vain as to any saving change upon your hearts! And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time, in secret prayer, we are

fain to complain to God with sad hearts, "Alas, Lord, we have spoken to them in thy name, but they little regard us; we have told them what thou bidst us tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us: we have told them that thou hast protested that there is no peace to the wicked;" (Isa. 57 : 21;) "but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked. We have showed them thy word, where thou hast said, that if they live after the flesh they shall die;" (Rom. 8 : 13,) "but they say, they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee; and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word; and when they hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we show them where thou hast said, that when a wicked man dieth, all his hopes perish, yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes." Prov. 11 : 7. "We tell them what a base unprofitable thing sin is; but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy this pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment; and they bless themselves, and will not believe it, but will do as the most do; and because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them, and this doth but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say they do repent already; while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them; but they that were drunkards, are drunkards still; and

they that were voluptuous flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still; and they that were worldlings, are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant, and proud, and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners, as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us, when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction; and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humor them in doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them to confess, and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. They would have us disobey God and damn our own souls, to please them; and yet they will not turn and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and if we are ever so anxious we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbors, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved, but we cannot persuade them; if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them; and what more can we do?

These are the secret complaints and moans that

many a poor minister is compelled to make. And do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? to see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? to see you merry when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? to think what you must for ever suffer, because you will not turn? and to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder thing can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you please by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin?

1. The devil indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations; for this he watches night and day; you cannot devise to please him better than to go on in sin. How glad is he when he sees thee going into the alehouse, or other sin, and when he heareth thee curse, or swear, or rail? How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it; for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased

in meat, and drink, and clothing; that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very god that you serve, for the Scripture saith of such, that their bellies are their gods. Phil. 3 : 19. But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. *Question.* Should your flesh be pleased before your maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teacher, and your godly friends, and all to please your brutish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be the ruler of your flesh? If he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. *Question.* Your flesh is pleased with your sin, but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge within you, and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be; and should not your souls and consciences be pleased before your corruptible flesh?

3. *Question.* But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sports, and merriment; it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world; but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell, but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if you go on in sin.

but if they be not, (as I am sure they are not,) then what if sin were never so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners, is the riches of this world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? Sirs, these questions should be considered before you go any further, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live; if yet you will go on and die rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it: it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the hearts, the grace, to hearken to God or man that would reclaim them, what remedy is there, but they must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late? Before I proceed any further in the application I shall come to the next doctrine, which gives me a fuller ground for it.

DOCTRINE V.

So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners that he doubleth his commands and exhortations, with vehemency—Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there an unconverted sinner that heareth these vehement words of God? Is there a man or woman in this assembly that is yet a stranger to the

renewing sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? It is a happy assembly, if it be not so with the most. Harken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey?

Harken then, all you that live after the flesh: the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being hath sent a message to thee from heaven; and this is his message, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee. If he did but tell thee thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it. O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, "I charge thee, upon the allegiance that thou owest to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me, that thou mayest live. I condescend to entreat thee, as thou either lovest or fearest him that made thee; as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, turn and live: as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a thing, then, is the heart of man!

Harken, then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation; here is the most joyful message that was ever sent to the ears of man, "*Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*" You are not

yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; turn, and you shall have it. O Sirs! with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord. Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers; you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars—*Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*

Hear, all you cold and outside professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, and never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls—“Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights than by the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but a little-by-the-by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he required it, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it—“Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

If you never heard it, or observed it before, remember that you were told from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, sirs? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions. If the Lord be God, follow him: if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away, then, and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal; and be awakened at last, with all your might, to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved, (Heb. 12: 28,) and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labors another way than formerly you have done. But if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Sirs, are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider, I. What preparations mercy hath made for your salvation; and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God. The time was, when thyself, and all the friends that thou hast in the world, could never have produced thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment, by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law; but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and en-

treateth thee to accept it; and it may be thine, if thou wilt. For, "he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5 : 18, 19. Sinners, we too are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord; "Come, for all things are ready." Luke, 14 : 17. Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you, and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the worldlings and drunkards will find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner! if thou hast a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee, who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation? and yet doth it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But that is not all: Christ hath died on the cross, and made such way for thee to the Father, that, on his account, thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the Gospel. And yet art thou not ready?

The ministers of the Gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, pray for thee. And yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society: they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them, by thy confession and amendment; they dare not so much as reproach thee with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itself is ready: The Lord will receive thee into the glory of his saints. Vile as thou hast been, if thou wilt be but cleansed thou mayest have a place before his throne; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready? are ministers ready, and the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready? and angels ready? and all these but waiting for thy conversion; and yet art thou not ready? What! not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long? not ready to come to thy right understanding, as the prodigal is said to "come to himself," (Luke, 15 : 17,) when thou hast been beside thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ, that would deliver thee, when

thou art even ready to sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be drawn from hell, when thou art even ready to be cast remediless into it? Alas, man! dost thou know what thou doest? If thou die unconverted there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation; and thou art not sure to live an hour. And yet art thou not ready to turn and to come in? O miserable wretch! Hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldst yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many warnings, and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions and pangs of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart, were opened to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready!

II. Consider also, what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful: and yet what encouraging, joyful calls! For the principal inviter is God himself. He that commandeth heaven and earth, commands thee to turn, and that presently, without delay. He commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious an orb, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets, and the orbs of heaven, and they obey. He commandeth the sea to ebb

and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him; the angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such worms as we on earth, (Heb. 1 : 14;) and yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him. He only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty say the word, the heavens and all therein obey him: but if he call but a drunkard out of an ale-house, he will not obey: or if he call a worldly fleshly sinner to deny himself, and mortify the flesh, and set his heart upon a better inheritance, he will not obey.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, O this is my Father's call! how can I find in my heart to disobey? For the sheep of Christ "know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life." John, 10 : 4. If thou hadst any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, "This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey? For saith the prophet, (Amos, 3 : 8,) "The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" God is not a man, that thou shouldst dally and trifle with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, "*It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" Acts, 9 : 5. Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ear against his call? who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest, and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thine head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked." Gal. 6 : 7. Whoever else

be mocked, God will not: you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. "For our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12: 29. O how unmeet a match art thou for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands." Heb. 10: 31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do: what will you say if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? will you then strive against his judgment, as now ye do against his grace? Isa. 27: 4, 5. "*Fury is not in me:*" saith the Lord: (that is) I delight not to destroy you: I do it, as it were unwillingly; but yet "*who will set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me.*" It is an unequal combat for the briers and stubble to make war with the fire.

And thus you see who it is that calleth you, that would move you to hear his call, and turn: so consider also by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly he doth it.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath, as it were, a voice, and calls out to thee, Turn, and live; turn, or thou wilt die. How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon that thou hearest: for what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call, and persuade, and entreat thee to turn.

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely, sometimes it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? And doth not thy conscience tell thee that thou must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call upon thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls on thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God: for they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by showing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness; and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. Psalm 19 : 1, 2. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work: day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge." Every time the sun riseth unto thee, it really calleth thee to turn, as if it should say, "What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Ephes. 5 : 14. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of sleep. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Rom. 13 : 11, 14. This text was the means of Austin's conversion.

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess; if thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee its fruits, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labors and their lives, but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but only to serve him? Why hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? and if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee from whom, and to what end and use thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress, and didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him, if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another, and another year; and yet dost thou not turn? You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree, Luke, 13 : 7, 9. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he was entreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, (ver. 3 and 5.) "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none, and yet he hath spared thee? How many a time, by thy wilful ignorance, and carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the fatal

blow, to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to turn. "Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." Rom. 2 : 3-6.

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry, Turn: and poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastening rod, cry, Turn. And yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel; they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itself, bespeaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know his will and do it? Why hast thou a heart within thee that can love, and fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The holy Scriptures call upon thee to turn; the ministers of Christ call upon thee to turn; the Spirit cries, Turn; thy conscience cries, Turn; the godly, by persuasions and example cry, Turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration cry, Turn; the patient forbearance of God cries, Turn; all the mercies which thou receivest cry, Turn; the rod of God's

chastisement cries Turn; thy reason and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy turning; and so do all thy promises to God; and yet art thou not resolved to turn?

III. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner, didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with Him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself, and all thou hast; and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldst serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand, and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms; thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies that would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner! and thou canst not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year, perhaps the last day. His sword is even at thy heart while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, sirs, look inwards now and tell me how your hearts are affected with those offers of the Lord. You hear what is his mind: he delighteth not in your death; he calls to you, Turn, turn: it is a fearful sign if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee, and much more if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of

God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, Turn and live! Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt that wrath of God but an hour! Or, if after a thousand or ten thousand years' torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God, Turn and live; and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death. What say you? which of them will you choose? Christ standeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in the one hand, and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice. Which wilt thou choose? The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble. Psalm 29. And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Why? It is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion; and yet canst thou neglect it? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whither thou art going better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, Turn, turn. He seeth what will become of thee, if thou turn not. He thinketh with himself, "Ah! this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he do not turn. I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law." And therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn. O sinner! If thou didst but know the thousandth part, as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the misery

that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there; and they would not now for a thousand worlds that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now, what are they possessing that turned at God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the voice of love, that meant them no more harm than their salvation; and if thou wilt obey the same call thou shalt come to the same happiness. There are millions that must for ever lament that they turned not; but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Well, sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak, man, in thy heart, to God, though you speak not out to me; speak, lest he take thy silence for denial; speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more; speak resolutely, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thine heart now, without any more delay, even before thou stir hence, "By the grace of God I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know my own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord."

Sirs, you are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Life is before you, and you may have it on reasonable terms, if you will; yea, on free cost, if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you; the church is open to you. You may have Christ, and pardon,

and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you or will you not? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witnesses, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember, you might have had Christ, and would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life, as well as others, and would not; and all because you would not turn!

But let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

DOCTRINE VI.

The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy and as to the disputants.

I. The controversy, or question propounded to dispute of is, Why wicked men will destroy themselves? or, Why they will rather die than turn; whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

II. The disputants are God and man: the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing, which God doth here seem to suppose, that any man should be willing to die and be damned? yea, that this should be the case of the wicked? that is, of the greatest part of the world. But you will say, "This cannot be; for nature desireth the preservation and felicity of itself; and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?"

To which I answer:—1. It is a certain truth that

no man can be willing to bear any evil, as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. 2. But yet for all that, it is most true which God here teacheth us, that the cause why the wicked die is, because they will die. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, although they are told by God and man whither it goes and whither it ends; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way they shall be condemned; and that they shall not be saved unless they turn. Isa. 48 : 22; 57 : 21; 59 : 8, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked." "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths. Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." They have the word and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn they shall not enter into his rest: and yet, wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will: fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be, worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be, though God hath told them that the love of the world is enmity to God, and that if any man love the world (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him. James, 4 : 4; 1 John, 2 : 15. So that, consequently, these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; they are willing to walk in the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment; though they do not will hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case sirs? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your

sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in spite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, "I will drink this poison, but yet I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it." Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and they will live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means lead to the end? and that God hath, by his righteous law, concluded that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say plainly, I will kill myself, for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, We will be damned; for so you will be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a murderer that would say I will kill, but I will not be hanged, when he knows that if he does the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done? If he say I will murder, he may as well say plainly, I will be hanged; and if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, We will go to hell.

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly, he will

not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly you will be damned; for if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all; but the wicked are unwilling even to partake of salvation itself; though they may desire somewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not; yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness, which is here to be attained, they have no mind for; much less for that which is so much greater. The joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposeth that the wicked are willing their own destruction. They will not turn, though they must turn or die: they will rather venture on certain misery than be converted; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

II. And as this controversy is matter of wonder, in that men should be such enemies to themselves as

wilfully to cast away their souls, so are the disputants too : that God should stoop so low as thus to plead the case with men ; and that men should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case ; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue.

No wonder that they will not hear us that are men when they will not hear the Lord himself. As God saith, (Ezek. 3 : 7,) when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee ; for they will not hearken unto me ; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbor, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think that they have reason on their side. When they weary the Lord with their words, they say, "Wherein have we wearied him?" Mal. 2 : 17. The priests that despised his name durst ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" And "when they polluted his altar, and made the table of the Lord contemptible," they durst say, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" Mal. 1 : 6, 7. But "Wo unto him (saith the Lord) that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth : shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?"

Quest. But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Answ. 1. Because that man being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome ; God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature

should not go against the clearest, the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least, men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable; but both in what he commandeth them, and what he forbids them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side; and they have good reason to obey him—but none to disobey him. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was only reasonable that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they had little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

USE.—Look up your best and strongest reasons, sinners, if you will make good your way. You see now with whom you have to deal. What sayest thou, unconverted sensual sinner? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that! Why, either he or you are mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it; he calls upon you to turn, and you will not; he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith it must be a total change, and you must be holy and new creatures, and born again: and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now?

God or you? God calleth you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn when you do not turn. And why will you not?

Can you give any reason for it that is worthy to be called a reason?

I that am but a worm, your fellow creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were fatal presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator! What is it then for a lump of earth, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself nor his own soul, that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yea, that is more ignorant than many of his neighbors, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord! It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such as sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: yea, that those people in our parishes that are so ignorant that they

cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them, and cavil against them, when they can scarcely speak sense, and will believe them no further than agreeth with their foolish wisdom!

And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the cause is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his Maker's laws, and reason to dishonor the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember that death is the wages of sin, (Rom. 6: 23.) and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul for ever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting? It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he showeth himself to be. Had you a lordship, or a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason, but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest prince on

earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery; all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand, or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it is the most gainful way to cast it away, rather than to go to hell to save it; for there is no saving a part when you lose the whole. So exceedingly great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserveth once to be named in comparison with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of such high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss; and hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort; and therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation; for, saith our Savior, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark, 8:36.

O sirs, that you did but know what matters they are that we are now speaking to you of! you would have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to the saints in heaven that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them sensual pleasures, or merry company, or sports to entice them away from God and glory, I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, or if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred and holy scorn would they reject the motion! And why should not you do so, that have

heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure: and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honor, or the good will or word of men, that will quench hell fire, or make him a gainer that loseth his soul. O if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say there can be no reason to warrant a man to destroy his soul; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand in the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have a reason for, as Bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for, as many a man hath it done to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be tormented with scourges and racks, or to be burned to ashes, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, this is a hard case to flesh and blood; but this a man may have good reason for, as you may see in Heb. 11: 33, 36, and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and to run into the fire of hell when he is told of it, and entreated to turn that he may be saved—this is a thing that can have no reason in the world to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to obtain it, or for any labor which we bestow for it; but nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to you

heart. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason have you to refuse to turn and live to God? What reason has the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant careless sinner of you all, why he should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for his soul as any other? Will not hell be as intolerable to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a sanctified people, as well as they?

O, sirs, when God bringeth the matter down to the very principles of nature, and shows that you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls—if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

And now, either you have good reason for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reason for? But if you think you have a reason, produce it, and make the best of your matter. Reason the case a little with me, your fellow creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God; tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in; what reason hast thou to deny or to delay? Hast thou any reasons that satisfy thine own conscience for it, or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But, alas! what poor stuff, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men! But for their necessity I should be ashamed to name them.

Objection 1. One saith, if none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, then heaven would be but empty; then God help a great many!

Answer. Why, it seems you think that God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed! Measure not all by yourselves: God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us, Matt. 7 : 13, 14. Luke, 11 : 32. It better be- seems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teacheth you: " Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." Luke, 13 : 22—24. Fear not, little flock, (saith Christ to his sanctified ones,) for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke, 12 : 32.

Object. 2. I am sure, if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Answer. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company, or will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there be so many that are guilty? These are all unreasonable conceits.

Object. 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.

Answer. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Object. 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will overreach, and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Answer. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands, and tens of thousands that are otherwise, though the malicious world doth accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts; and commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God, because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Object. 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted?

Answer. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons that avoid disgraceful sins are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God, and averse to heaven in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful notorious sins.

Object. 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm; and why then should God condemn me?

Answer. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness to be so insensible of it: the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou

wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thy self, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Object. 7. I think you would make men mad, under pretence of converting them: it is enough to rack the brains of simple people to muse so much on matters so high for them.

Ans. 1. Can you be more mad than you are already? or, at least, can there be a more dangerous madness than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never well in his wits till he be converted: he never knows God, nor knows sin, nor knows Christ, nor knows the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted. The Scripture saith, that the wicked are unreasonable men, (2 Thess. 3 : 2,) and that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. 1 Cor. 1 : 20. and Luke 15 : 17. It is said of the prodigal, that when he came to himself he resolved to return. What a strange wisdom is this; men will disobey God, and run to hell, for fear of being out of their wits?

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving God, and calling upon him, and comfortably thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us; you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed to meditate on it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is

plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed persons to be distracted by thinking of eternal things, this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide; and of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Object. 8. I do not think that God cares so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Answer. It seems, then, you take the word of God to be false: then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the scriptures; for you see God sets not so light by us but that he vouchsafed to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look at it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely, if you believe not a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles, or to relieve you; and if God had so little care for you as you imagine, you would never have lived till now; a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you; yea, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less, and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use;

and if he made him for any, it was sureiy for himself; and can you think he cares not whether his end be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection you make God to have made and upheld all the world in vain; for what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What doth the earth but bear us and nourish us, and the beasts but serve us with their labors and lives, and so of the rest? And hath God made so glorious a habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants; and now doth he look for nothing at his hands, nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Object. 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Answ. 1. It hath ever been the custom to praise the times past; that world that you speak of was wont to say it was a better world in their forefathers' days; and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think. Worldlings think the world is at the best when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure; and I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world, for then he had more service, and less disturbance. But the world is at the best when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed; and how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Object. 10. There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will be even as we are.

Ans. Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are further out of the way than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners; for they do not only err in this or that opinion, as many sects do, but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop, or turn again, because you met with some cross-ways, or because you saw some travellers go the horse-way, and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well of any of the rest that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see their companions so bad?

Object. 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly, than with other men; they are as poor and in as much trouble as others.

Ans. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages; they have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed; the less they have, the more is behind, and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Ans. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will, indeed, but that is your misery.

2. My desire is, that you should hope and trust in

God. But for what is it that you will hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise, and therefore hope for it, and spare not. But if you hope to be saved without conversion, and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these, and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion, and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing; and if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless hardened hearts. Dare you stand to aver one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn to say, "Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors, or because I saw men of so many minds!" O how easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasonings as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served now pay you your wages, and save you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after first, and were ye not commanded to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and promised that other things should be added to you? Matt. 6 : 33. And were ye not told, that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and that which is to come? 1 Tim. 4 : 8. Did the sins of the professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware, and have

been the more careful, and not to be more careless. It was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why the Scripture that was your rule did teach you but one way, and that was the right way. If you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you should never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asked the man, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Matt. 22: 12, that is, what dost thou in my church among professed Christians, without a holy heart and life—what answer did he make? Why, the text saith, "he was speechless;" he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing we can say to you now, but will make good your cause be it ever so bad. I know already that never a reason that now you can give me will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord, and all the world.

Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons; for if they are, it seems, then, you have not so much as a purpose to repent. But if you do purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reasons to give why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your hearts? Or will you go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to

bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or his wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil, whom ye serve, a better? or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your consciences that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you, and to have a cleansed purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" 1 Pet. 1 : 15, 16; Lev. 20 : 7. Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said that God made man in his own image? Why, this holiness is his image; this Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he doth to all that he will save. Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are loth to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of an unconverted? of a holy and heavenly man than of a carnal earthly man? and would you not say as Balaam. (Numb. 23 : 10.) "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing, if you are? Is it your friends? You will but change them; God will be your friend, and Christ and the Spirit will be your friend; and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have

done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to he'll, but could not have delivered you : but the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again if you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than to live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consisteth. Rom. 14 : 17. If it would be a greater pleasure for you to think of your lands and inheritance, if you were lord of all the country, than it is for a child to play at pins, why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than of all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in toys that they would not leave them for all your lands, so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses and lands, and meat and drink, and ease and honor, as that you would not part with them for the heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out like a taper, the pleasures of the saints are then at the best. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures: so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side; and yet I must profess from that little

experience, that there is no comparison. There is more joy to be had in a day, if the sun of life shine clear upon us, in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm 84 : 10. "A day in his courts is better than a thousand" any where else. Psalm 84 : 10. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery ; and therefore Solomon says of such laughter, "it is mad ; and of mirth, what doth it ?" Eccles. 2 : 2 ; 7 : 2, 6. "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting ; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter ; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning ; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools ; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled ; he laughs when he has no cause of joy. Judge, as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is but your carnal unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

Question. But how cometh it to pass that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation ?

They have wit enough in other matters: what makes them so loth to be converted that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Answer. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with the earth and flesh; they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and goodness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man: and when all that we can say goes against an habitual inclination of their natures, no marvel if it prevail little.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light; but what will hearing do, unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the Spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith: they know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion and a holy mind and conversation is, even when they hear of it. They are in a mist of ignorance. They are lost and bewildered in sin; like a man that has lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the daylight recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment, and that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted when they are not. And if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world, to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites, have distracted them, and got such a hand over them that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else; so that the drunkard saith, I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear it; the glutton saith, I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear; the fornicator saith, I love to have my lust fulfilled, and I cannot forbear; and the gamester loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency; and what they would not do, they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time, for heavenly; but, as in Pharaoh's dream, Gen. 41 : 4, the lean kine did eat up the fat ones; so this lean and barren earth doth eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it; or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways; and when one is cut off, and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodliness for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke 16, the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is likely he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were

hasting thither, and little dreamt that he was there, yea, and would little have believed one that should have told them so. I remember a passage that a gentleman, yet living, told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn.* A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leapt upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him he fell into the stream; the rest seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all or almost all drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before; but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. O, but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a subtle malicious enemy that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark; and it is his principal business to hinder their conversion; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that more is enjoined than need be, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir; and that God is so merciful that he will not damn any such as they; or at least, that they may

* Mr R. Rowly, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham-Bridge.
Bax. Call.

stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter. And by such juggling, deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps the most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion: when their reasons are silenced and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now showed you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve their turn, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider, who is in fault if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

DOCTRINE VII.

That if after all this men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but their own, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will, that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord, concern-

ing his unprofitable vineyard : (Isa. 5 : 1, 4,) " Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard : what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ?" When he had planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines, what should we have done more to it ? He hath made you men, and endowed you with reason ; he hath furnished you with all external necessaries ; all creatures are at your service ; he hath given you a righteous perfect law. When ye had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins ; and he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself !

The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He hath on this reasonable condition offered you the free pardon of all your sins ! he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it by his ministers : they have made the offer to you a hundred and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face ! He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins ; he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies ; he hath also intermixed afflictions, to remind you of your folly, and call you to your senses, and his Spirit has been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, " Turn, sinner, turn to him that calleth thee : Whither art thou going ?

What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies? When wilt thou let go all, and turn and deliver thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be?" These pleadings have been used with thee, and when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart." Why not now without any more delay? Life hath been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the Gospel; the certainty of them hath been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned hath been declared to you; unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. Gal. 3:1. You have been a hundred times told that you are but lost men till you come unto him; as oft you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it, like the smith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers and when the sparks fly about his ears; and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let reason itself be the judge, whether it be the fault of God or yours, if after this you will be

unconverted and be damned. If you die now, it is because you will die. What should be said more to you, or what course should be taken that is more likely to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, "We would fain have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not; we would fain have forsaken our sins, but we could not; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not." Why could you not, if you would? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin, or who held you back from duty? Had not you the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly, as your godly neighbors had? Why then could not you have been godly as well as they? Were the church doors shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves, or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, "I will pardon all that repent except thee?" Did he shut thee out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves, and when he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, "Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you." If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse; you might have said, "To what end do I repent and turn, when

it will do no good?" But this was not your case: you might have had Christ to be your Lord and Savior, your head and husband, as well as others, and you would not, because you felt yourselves not sick enough for the physician: and because you could not spare your disease. In your hearts you said as those rebels, Luke, 19 : 14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not. Matt. 23 : 37. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word? With what compassion did he stand over you, and say, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways!" Psalm 17 : 13; 76 : 13, "O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" Deut. 5 : 29, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deut. 32 : 29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire: but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him: though you complimented him, and gave him high titles; yet when it came to the closing, you would have none of him. Psalm 81 : 11, 12. No marvel then if he gave you up to your own hearts' lusts, and you walked in your own counsels. He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you, "What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hand? Many mercies have I showed thee: for which of them dost thou thus despise me? Is it I, or

is it satan, that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me, the Lord that would have saved thee." Jer. 2 : 7. "Doth not thy own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee? Thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken me." Jer. 2 : 19. "What iniquity have you found in me that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" Jer. 2 : 5, 6. He calleth out, as it were, to the brutes, to hear the controversy he hath against you. Mic. 2 : 3, 5, "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me, for I brought thee up out of Egypt, and redeemed thee." "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 knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider! Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers!" &c. Isaiah. 1 : 2, 4. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. 32 : 6. When he saw that you forsook him, even for nothing, and turned away from the Lord of life to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, Isaiah, 55 : 1, 3. "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not

bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;" and so Isa. 1: 16—18. And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbornness. Jer. 2: 13, 13. "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, Rev. 22: 17, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But you put him to complain, after all his offers, "They will not come to me, that they may have life." John, 5: 40. He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business; and when you would not come, you have said you could not, and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper. Luke, 14: 16—25. And who is it the fault of now but yourselves? and what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation but your own wills? you would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself. Prov.

1:20—33. “Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse—How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. 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 counsels, and would none of my reproofs. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsels; they despised all my reproofs; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil.” I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully show the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

Use.—From what hath been said, you may further learn these following things:

1. From hence you may see, not only what blas-

phemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker! They cry out upon God, and say he gives them not grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be condemned that be not converted and sanctified; and they think it hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned they say they cannot help it, when, in the meantime, they are busy about their own destruction, even the destruction of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God were cruel if he should condemn them, and yet they are so cruel to themselves that they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is a little before them; and neither entreaties, nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives, tell us that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them; and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire; and therefore we entreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves, but they will have none; and yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful miserable sinners! it is not God that is cruel to you, it is you that are cruel to yourselves; you are told you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God

with them, and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offereth it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help; he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them; you love your lust, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go; would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why that is an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified fleshly heart be in heaven? it cannot be. There entereth nothing that is unclean. Rev. 21 : 17. "For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. 6 : 14, 15. "All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Rom. 10 : 21. What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why, God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not! Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us! Drink it he must and will; he loves it, and, therefore, though hell comes next, he saith he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly careless worldling, it is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a lion were at your back you would mend your pace; when the curse of God is at your back, and satan

and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, What needs of all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy on themselves. And yet will these shameless transgressors say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation; and if we should go to them, and entreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall on our knees to them we cannot stop them, but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own souls to pity themselves, and go no further in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had, they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot so much as get them now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and turn; and yet they can say, "I hope God will be merciful." Did you never consider what he saith, Isa. 27 : 11, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful: and yet you will do a thousand

times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness! Yea, and God that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the spirit of grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy than by the filth of their fleshly pleasures; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would have none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them! But he will be justified when he judgeth, and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord; but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my *Treatise of Judgment*, to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute them to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it should be an easy question who is in the fault; whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favorable judges of themselves, that they are more prone to accuse the infinite perfection and goodness itself, than their own hearts, and imitate

their first parents, that said, "The serpent tempted me; and the woman that thou gavest me gave unto me, and I did eat;" secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, "The understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me did entice me; the temptations which thou didst permit to assault me prevailed against me." And some are so loth to think that God can make a self-determining creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative, to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient immediate physical cause; and many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good; as if truths would be no longer truths than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence; because our ravelled wits cannot see them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness, when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in holy submission to the omniscience of our Teacher but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

Objection. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace; it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy.

Ans. 1. God hath two degrees of mercy to show; the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last; the latter he will give to none but those that *will* and *run*, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that are unwill-

ling; and though your own willingness and endeavors deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied to you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves are so corrupted that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it and set yourself against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Object. But you seem to intimate all this while that man hath free will.

Answ. 1. The dispute about free will is beyond your capacity; I shall, therefore, now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty; but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore we see, by sad experience, that it hath not a virtuous moral freedom; but that it is the wickedness of it which procures the punishment; and I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy that was so malicious as to fall upon you and beat you, or take away the lives of your children, would you excuse him because he said I have not free will; it is my nature, I cannot choose unless God give me grace? If you had a servant that robbed you, would you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assize give such an answer: I have not free will; I cannot change my own heart; what can I do without God's grace? and shall

they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together:—1. What a subtle tempter Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing sin is. 3. What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtle tempter, indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have! A deceitful thing is sin, indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man, indeed, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded for a little to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence, also, you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and keep them in it. Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon

themselves? and that they should hesitate much at the destruction of others, that hesitate not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn that the greatest enemy to man is himself; and the greatest judgment in this life that can befall him, is to be left to himself; that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves; that the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves, that the greatest work that we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; and the greatest enemy that we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity's sake, and leave them to your further consideration.

Well, sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls, (even men's selves, their own wills,) what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And, 3. To reform you, if there yet be any hope.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delighteth to show mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death,

or to call him cruel; he made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all; the eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living. Psalm 145 : 15, 16. He is not only righteous in all his ways, and therefore will deal justly; and holy in all his works, and therefore not the author of sin, but he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Psalm 145 : 17, 19.

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, and his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by? Or if you see a house broken open, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need, or a known thief or murderer? I say, therefore, as James, 1 : 13—15, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to sin,) but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." You see here that sin is the offspring of your own concupiscence, and not to be charged on God; and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle

your own souls. Your nature shows it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered to you. Satan is scarcely more ready to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear, and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires in you, it is soon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts, or deeds, you are so free that he needs no rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it, you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoreth to kindle; but you set in with him, and meet him half way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy for him to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently of yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it; it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you; or at best you put him off

with heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them; your unhumbled souls feel but little need of their help; if they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. What ever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, even in the depth of ignorance, that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance, and wilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections, so that no good that is offered can find any welcome acceptance and entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you "draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself." You like not the contrivances of his wisdom; you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty; you like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, (Psalm 1 : 21,) and makes as light of sin as you do; you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings, prove false; and his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly resist, as it would lead you to repentance; and partly abuse, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might more freely sin because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you fetch destruction from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself! and nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that

Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture; as if Christ were become a servant to satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the Physician of souls, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away his medicines, and must save you whether you will come to God by him or not: so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ, not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sins, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head. Matt. 1: 21; Tit. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 1: 15, 16; Col. 3: 10, 11; Phil. 3: 9, 10.

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal fore-knowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labor of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of sin and death. If he afflict you, you repine; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight, and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly; and thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures and mercies of God to you. He giveth them to you as the tokens of his love and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him, to the pleasing of

your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you to perform his work. Your clothes you abuse to pride; your riches draw your hearts from heaven; (Phil. 3 : 18;) your honors and applause puff you up; if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honors and dignity, you are provoked to envy them; if you see their riches, you are ready to covet them; if you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust; and it is well if godliness itself be not an eye-sore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn to sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited; if you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you "regard iniquity in your hearts," (Psalm 66 : 18,) and depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord. 2 Tim. 2 : 19. Your "prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law," (Prov. 28 : 9,) and are more ready to offer the sacrifice of fools, thinking you do God some special service, than to hear his word and obey it. Eccles. 5 : 1.

9. Yea, the persons that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them. If they live ungodly, you imitate them; if the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them; if the godly be few, you are the more

emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise; if one of them fall in a particular temptation you stumble and turn away from holiness because that others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your legs because some others have by their heedlessness strained a sinew, or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, "They are all alike," and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years' custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors, while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the Gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it; and you will not hear, or at least not obey, the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that agree not with your conceits. One will not hear a minister because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him because he doth not use it. One will not hear them that are for episcopacy; and another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might show it you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it that the ungodly

are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths :

1. To be your own destroyers is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection, and will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbors as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves; but if you love your neighbors no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world to be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But, alas, it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wild-fire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honor, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it that you should do that against yourselves which none else on earth or in hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent: and will you do that against yourselves which no one else can do? You have hate-

ful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoreth your destruction; and will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it: when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides; and if you should set yourselves and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much intrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He hath set you, with all diligence, to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them? Prov. 4 : 23.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamity for mercy, mercy; what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, "Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself; who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulness?" And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how shall they pity you that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O what a piercing thought it will be for ever to think with yourselves that this was your own doing! that you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God! that you had time as well as others, but you abused it; you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instruction; you had holy examples, but

you did not imitate them; you were offered Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, but you had more mind of your fleshly pleasures! you had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out. Prov. 17 : 16. Can it fail to torment you to think of this your present folly? O that your eyes were open to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God. Prov. 8 : 33, 36, "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death."

And now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest after this the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart; yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, (17 : 16,) "I have not desired the woful day, thou Lord knowest." I have not, with James and John, desired that "fire might come from heaven" to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. Luke, 9 : 54. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavoring: and O that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labor as some of you could have been. Dear friends, I am so loth that you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of hea-

ven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, what do you now resolve? Will you turn, or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith to him, "Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but those few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this you are but a dead man." What would you think of such a man, if the physician, and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to the poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet, if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, yet you might be held or bound while the medicine were poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God has thought meet to lay men's salvation or destruction exceedingly much upon the choice of their own will, that no man shall come to heaven that chose not the way to heaven; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, "I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither." Now, if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and resolvedly, and

habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And alas! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? O God forbid! It is a strange thing to me that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, who in lesser things are civil and courteous, and good neighbors. For aught I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbors, so far, that if I should send to any man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they would grant it me; and yet when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good earnest or not, and means as he speaks; for I think I have few neighbors, but, if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them what I have seen and done, or known in the world, they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they would believe me, and regard what I say; but when I tell them, from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they show, by their lives, that they do either not believe it or not much regard it. If I met any one of them on the way, and told them yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lying in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by; but when I tell them that satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbors, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit as I am in my familiar discourse; and if ever you will regard me, I beseech

you let it be here. I think there is not a man of you all, but, if my own soul lie at your wills, you would be willing to save it, though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it. Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather that I did burn there for ever than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would. If it were to save my life, I know you would, some of you, hazard your own; and yet will you not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Wouldst thou forbear a hundred cups of drink to save my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to save thy own soul? I profess to you, sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day for the saving of your own souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come begging to your doors; and therefore if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hear' en to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live. All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption, to this day; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God, and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drinks, sports and lusts; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work

of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love; and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and heartier love to them than your fleshly prosperity, and the things below; I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not one day longer in your former condition, but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. And if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live. Deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this; and if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you, and died that you may live, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O sirs, believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off: then you would hear such a message as I bring you with more awakened regardful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter, (Acts. 2: 37,) when they were

pricked in their hearts, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How may we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should choose destruction by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I say of you as God did of a promising people, (Deut. 5 : 28, 29,) "They have well said all that they have spoken: O that there was such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purposes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And in hope hereof I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

DIRECTION I.—If you would be converted and saved, labor to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what it is that you must turn.

Consider in what a lamentable condition you are till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed, and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law; you are bond slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others; you are spiritually dead and deformed, as being devoid of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing to God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain

to be lost if you die in that condition; and nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities or amendments are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted; it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

Quest. 1. For what must we turn?

Ans. For these ends following, which you may attain: 1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have an interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan, and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you; you shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints; you shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful, and a blessing to the place where you live; and shall have the promise of this life, and that which is to come: you shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear; you may have some taste of communion with God in the Spirit, especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls; you shall be heirs of heaven while

you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace; and you shall never be so low but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive!

And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be glorified and justified, and enter into your Master's joy, where your happiness will consist in these particulars:

1. You shall be perfected yourselves; your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption; you shall no more be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or sick, nor shall you need to fear either shame, or sorrow, or death, or hell; your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praises of the Lord.

2. Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow citizens of heaven, and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

3. Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

4. Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in that you are the travail of his soul, and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

5. And the eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory, both as he is magnified by

your praises, and as he communicateth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious work, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

II. You see *for* what you must turn: next you must understand *from* what you must turn; and this is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted:—from the flesh that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you;—from the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

III. Next you must know to what end you must turn; and that is, to God as your end; to Christ as the way to the Father; to holiness as the way appointed you by Christ; and to the use of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

IV. Lastly; you must know by what you must turn; and that is by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the Sanctifier; and by the word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

DIRECTION II.—If you will be converted and saved, be much in serious secret consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves oft into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, of the time you have lost, the sins you have committed; of the love, and sufferings, and fulness of Christ;

of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and the eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Absorb your hearts in such considerations as these.

DIRECTION III.—If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it; constantly attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will light the world by the sun, and not by himself without it, so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world. Acts, 26 : 17, 18. Matt. 5 : 14. When he had miraculously humbled Paul, he sent Ananias to him, (Acts, 9 : 10,) and when he had sent an angel to Cornelius, it was but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what to believe and do.

DIRECTION IV.—Betake yourselves to God in a course of earnest constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. Pursue this work daily, and be not weary of it.

DIRECTION V.—Presently give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more, but avoid the very occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures

with detestation. Curse, and swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore, as Zaccheus did; if you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

DIRECTION VI.—Presently, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad; not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions; and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven. Acts, 9 : 19, 26. Psalm 15 : 4.

DIRECTION VII.—Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life, there is no coming to the Father but by him. John, 14 : 6. Nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved. Acts, 4 : 12. Study, therefore, his person and natures, and what he hath done for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

DIRECTION VIII.—If you mean indeed to turn and live, do it speedily, without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember, you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death: and this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for your lives, as

you would be gone out of your house if it were all on fire over your head. O, if you did but know in what continual danger you live, and what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in if you die before you thoroughly turn! Ye have staid too long already, and wronged God too long. Sin getteth strength while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

DIRECTION IX.—If you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world; and to part with some sins and keep the rest; and to let that go which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding; you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples. Luke, 14 : 26, 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory are not enough for you; it is vain to dream of salvation on these terms; for it will not be. If you seem never so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and if the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

DIRECTION X.—If you will turn and live, do it resolvedly, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master, or whether sin or holiness be the better way, or whether heaven or hell be the better end. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly resolve. Be not one day of one mind, and the next day of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves and all you have to God. Now, while you are reading, or hearing this, resolve; before you sleep another night, resolve; before you stir from the place, resolve; before satan have time to take you off, resolve. You never turn indeed till you do resolve, and that with a firm unchangeable resolution.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn to the call of God, and live. What will become of it I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no further with my message; I cannot bring it to your heart, nor make it work; I cannot do your parts for you to entertain it and consider it; nor can I do God's part, by opening your heart to entertain it; nor can I show heaven or hell to your sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But O thou that art the gracious Father of spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; deny

not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight, and the great deceiver of souls to prevail against thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word! O pity poor unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity or help themselves! Command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure, resolve the unresolved, confirm the wavering; and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins, and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavors shall prosper to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting joy, and thine everlasting glory.—*Amen.*



THE
DYING THOUGHTS

OF THE

REV. RICHARD BAXTER,

ABRIDGED BY

BENJAMIN FAWCETT, M. A.

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P R E F A C E

BY THE

COMPILER OF THIS ABRIDGMENT.

IN the following pages the reader will find none of the triumphs peculiar to martyrdom, nor any of those ecstasies which have distinguished some particular Christians on their dying beds. Some extraordinary cases rather excite our joyful surprise, than are patterns for our imitation.

The "Dying Thoughts" of Mr. BAXTER chiefly present to our view what every Christian may attain, and what it is the highest interest as well as the indispensable duty of every Christian to aspire after. See here his doubts and fears in the prospect of eternity; though he had spent a long life in exemplary holiness, and in great nearness to God and heaven. See his jealousies over his own heart, and anxious concern to discover his sincerity; together with his sober appeals and earnest attention to every dictate of reason and Scripture, in order to establish his mind and conscience in a well grounded peace. See, also, his unwearied striving with God and his own soul to have his grace in vigorous exercise. All

these are well known ingredients of the Christian temper; and therefore tend, not to perplex and discourage, but to counsel, strengthen, and comfort serious readers, while they discern, in one of Mr. BAXTER'S exalted attainments, the same conflicts, complaints, and desires, which fill their own breasts.

It is observed of Lord WILLIAM RUSSELL, who died a martyr for the liberty of his country, that a little before his death, by a trusty messenger, he sent Mr. BAXTER his hearty thanks for his Dying Thoughts, "which," says he, "have made me better acquainted with the other world than I was before; and have not a little contributed to my support and relief, and to the fitting me for what I am to go through."

Though the Dying Thoughts were written about forty years after the Saints' Rest, yet both are evidently built on the same principles, and are animated by the same spirit. And let it suffice to add, that the abridgment of both is conducted in the same manner.

B. FAWCETT.

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DYING THOUGHTS.

PHILIPPIANS, 1 : 23.

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better.

CHAPTER I.

What there is desirable in the present life.

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble : he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down : he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” “And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?” As a watch when it is wound up, or as a candle newly lighted ; so man, newly conceived or born, begins a motion which incessantly hastes to its appointed period. And as an action, or the time of it, is nothing when it is past ; so vain a thing would man be, and so vain is life, were it not for the hopes of a more durable life with which this is connected. But those *hopes*, and the *means* for supporting them, do not only distinguish a *believer* from an *infidel*, but a *man* from a *beast*. When Solomon describes the difference only in respect to time and the things of time, he well observes, that *one event* happening to both, shows that both are *vanity*. And Paul says of Christians, “If in this life only we have

hope, we are of all men most miserable." Though even in *this life*, as related to a *better*, and as we ourselves are exercised about things of a higher nature than the concerns of a temporal life, we are far happier than the men of the world.

I am intending to speak to none but myself, and therefore (supposing the meaning of the text to be duly ascertained) shall only observe what is useful to my own heart and practice. In this chapter I will consider—What there is desirable in the present life: then show, chapter second—The necessity and reasonableness of believing that pious separate spirits are with Christ: next explain, chapter third—What it is to depart, and to be with Christ: and chapter fourth—Why it is far better to be with him. I will conclude chapter fifth with expressing—My concern that I myself may be willing to depart, and to be with Christ.

It was a happy state into which grace had brought the apostle, who saw so much of what was not only tolerable, but greatly desirable, both in living and dying. "For him to live was Christ;" that is, to do the work and serve the interest of Christ: for him "to die was gain;" that is, would be his own interest and reward. His strait was not, whether it would be good to live, or good to depart, because both were good; but he doubted which of the two was more desirable. Nor was it his meaning to bring his own interest and Christ's into competition with each other. By Christ, or the interest of Christ, he means his serving the churches

of Christ upon earth. But he knew that Christ had an interest also in his saints above, and could raise up more to serve him here. Yet, because he was to judge by what appeared, and saw that such were much wanted upon earth, this turned the scales in his choice; and therefore, in order to serve Christ in the edification of his churches, he was more inclined, by denying himself, to have his reward delayed; at this same time well knowing that the delay of his reward would tend to its increase. Here let me observe, "That even in this world, short of death, there is some good so much to be regarded, as may justly prevail with believers to prefer it before the present hastening of their reward." I rather note this, that no temptation may carry me into the extreme of taking nothing but heaven to be worth minding; and so even sinfully cast off the world, on pretence of mortification and a heavenly life. Not that any thing on earth is better than heaven, or is in itself to be preferred before heaven. The end, as such, is better than the means, and perfection better than imperfection. But the present use of the means may be sometimes preferred before the present possession of the end. And the use of the means for a higher end, may be preferred before the present possession of a lower end. Every thing has its season. Planting, sowing, and building are not so good as reaping, fruit-gathering, and dwelling; but in their season they must be first done.

But let me inquire, What there is so desirable in this present life? The answer is obvious: for,

1. While this present life continues, the will of God is fulfilled, who will have us upon earth for a season; and that is best which God wills.

2. The life to come depends upon this present life; as the life of adult age depends upon infancy; or the reward upon the work; or the prize of racers or soldiers upon their running or fighting; or the merchant's gain upon his voyage. Heaven is won or lost on earth; the possession is *there*, but the preparation is *here*. Christ will judge all men in another state, as their works have been in this. First, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" then, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course" must go before the crown of righteousness "which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give." All that we ever do for salvation must be done here. It was on earth that Christ himself wrought the work of our redemption, fulfilled all righteousness, became our ransom, and paid the price of our salvation; and here also must we do our part. The bestowing of the reward is God's work, who, we are sure, will never fail. Here is no room for the least suspicion of his failing in any thing he undertakes; but the danger and fear is of our own miscarrying, lest we be not found capable of receiving what God will certainly give to all that are fit to receive. To distrust God is heinous sin and folly; but to distrust our-

selves is highly reasonable. So that if we will make sure of heaven, it must be by "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure" upon earth. If we fear hell, we must fear our being prepared for it. And it is great and difficult work we have to do upon earth; as, for instance, to be cured of all damning sin; to be born again; to be pardoned and justified by faith; to be united to Christ, made wise to salvation, renewed by his Spirit, and conformed to his likeness; to overcome all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to perform all our duties toward God and man; "with the heart to believe in Christ unto righteousness, and with the mouth to make confession unto salvation; also to "suffer with Christ, that we may reign with him; and be faithful to death, that we may receive the crown of life." Thus on earth must we "so run that we may obtain."

3. We must labor to *do good to many*; and therefore we have greater work to do on earth than merely securing our own salvation. We are intrusted with our Master's talents for his service, to do our best in our places, to propagate his truth and grace, to edify his church, honor his cause, and promote the salvation of as many souls as we can. All this is to be done on earth, if we would secure the end of all in heaven.

It is then an error, though but few are guilty of it, to think that all religion lies in minding only the life to come, and in disregarding all things in

this present life. All true Christians must seriously mind both the end and the means of attaining it. If they believingly mind not the end, they will never be faithful in the use of the means; if they be not diligent in using the means, they will never obtain the end. Heaven must have our highest esteem, and our habitual love, desire, and joy; but earth must have more of our daily thoughts for present practice. A man that travels to the most desirable home, has an habitual desire to it all the way; but his present business is his journey, and therefore his horse, inns and company, his roads and his fatigues, may employ more of his thoughts, and talk, and action, than his home.

I have often wondered to find David, in the Psalms, and other saints before the coming of Christ, express so great a sense of the things of this present life, and say so little of another; making so much account of prosperity, dominion, and victories on the one hand, and of persecution and the success of enemies on the other hand. But I consider that it was not for mere personal and carnal interest, but for the church of God, and for his honor, word, and worship; for they knew, if things go well with us on earth, they will be sure to go well in heaven; if the militant church prosper in holiness, there is no doubt but it will triumph in glory. Satan does much of his damning work by men, as his instruments; so that if we escape their temptations, we escape much of our danger. When idolaters prospered, Israel was

tempted to idolatry. Most follow the powerful and prosperous side. And therefore, for the glory of God, and for our own everlasting salvation, we must, while upon earth, greatly regard our own, and much more the church's welfare. Indeed, if earth be desired only for earth, and prosperity be loved only to gratify the flesh, it is the certain mark of damning carnality and an earthly mind. But to desire peace and prosperity for the sake of souls, the increase of the church, and the honor of God, that "his name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven," accords with the highest and most sacred discharge of duty.

"And now, O my soul! be not unthankful for the mercies of this present life. This body is so nearly united to thee, that it must needs be a great help or hinderance. Had it been more afflicted, it might have been a discouraging clog; like a tired horse in a journey, or an ill tool to a workman, or an untuned instrument in music. A sick or a bad servant in a house is a great trouble, and much more a bad wife: but thy body is nearer to thee than either of these could be, and will be more of thy concern. Yet if it had been more strong and healthful, sense and appetite would have been strong; and the stronger thy lusts the greater would have been thy danger, and much more difficult thy victory and salvation. Even weak senses and temptations have too often prevailed. How knowest thou then what stronger

might have done? When I see a thirsty man in a fever, or dropsy; and especially when I see strong and healthful youth bred up in fullness and among temptations, how they are mad in sin, violently carried to it, bearing down the rebukes of God and conscience, parents and friends, and all regard to their own salvation; this tells me how great a mercy I had, even in a body not liable to their case. Also, many a bodily deliverance has been of great use to my soul, renewing my time, and opportunity, and strength for service, and bringing frequent and fresh reports of the love of God. If bodily mercies were not of great use to the soul, Christ would not so much have showed his saving love as he did, by healing all manner of diseases. Nor would God promise us a resurrection of the body, if a suitable body did not promote the welfare of the soul.

“I am obliged to great thankfulness to God for the mercies of this life which he hath showed to *my friends*. That which promotes their joy should increase mine. I ought to ‘rejoice with them that rejoice.’ Nature and grace teach us to be glad when our friends are well and prosper; though all this must be in order to better things than bodily welfare.

“Nor must I undervalue such mercies of this life as belong to *the land of my nativity*. The want of them is part of God’s threatened curse; and ‘godliness has a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, and so is profita-

ble unto all things.' When God sends on a land the plagues of pestilence, war, persecution, and famine, especially *a famine of the word of God*, it is a great sin to be insensible of them. If any shall say, 'While heaven is sure, we have no cause to accuse God, or to cast away comfort, hope, or duty,' they say well. But if they say, 'Because heaven is all, we must make light of all that befalls us on earth,' they say amiss. Pious and public-spirited men, who promote the safety, peace, and true prosperity of the commonwealth, do thereby very much befriend religion and men's salvation, and are greatly to be loved and honored by all. Let me therefore be thankful for the preservation from enemies, the restraint of persecution, the concord of Christians, and increase of godliness, in this land, and especially that the Gospel is continued in it.

"Be particularly thankful, O my soul! that God hath made any use of thee for the service of his church on earth. My God, my soul for this doth magnify thee, and my spirit rejoiceth in the review of thy great undeserved mercy. O what am I, whom thou tookest up from the dunghill, or low obscurity, that I should live myself in the constant relish of thy sweet and sacred truth, and with such encouraging success communicate it to others! that I may say, now my public work seems ended, that these forty-three or forty-four years I have no reason to think that ever I labored in vain! O with what gratitude must I look

upon all places where I lived and labored; but, above all, that place which had my strength!* I bless thee for the great numbers of them gone to heaven, and for the continuance of piety, humility, concord, and peace among them. Also for all that by my *writings* have received any saving light and grace. O my God, let not my own heart be barren while I labor in thy husbandry to bring others unto holy fruit! Let me not be a stranger to the life and power of that saving truth which I have done so much to communicate to others! O let not my own words and writings condemn me as void of that divine and heavenly nature and life which I have said so much of to the world!

“Stir up then, O my soul, thy sincere desires, and all thy faculties, to do the remnant of the work of Christ appointed thee on earth, and then joyfully wait for the heavenly perfection in God’s own time. Thou canst truly say, ‘To me to live is Christ.’ It is his work for which thou livest. Thou hast no other business in the world. But thou doest this work with a mixture of many oversights and imperfections, and too much troublest thy thoughts with distrust about God’s part, who never fails. If thy work be done, be thankful for what is past, and that thou art come so near the port of rest. If God will add any more to thy days, serve him with double alacrity. The prize is almost within sight. Time is swift and short. Thou hast told others that ‘there is no working in the

* Kidderminster.

grave,' and that it must be 'now or never.' Dream not, because Christ's righteousness was perfect, that God will save the wicked, or equally reward the slothful and the diligent. As sin is its own punishment, holiness is much of its own reward. Whatever God appointed thee *to do*, see that thou *do it* sincerely, and *with all thy might*. If sin dispose men to be angry because it is detected, disgraced, and resisted; so that God be pleased, their wrath should be patiently borne, who will shortly be far more angry with themselves. I shall not be hurt when I am with Christ, by the calumnies of men on earth; but the saving benefit will, by converted sinners, be enjoyed everlastingly. Words and actions are transient things, and being once past, are nothing; but the effect of them on an immortal soul may be endless. All the sermons that I have preached are nothing now; but the grace of God on sanctified souls is the beginning of eternal life. It is an unspeakable mercy to be thus employed sincerely and with success; and therefore I had reason all this while to be in Paul's *strait*, and make no haste in my 'desires to depart.' The crown will come in its due time; and eternity is long enough to enjoy it, how long soever it be delayed. But if I will do that which must obtain it for myself and others, it must be quickly done, before my declining sun be set. O that I had no worse causes of my unwillingness yet to die, than my desire to do the work of life for my own and other men's salvation, and to

‘finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord!’

“As it is on earth I must do good to others, so it must be in a manner suited to their earthly state. Souls are here closely united to bodies, by which they must receive much good or hurt. Do good to men’s bodies, if thou wouldest do good to their souls. Say not, Things corporeal are worthless trifles, for which the receivers will be never the better. They are things that nature is easily sensible of, and sense is the passage to the mind and will. Dost thou not find what a help it is to thyself, to have at any time any ease and alacrity of body; and what a burden and hinderance pains and cares are? Labor then to free others from such burdens and temptations, and be not regardless of them. If thou must ‘rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,’ promote then thy own joy by helping theirs, and avoid thy own sorrows in preventing or curing theirs. But, alas! what power has selfishness in most! How easily do we bear our brethren’s pains and reproaches, wants and afflictions, in comparison of our own! How few thoughts and how little cost and labor do we use for their supply, in comparison of what we do for ourselves! Nature indeed teaches us to be sensible of our own case; but grace tells us that we should not make so great a difference as we do, but should love our neighbor as ourselves.

“And now, O my soul, consider how mercifully God has dealt with thee, that thy strait should

be between two conditions so desirable. I shall either die speedily, or stay yet longer upon earth; whichever it be, it will be a merciful and comfortable state. That it is 'desirable to depart, and be with Christ,' I must not doubt, and shall hereafter more copiously consider. And if my abode on earth yet longer be so great a mercy as to be put into the balance against my present possession of heaven, surely it must be a state which obliges me to great thankfulness to God and comfortable acknowledgment: nor should my pain, or sickness, or sufferings from men, make this life on earth unacceptable while God will continue me in it. Paul had his thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and suffered more from men than I have done; and yet he 'gloried in his infirmities, and rejoiced in his tribulations,' and was 'in a strait betwixt' living and dying; yea, rather chose to live yet longer. Alas! the strait of most men is between the desire of life for fleshly interest, and the fear of death as ending their felicity; between a tiring world and body, which make them weary of living, and the dreadful prospect of future danger, which makes them afraid of dying. If they live, it is in misery; if they must die, they fear greater misery: whether they look behind or before them, to this world or the next, fear and trouble is their lot. Yea, many serious Christians, through the weakness of their trust in God, live in this perplexed strait, weary of living and afraid of dying, continually pressed between

grief and fear. But Paul's *strait* was *between two joys*, which of them he should desire most. And if that be my case, what should much interrupt my peace or pleasure? If I *live*, it is *for Christ*, for his service, and to prepare for my own and his everlasting felicity; and should any suffering make me impatient with such a work, and such a life? If I *die* presently, it is *my gain*; God, who appoints me my work, limits my time; and surely his glorious reward can never be unseasonable, or come too soon, if it be the time that he appoints. When I first engaged myself to preach the Gospel, I reckoned, as probable, but upon one or two years, and God has made it above forty-four. And what reason have I to be unwilling now, either to live or die? God's service has been so sweet to me that it has overcome the trouble of constant pains or weakness of the flesh, and all that men have said and done against me. How much the following exceeds this pleasure, I am not now able to conceive. There is some trouble in all this pleasant work, from which the soul and flesh would rest. And 'blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.' O my soul, what need has this kind of strait to trouble thee? Leave God to his own work, and mind that which is thine. So live that thou mayest say, 'Christ liveth in me; and 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.' Ther, as thou hast lived in the comfort of hope, thou shalt die in the comfort of vision and enjoyment. And when thou canst say of God, 'Whose I am, and whom I serve;' that thou mayest boldly add, 'I know whom I have believed, and into his hands I commit my departing spirit. "

CHAPTER II.

The necessity and reasonableness of believing that pious separate spirits are with Christ.

The subject suggests to my thoughts—the necessity of believing that the souls of the godly, when departed hence, shall be with Christ—and the reasonableness of such a faith. We are elsewhere assured, that "we shall be with him, where he is;" and to be with him can mean no less than a state of communion, and a participation of happiness. To believe such a state of happiness for departed pious souls, must appear, upon consideration, to be both necessary and reasonable.

I. The NECESSITY of believing that pious separate spirits are with Christ, appears by considering, that, without this belief—we shall be uncertain concerning the design of life—we shall lose the most powerful motives to a holy life—we can neither know, estimate, nor improve our mercies—nor can we bear our sufferings with comfort.

1. We shall be uncertain concerning the *design* of life. It is allowed, that the right end of life is to *please God*. But I must desire to please God better than I do in this imperfect state, I must desire to please him perfectly. And our desires of our ultimate end must have no bounds. God has made the desire of our own happiness so necessary to the soul of man, that it cannot be separated from our desire to please him. Therefore, both in respect to God and to our own happiness, we must believe that he is the everlasting "rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If we knew not whether God will turn our pleasing him to our loss, or to our having no gain by pleasing him, this would hinder our love to him, and our trust and joy in him; and consequently hinder the cheerfulness, sincerity, and constancy of our obedience. Had we no *certainty* what God will do with us we must have some *probability* and *hope* before we can be entirely devoted to his service. How can a man pitch upon an *uncertain end*? If he waver so as to have no *end*, he can use no *means*; he lives not as a *man*, but as a *brute*. Or if he pitch upon a wrong end, he will but make work for repentance.

2. We shall lose the most powerful *motives to a holy life*. Indeed, goodness is desirable for itself; but the goodness of *means* is their fitness for the *end*. We have here abundance of hinderances, temptations, and difficulties, which must be overcome. Our natures are diseased, and greatly in-

disposed to the most necessary duties; and will they ever be discharged, if the necessary motives be not believed? Our duties to God and man may cost us our estates, liberties, and lives. The world is not so happy as commonly to know good men from bad, or to encourage piety and virtue, or to forbear opposing them. And who will let go his present welfare without some hope of better as a reward? Men do not use to "serve God for naught," or while they think it will be their loss to serve him. A life of sin will not be avoided for inferior motives. When lust and appetite incline men strongly and constantly to their respective objects, what shall sufficiently restrain them, except the motives from things external? If sin so overspread the earth, notwithstanding all the hopes and fears of a life to come, what would it do if there were no such hopes and fears?

3. We can neither know, estimate, nor improve our *mercies*.—God gives us all the mercies of this life as *helps* to an immortal state of glory, and as *earnests* of it. Sensualists know not what a soul is, nor what soul-mercies are, and therefore know not the just value of all bodily mercies; but take up only with the *carcass, shell, or shadow*, instead of the *life* of their mercies. No wonder they are so unthankful for God's mercies, when they know not the real excellency of them.

4. Nor can we bear our *present sufferings* with comfort, without the hope of living with Christ.—What should support and comfort me under my

bodily languishings and pains, my weary hours, and daily experience of the *vanity and vexation* of all things under the sun, had I not a prospect of the comfortable end of all? I, that have lived in the midst of great and precious mercies, have all my life had something to do to overcome the temptation of wishing that I had never been born; and had never overcome it, but by the belief of a blessed life hereafter. We should be strongly tempted, in our considerate moments, to murmur at our Creator, as dealing worse by us than by the brutes; if we must have had all those cares, and griefs, and fears, by the knowledge of what we want, and the prospect of death and future evils, which they are exempted from, and had not withal the hope of future felicity to support us. Seneca had no better argument to silence such murmurers, than to tell them, "If this life have more evil than good, and you think God does you wrong, you may remedy yourselves by ending it when you will." But that could not cure the repinings of nature, when weary of the miseries of life, and yet afraid of dying. No wonder that so many fancied that souls were punished in these bodies for something done in a pre-existent state. "O how contemptible a thing is man," says Seneca, "unless he lifts up himself above human things." Therefore, says Solomon, when he had tried all sensual enjoyments, "I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

II. AS for the REASONABLENESS of believing that pious separate spirits are with Christ—I have often thought, whether an implicit belief of it may not be better than searching into its nature, and trying what can be said against it. I have known many godly women who never disputed the matter, but served God comfortably to a very old age, and who lived many years in such a cheerful readiness and desire for death as few studious men ever attain to. This no doubt was the *divine reward* of their unwavering confidence and trust in the promises through Christ. On the contrary, as doubts and difficulties are apt to present themselves to an inquisitive mind, they must be answered; for if we reject them unanswered, we give them half the victory over us; and a faith that is not upheld by such evidence of truth as reason can discern and justify, is often joined with much doubting, which men dare not confess, but do not therefore overcome; and the weakness of such a faith may tend to enfeeble all the graces and duties which should be strengthened by it. Who knows how soon a temptation from Satan, or infidels, or from our own dark hearts, may assault us, which will not be overcome without clear evidence? Yet many that try, and reason, and dispute most, have not the stronger faith. Indeed, there is a wide difference between that light which discovers the thing itself, and a mere artificial kind of knowledge, to form arguments and answer objections. Unlearned persons, who have little

of the latter may have more of the former, even that teaching from God which reaches the heart as well as the understanding. And who does not find it necessary to pray hard for this divine teaching? When I can prove the truth of the word of God, and of the life to come, with the most convincing evidence of reason, I feel my need to cry daily to God to "increase my faith," and to give me that light which may sanctify the soul and reach the end. Nevertheless, this effectual teaching ordinarily supposes that which is artificial. Unlearned Christians are convinced, by good evidence, that God's word is true, and his rewards sure: though they cannot state that evidence, or conceive of it without some confusion. With respect to curious and needless inquiries beyond what is revealed, it is a believer's wisdom implicitly to trust his soul to Christ, and to fear that vain, vexatious knowledge, which is selfish, and savors of a distrust of God, and is that sin, and fruit of sin, which the learned world too little fears. That "God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and that holy souls shall be in blessedness with Christ, I am convinced by the following concurrent evidences, on which my soul raises its hopes:—The immortality of the soul—the belief of it naturally implanted in all men—the duty of all men to seek after future happiness—the difference between men and brutes, concerning the knowledge of God and futurity—the justice of God, as the governor of the

world—divine revelation—God's hearing and answering prayer—the ministration of angels—the temptations of Satan, and especially the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God.

1. The soul of man is *immortal*—and therefore, if good, cannot be for ever in a bad condition. An immortal spirit is “a distinct, self-conscious, invisible being, endowed with natural powers of never-ceasing action, understanding and will, and which is neither annihilated nor destroyed by separation of parts.” Such is the soul of man. If in this flesh our spirits were not inactive and useless, we have no reason to think that they will be so hereafter, and that for ever. Though by the light of nature we may know the immortality of souls, yet without supernatural light we know not what manner of action they will have in their separate state. It satisfies me, that God will not continue their noblest powers in vain; and how those powers shall be exercised is known to him; and this his word tells us more than nature. All things considered, there is no reason to fear that souls shall lose their activity, though they change their manner of action: and so it is naturally certain that they are immortal. And if holy souls are so far immortal, their holiness must prove their happy immortality. This the most just and holy God will certainly secure to those whom he makes holy.

2. The belief of the soul's immortality is naturally *implanted in all men*.—Almost all pagan

nations at this day, as well as the Mahommedans, believe it. As for the cannibals and savages, whose understandings are least improved, they are rather ignorant of it than disbelieve it. Though some philosophers denied it, they were every way inconsiderable: though many others were doubtful, it was only a certainty which they professed to want, and not a probability. Most of the apostates from Christianity, beside those philosophers who have been its violent opposers, fully acknowledged it. Julian was so persuaded of it, that with a view to it he exhorted his priests and the rest of his subjects to great strictness of life, and to see that the Christians did not exceed them. Indeed, few of those that affect, like the Sadducees, to disbelieve it, are able to free themselves from the fears of future misery; but, with all their efforts, conscience still troubles them. And whence should all this be in man, and not in beasts, if man had no more cause for hopes and fears than they?

3. God has made it every man's duty to *seek after future happiness* as the one thing needful, and therefore there must certainly be such a happiness for them that truly seek it. Some believe a state of future retribution, as Christians Mahommedans, and most heathens. Others think it is uncertain, yet very probable. And to others it is also uncertain, though they rather think it untrue. Now all these ought to seek after it, and make it their chief care and labor; for natural rea-

son requires every man to seek that which is best with the greatest diligence, and assures us that a probability or possibility of future everlasting happiness is better, and more worthy to be sought, than any thing attainable in this present life. As the will of man necessarily desires happiness, it must desire that most which is best, and which is known to be so. In this life there is nothing certain for an hour. It is certain that the longest life is short. It is certain that time and sensual pleasure, when past, are nothing, and no better than if they had never been. It is also certain that they are dissatisfying while we possess them; for carnal pleasure is no sweeter to a man than to a beast, and to a beast is unattended with fear of death, or any misery after death; nor has the beast any labors, sufferings, or trials, in order to obtain a future happiness, or avoid a future misery. Beside, it is self-evident, from the perfections of God, and from the nature of his works that he does not make it man's natural duty to care and labor most for that which is not, or to seek what is not to be attained. If so, the duty of man would result from deceit and falsehood; and God would govern the world by a lie, and not by power, wisdom, and love; and the better any man was, and the more he did his duty, he would be only the more deluded and miserable; and the more wicked and unbelieving any man was, the wiser and happier would he be. But all this is contrary to the perfections and works of

God; for he makes nothing in vain, nor can he lie: much less will he make holiness itself, and all that duty and work of life which reason obliges all men to perform, to be not only vain, but pernicious.

4. The difference *between men and brutes* with respect to the knowledge of God and futurity, shows that they differ as much in their hopes. Man knows that there is a God by his works; and that this God is our Lord, our ruler, and end; and that we naturally owe him all our love and obedience; and that it is not the manner, even of good men, ever to suffer their most faithful servants to be losers by their fidelity, or to set them upon laboring in vain. Man also knows that his own soul is immortal, and therefore must be well or ill for ever, and that this ought to be cared for. And why should God give man all this knowledge more than the brutes, if man is designed for no more happiness than brutes? Every wise man makes his work fit for its design; and will not God do so? If God was not perfectly wise, he would not be God. Therefore to deny man's future hopes, is to deny God himself.

5. The *justice of God* as the governor of the world, infers a state of future retribution. If God did not govern man by laws, judgment, and executions, there would be no proper law of nature, and man would have no proper duty, nor be in sin or fault. But experience tells us that God morally governs the world; and his right to

do so is unquestionable. If God was not the ruler of the world, the world would have no universal laws; for no man is the universal ruler; nor are kings, and other supreme powers, utterly lawless and ungoverned. And if God be a ruler, he is just; else he is not so good as he requires earthly princes to be. But how is God a righteous ruler, if he draws all men to him by deceit? if he obliges them to seek and expect a reward which he will never give? if he makes man's duty his misery? if he requires man to labor in vain? if he suffer the wicked to persecute and kill his servants, without punishing the one and gloriously recompensing the other, in a future state?

6. The *gospel revelation* is the clear foundation of our faith and hope. God has not left us to the mere light of nature. "Christ has brought life and immortality to light." One greater than an angel was sent from heaven to tell us what is there, and which is the way, and to secure our hopes. He has conquered death, and entered before us, as our captain and forerunner, into the everlasting habitations. He has "all power in heaven and earth, and all judgment is committed to him." All his word is full of promises of our future glory at the resurrection. Nor are we without assurance that the departing soul at death enters upon a state of joy and blessedness, as appears by the promise to the penitent thief on the cross;—the parable of the rich man and Lazarus;—Christ's telling the sadducees that God; "is not

the God of the dead, but of the living;"—the translation of Enoch and Elijah, and the appearance of Moses with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration; our Lord's arguing, that "they who kill the body are not able to kill the soul:"—his "commending his spirit into his Father's hands," and its being in paradise, while his body was in the grave;—his promising, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be," &c.—Stephen's seeing heaven opened, and his praying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit;"—our being "come to the spirits of just men made perfect;"—Paul's desiring to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better, and to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord;—the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord;—the disobedient spirits being in prison, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;—also Christ's saying, "When ye fail, (that is, leave this world,) ye shall be received into everlasting habitations."

7. God's *hearing and answering prayer* in this life, assures his servants that he is their true and faithful Savior. How often have I cried to him, when there appeared to be no help in second causes; and how frequently, suddenly, and mercifully, has he delivered me! Such extraordinary changes, beyond my own and others' expectations, while many plain-hearted, upright Christians, by fasting and prayer, sought God on my behalf, have abundantly convinced me of a special provi-

dence, and that God is indeed a hearer of prayer. I have also seen wonders done for others by prayer more than for myself: though I and others are too much like those who "cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses; but they forgot his works, and his wonders that he showed them." And what were all those merciful answers, but the fruits of Christ's power, faithfulness, and love, the fulfilling of his promises, and the earnest of the greater blessing of immortality, which the same promises entitle me to?

8. The *ministration of angels* is also a help to my belief of immortality with Christ.—"They have charge over us,—encamp round about us,—bear us up in their hands,—joy in the presence of God over our repentance,—and are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.—As our angels, they always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven.—When the Son of man shall come in his glory, all the holy angels shall come with him, and he shall send them forth, and they shall sever the wicked from among the just." Not only of old did they appear to the faithful as messengers from God, but many mercies does God give to us by their ministry. And that they are now so friendly and helpful to us, and make up one society with us, greatly encourages us to hope that we are made for the same region, employment, and converse. They were once in a life of trial, though not on

earth; and having overcome, they rejoice in our victory. The world above us is not uninhabited, nor beyond our capacity and hope; but we are come to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels.

9. Even *Satan himself* by his temptations has many ways cherished my hopes of immortality. There are few men, I think, that observe what passes within them, but have had some experience of such inward temptations, as show that the author of them is an invisible enemy, and assure us that there are diabolical spirits, which seek man's misery by tempting him to sin, and consequently that future happiness or misery must be expected by us all.

10. More especially the sanctifying operations of *the Spirit of God*, are the earnest of heaven, and the sure prognostic of our immortal happiness. It is a change of grand importance to man, to be renewed in his mind, his will, and life. It repairs his depraved faculties. It causes man to live as man, who was degenerated to a life too much like the brutes. Men are slaves to sin till Christ makes them free. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." If "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts," be not our excellence, health, and beauty, what is? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. "Without Christ" and his Spirit, "we can do nothing." Our dead notions and reason, though we see the truth, have not power to overcome

temptations, nor raise up man's soul to its original end, nor possess us with the love and joyful hope of future blessedness. It were better for us to have no souls, than have our souls void of the Spirit of God.—Heaven is the design and end of this important change. What is our knowledge and faith, but to know and believe that heaven consists in the glory and love of God there manifested, and that it was purchased by Christ, and given by his covenant? What is our hope, but “the hope of glory,” which we through the Spirit wait for? What is our love, but a desire of communion with the blessed God, begun here, and perfected hereafter? What Christ teaches and commands, he works in us by his Spirit. He sends not his Spirit to make men craftier than others for this world, but “wiser to salvation,” and more holy and heavenly. “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.” Heavenly mindedness is the special work of the Spirit. In producing this change, the Spirit overcomes all opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ first overcame the world, and teaches and causes us to overcome it, even in its flatteries and its frowns, “Our faith is our victory.” Whether this victory be easy and honorable to the Spirit of Christ, let us appeal to our experience of the wickedness of the world, and of our own weakness and falls. None can do this work on the soul of man, but God. Not the most learned and holy teachers, of

the wisest and most affectionate parents, or greatest princes. Evil angels neither can, nor will do it. Good angels do nothing toward it, but obedient ministers of God. We cannot quickly illuminate, or sanctify ourselves; and though we have some power, both conscience and experience testify, that we have nothing but "what we have received,"—Christ promised his Spirit to all true believers, to be in them as his advocate, agent, seal, and mark; and indeed the Spirit here, and in heaven hereafter, are the chief of his promises. That this Spirit is given to all true believers, is evident by the effects of it. They have endowments, affections, and lives, different from the rest of mankind: they live upon the hope of a better life, and their heavenly interest overrules all the opposite interests of this world; in order to which they live under the conduct of divine authority, and to obey and please God is the great business of their lives. The men of the world discern this difference, and therefore hate and oppose them because they find themselves condemned by their heavenly temper and conversation. Believers are conscious of this difference; for they desire to be better, and to trust and love God more, and to have more of the heavenly life and comforts; and when their infirmities make them doubt of their own sincerity, they would not change their governor, rule, or hopes, for all the world; and it is never so well and pleasant with them, as when they most trust and love God most; and in their worst a

weakest condition they would fain be perfect. Indeed, whatever real goodness is found among men, it is given by the same Spirit of Christ: but it is notorious, that, in heavenly mindedness and virtue, no part of the world is comparable to serious Christians. This Spirit, Christ also expressly promised, as the means and pledges, the first-fruits and earnest, of the heavenly glory; and, therefore, it is a certain proof that we shall have such a glory. He that gives us such a spiritual change, which in its nature and tendency is heavenly; he that sets our hopes and hearts on heaven, and turns the endeavors of our lives toward future blessedness, and promised this preparatory grace as the earnest of that felicity, may well be trusted to perform his word in our complete, eternal glory.

And now, O weak and fearful soul! why shouldst thou draw back, as if the matter was doubtful? Is not thy foundation firm? Is not the way of life, through the valley of death, made safe by him that conquered death? Art thou not yet delivered from the bondage of thy fears? Hast thou not long ago found in thee the motions and effectual operations of this Spirit? And is he not still residing and working in thee, as the agent and witness of Christ? If not, whence are thy groanings after God, thy desires to be nearer to his glory, to know him and love him more? Whence came all the pleasure thou hast had in his sacred truth, and ways, and service? Who subdued for thee thy folly, pride, and vain desires? Who made it

thy choice to sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his word, as the better part, and count the honors and preferments of the world but dung and dross? Who breathed in all those requests thou hast sent up to God? Overvalue not corrupt nature, it brings forth no such fruits as these. Remember what thou wast in the hour of temptation, how small a matter has drawn thee to sin. Forget not the days of thy youthful vanity. Overlook not the case of thy sinful neighbors, who, in the midst of light, still live in darkness, and hear not the loudest calls of God. Is it no work of Christ's Spirit that has made thee to differ? Thou hast nothing to boast of, and much to be humbled and also to be thankful for. Thy holy desires are, alas! too weak; but they are holy. Thy love has been too cold; but it is the most holy God whom thou hast loved. Thy hopes have been too low; but thou hast hoped in God, and for his heavenly glory. Thy prayers have been too dull and interrupted; but thou hast prayed for holiness and heaven. Thy labors have been too slothful; but thou hast labored for God and Christ, and the good of mankind. Though thy motion was too weak and slow, it has been God-ward, and therefore it is from God. O bless the Lord, not only for giving thee his word, and sealing it with uncontrolled miracles, but also for frequently and remarkably fulfilling his promises, in the answer of thy prayers, and in great deliverance of thyself and of many others; and that he has by regenera-

tion been preparing thee for the light of glory! And wilt thou yet doubt and fear, against all this evidence, experience, and foretaste?

I think it no needless labor to confirm my soul in the full persuasion of the truth of its immortal nature, and of a future life of joy or misery, and of the certain truth of the Christian faith. I can no more doubt the being and perfections of God, than whether there be an earth or a sun. Christianity is only known by revelation, which is so attested externally to the world, internally to holy souls, as makes faith a ruling, victorious, and comfortable principle. But the soul's immortality and future reward is known in some measure by the light of nature, and more perfectly by revelation. When I consider the great unlikeness of men's hearts and lives to such a belief as we all profess, I cannot but fear, that not only the ungodly, but most that truly hope for glory, have a far weaker belief of the soul's immortality, and the truth of the gospel, than they are apt to imagine. Can I be fully persuaded of the future rewards and punishments of souls, and that we shall be judged hereafter as we have lived here, without despising all the vanities of the world, and setting my heart with resolution and diligence to a holy, heavenly fruitful life? Who could stand trifling, as most men do, at the door of eternity, that verily believed his immortal soul must be shortly there? Though such a one had no certainty of his own salvation, he would nevertheless search and try, watch and

pray, and spare no care, cost, or labor, to make all sure. If a man once saw heaven and hell, would he not afterward exceed the most resolute believer? I confess there is much weakness of faith in things unseen, even where there is sincerity. But where there is little diligence for the world to come, I must think there is but little belief of it, and that such persons are not aware how much they secretly doubt the truth of it. Most complain of the uncertainty of their title to salvation, and very little of their uncertainty whether there be a heaven and a hell. Whereas a hearty persuasion of the latter, would do more to convince them of the former than long examinations, and many marks of trial. It would, indeed, confound faith and reason, if in the body we had as clear and lively apprehensions of heaven and hell as sight would occasion; nor is the soul fit, while in the body, to bear such a sight. But yet there is an overruling seriousness, to which the soul must be brought by a firm persuasion of future things. And he that is careful and serious for this world, and looks after a better only as a secondary object, must give me leave to think that he believes but as he lives, and that his doubting of a heaven and hell is greater than his belief.

O then, for what should my soul more pray, than for a clearer and stronger faith? "I believe; Lord help my unbelief!" I have many thousand times groaned to thee under this burden of remaining darkness and unbelief: I have many thousand

times thought of the evidences of Christianity, and of the necessity of a lively, powerful, active faith. I have cried to thee night and day, 'Lord, increase my faith!' I have written and spoken that to others, which might be most useful to myself, and render my faith more like sense. Yet, Lord, how dark is this world! What a dungeon is flesh! How little clearer are my perceptions of things unseen, than they were long ago! Is no more growth of them to be expected? Does the soul no more increase in vigorous perception, when the body no more increases in the vigor of sensation? Must I sit down with so slow a measure, when I am almost there, where faith is changed for sight? O let not a soul, that is driven from this world, and weary of vanity, and can think of little else but immortality, that seeks and cries both night and day for the heavenly light, and fain would have some foretaste of glory, and some more of the first-fruits of the promised joys, —let not such a soul either long, or cry, or strive in vain! Punish not my former grieving of thy Spirit, by deserting a soul that cries for thy grace, so near its great and inconceivable change! Let me not languish in vain desires, at the door of hope; nor pass with doubts and fears from this vale of misery! Which should be the season of triumphant faith, and hope, and joy, if not when I am entering on the world of joy? O thou, that hast left us so many words of promise, 'that our joy may be full: send, O send the Comforter; for

without his heavenly beams, after a thousand thoughts and cares, it will still be night and winter with my soul!"

But I fear a distrust of God and my Redeemer has had too great a hand in my desires after a more distinct knowledge than God ordinarily gives to souls in flesh. I know that I should implicitly, absolutely, and quietly commit my soul into my Redeemer's hands; for a distrustful care of the soul, as well as the body, is our great sin and misery. Yet we must desire that our knowledge and belief may be as distinct as divine revelations are. We can love no farther than we know; and the more we know of God and glory, the more we shall love, desire, and trust. If I may not be ambitious of too sensible and distinct foretastes of things unseen, yet I must desire and beg the most fervent love of them of which I am capable, that my soul may not pass with distrust and terror, but with suitable triumphant hopes, to everlasting pleasures. "O Father of lights, who givest wisdom to them that ask, shut not up this sinful soul in darkness! Leave me not to grope in unsatisfied doubts, at the door of celestial light! Deny me not now the lively exercise of faith, hope, and love, which are the stirrings of the new creature, the dawnings of eternal day, and the earnest of the promised inheritance!" Though, like Cicero's, after reading Plato's book on immortality, our doubts return, and our fear interrupts and weakens our desires and joys; yet I find that it is chiefly

an irrational fear, occasioned by the darkness of the mind, the greatness of the change, the dreadful majesty of God, and man's natural aversion to death, even when reason is fully satisfied that such fear is consistent with certain safety. Were I on the top of a castle or steeple, fastened by the strongest chains, or guarded by the surest battlements, I could not possibly look down without fear; and so it is with our prospect into the life to come. If, therefore, my soul sees undeniable evidence of immortality, and is able by irrefragable arguments to prove a future blessedness; if I am convinced that divine promises are true, and trust my soul and all my hope upon them; then neither my averseness to die, nor my irrational fear of entering upon eternity, can invalidate the reasons of my hope, or prove the unsoundness of my faith, but only the weakness of it. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" was Christ's just reproof to his disciples. A timorous heart needs to be chided, by saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God," &c.

CHAPTER III

What it is to depart, and to be with Christ.

HAVING proved that faith and hope have a certain future happiness to expect, the text directs

me next to consider,—What it is to be with Christ; and—What it is to depart, in order to be with him.

I. To be with Christ, includes—Presence with him,—Union to him, and—Participation of his happiness.

1. The *presence* of Christ, which pious separate spirits shall enjoy, must refer to his Godhead as well as to his human soul and body. We shall be present with the divine nature of Christ, as manifested in and by his glory. He teaches us to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” because in heaven the Father gloriously shines forth to holy souls. The soul of man is eminently said to be in the head, because there it understands and reasons; and not in the foot or hand, though it be also there. As we look a man in the face when we talk to him, so we look up to heaven when we pray to God. Though “in God we live, and move, and have our being,” both as the God of nature and grace, yet by the works and splendor of his glory he is eminently in heaven, manifesting himself there by some created glory; for his essence is the same every where. We shall be present with the human nature of Christ, both soul and body. But here our present narrow thoughts must not too boldly presume to determine the difference between Christ’s glorified body and his flesh upon earth; nor where his glorified body is nor how far it extends; nor where in his soul and his glorified body differ, seeing it

is called a spiritual body. We can conceive no more of such a body than that it is pure, incorruptible, invisible to mortal eyes, and fitted to the most perfect state of the soul. Nor need we wonder how a whole world of glorified bodies can all of them be present with the one body of Christ; for as the solar beams are so present with the air that none can discern the difference of the places which they possess, and a world of bodies are present with them both; so may all our bodies, without any confusion, be present with Christ's body.

2. The *union* to Christ, which pious separate spirits shall also enjoy, must be like that of subjects to their king; but how much more we know not. The more spiritual, pure, and noble any natures are, the more inclination they have to union. Such instances of union, as the vine and branches, the head and members, are of extensive import; yet being but similitudes, we cannot determine how extensive. Far be it from us to think that Christ's glorified body is of such an earthly composition, and of such a limited extent. as it was here; for then, as his disciples and a few more were present with him, while the rest of the world were absent and had none of his company, so it would be in heaven. But all true believers, from the creation to the end of the world, as well as a Paul, shall "be with Christ, and see his glory." And though there will be different degrees of glory, as there have been of holiness, yet none in heaven are at such a distance from Christ as not to enjoy the felicity of his presence.

3. We shall also have *communion* with the divine and human natures of Christ; both which shall be the felicitating objects of perfect knowledge and holy love to the separate spirits, before the resurrection. The chief part of this communion will consist in Christ's communications to the soul. As the whole creation is more dependent on God than the fruit on the tree, or plant on the earth, or the members on the body, so God uses second causes in his communications to inferior natures; and it is more than probable that Christ's human nature is the second cause of communicating both grace and glory, both to man in the body and to the separate soul. As the sun is both the cause and object of sight to the eye, so is Christ to the soul. For as God, so the Lamb is the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and in his light they shall have light. Though Christ shall give up the kingdom to the Father, so that God may be "all in all," and his creatures be fully restored to his favor, and a healing government for recovering lapsed souls to God shall be no more needed; yet surely he will not cease to be our Mediator, the church's head, and the channel of everlasting light, life, and love to all his members. As "we now live because he lives," like the branches in the vine; and as the Spirit that now quickens, enlightens, and sanctifies us, is first the Spirit of Christ before it is ours, and is communicated from God through him to us; so will it be in the state of glory: there our union

and communion with him will be perfected, and not destroyed or diminished. As it would be arrogance to think we shall be above the need and use of Christ and his communications; so, I doubt not, we shall ever have use for one another, as is plainly intimated by "sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God;" by being "in Abraham's bosom;" by "sitting at Christ's right and left hand in his kingdom;" by being "made ruler over ten cities;" and by joining with those that "sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb"

And certainly if I be "with Christ," I shall be with all them that are with Christ, even with all the heavenly society. Our mortal bodies must have so much room, that the earth is little enough for all its inhabitants. So narrow is our capacity of communion here, that those of the antipodes, or on the opposite side of the earth, are almost as strange to us as if they were in another world. What strangers are we to those of another kingdom, county, or parish, and even of another house. But we have great cause to think, by many scriptural expressions, that our heavenly union and communion will be nearer and more extensive, and that all the glorified shall know each other. It is, I confess, a pleasant thought to me, and greatly helps my willingness to die, to think that I shall go to all the holy ones, both Christ, and angels, and pious separate spirits. They are each of them better and more amiable than I am. Many are better than one, and the perfect whole

than a sinful part, and the New Jerusalem is the glory of the creation. God has given me a love to all that are holy, for their holiness; and a love to the work of love and praise, which they continually and perfectly perform; and a love to his celestial habitation, to his glory shining there. My old acquaintance with many a holy person gone to Christ, makes my thoughts of heaven the more familiar to me. O how many of them could I name! And it is no small encouragement to one that is to enter upon an unseen world, to think that he goes no untrodden path, nor enters into a solitary or singular state; but follows all that, from the creation to this day, have passed by death into endless life. O how emboldening to consider that I am to go the same way, and to the same place and state, with all the believers and saints that have ever gone before me!

II. But I must “depart before I can thus “be with Christ.” I must particularly depart—from this body—from all its former delights—and also from more rational pleasures belonging to the present life and world.

1. I must depart *from this body*. Here these eyes must see no more, this hand move no more, these feet walk no more, this tongue speak no more. As much as I have loved, and over-loved this body, I must leave it to the grave. There must it lie and rot in darkness, as a neglected and loathsome thing. This is the fruit of sin, and na-

ture would not have it so. But it is only my shell, my tabernacle, my clothing, and not my soul itself. It is only a dissolution; earth to earth. It is but an instrument laid by, when all its work is done; a servant dismissed, when his service is ended; as I cast by my lute when I have better employment. It is but as flowers die in autumn, and plants in winter. It is but a separation from a troublesome companion, and putting off a shoe that pinched me. Many a sad and painful hour, many a weary night and day, have I had. What cares and fears, what griefs and groans, has this body cost me! Alas! how much of my precious time has been spent to maintain, please, or repair it! Often have I thought that it cost me so dear to live, yea, to live a painful weary life, that were it not for the higher ends of life, I had little reason to be much in love with it, or be loth to leave it. To depart from such a body, is but to remove from a sordid habitation. I know it is the curious wonderful work of God, and not to be despised or unjustly dishonored, but admired and well used; yet our reason wonders that so noble a spirit should be so meanly housed, for we must call it "our vile body." To depart from such a body, is but to be "loosed from the bondage of corruption," from the clog and prison of the soul. That body, which was a fit servant to the soul of innocent man, is now become as a prison. And further, to depart from such a body, is but to be separated from an accidental enemy, and one of

our greatest and most hurtful enemies; not, indeed, as the work of our Creator, but as the effect of sin. What could Satan, or any other enemy of our souls, have done against us without our flesh? What is it but the interest of this body that stands in competition with the interest of God and our souls? What else do the profane sell their heavenly inheritance for, as Esau his birthright? What else is the bait of ambition, covetousness, and sensuality? What takes up the thoughts and cares which we should lay out upon things spiritual and heavenly, but this body and its life? What steals away men's hearts from the heavenly pleasures of faith, hope, and love, but the pleasures of this flesh? This draws us to sin, and hinders us from and in our duty. Were it not for bodily interests and temptations, how much more innocent and holy might I live! I should have nothing to care for, but to please God and be pleased in him, were it not for the care of this bodily life. What employment should my will and love have but to delight in God, and love him and his interest, were it not for the love of the body and its concerns? By this the mind is darkened, the thoughts diverted, our wills corrupted, our heart and time alienated from God, our guilt increased, our heavenly desires and hopes destroyed; life is made unholy and uncomfortable, and death terrible. God and souls are separated, and eternal life is neglected and in danger of being utterly lost. I know that in all this the sin-

ful soul is the chief cause and agent: but is not bodily interest its temptation, bait, and end? Is not the body, and its life and pleasure, the chief alluring cause of all this sin and misery? And shall I take such a body to be better than heaven, or refuse to be loosed from so troublesome a yoke-fellow, and separated from so burdensome and dangerous a companion?

2. I must depart from all the former *pleasures* of this body. I must taste no more sweetness in meat or drink, in rest or action, or any such thing as now delights me. Houses and lands, goods and wealth must all be left; and the placè where I live must know me no more. All I labored for, or took delight in, must be no more to me than if they had never been. But consider, O my soul! Thy former pleasures are already past. Thou lovest none of them by death, for they are all lost before; unless immortal grace has made them immortal by sanctifying them. All that death does to them is to prevent the repetition of them upon earth. Is not the pleasure which we lose by death common to every brute? Meat is as sweet to them, and ease as welcome, and appetite as vehement. Why then should it seem hard to us to lose that, when God pleases, which we deprive the brutes of at our pleasure? If we are believers, we only exchange these delights of life for the greater delights of a life with Christ; a comfort which our fellow-creatures the brutes have not. Are not the pleasures of life usually embitt-

tered with such pain that they seldom counter-vail the attending vanity and vexation? It is true, nature desires life under sufferings that are tolerable, rather than die: but that is not so much from the sensible pleasure of life, as from mere natural inclination to life, which God has implanted in us. Do we not willingly interrupt these pleasures every night, when we betake ourselves to sleep? To say that rest is my pleasure is but to say, that my daily labors and cares are so much greater than my waking pleasures, that I am glad to lay by both together. If we can thus be content every night to die, as it were, to all our waking pleasures, why should we be unwilling to die to them all at once?—If they be forbidden pleasures which you are unwilling to leave, those must be left before you die, otherwise you had better never have been born. Every wise and godly man casts them off with detestation. Indeed, the same cause which makes men unwilling to live a holy life, has a great hand in making them unwilling to die—even because they are loath to leave the pleasures of sin. If the wicked be converted, he must be gluttonous and drunken no more; he must live in pride, vanity, worldly-mindedness, and sensual pleasures no more; and therefore he draws back from a holy life, as it were from death itself. But what is this to those who “have mortified the flesh with the affections and lusts?” Consider also, that these forbidden pleasures are the great impediments both of our holiness and

of our truest pleasures. One of the reasons why God forbids them, is because they hinder us from better; and if, for our own good, we must forsake them when we turn to God, we should therefore be the more willing to die, in order to be free from the danger of them; and especially since death will transmit us to infinitely greater pleasures.

3. I must also depart from the *more rational pleasures* which I have enjoyed in this body; as, for instance, from my present *studies*, which are delights far above those of sensual sinners. But let me consider—how small is our knowledge compared with our ignorance! How little does the knowledge of the learned differ from the thoughts of a child! As trifles are the matter of childish knowledge, so artificial words and forms make up more of the learning of the world than is commonly understood. God, and the life to come, are little better known by the learned, and often much less than by many of the unlearned. Of how little use is it to know what is contained in many hundred volumes that fill our libraries, and have given their authors the name of virtuosi; not for their having the virtue to live to God, or overcome temptations from the flesh and the world, and secure their everlasting hopes! Much of our reading and learning, alas! does us more harm than good. Many a precious hour is lost in them, that should be employed in higher pursuits. To many, I fear, it is as unholy a pleasure as others take in thinking of lands and honors; only the

more dangerous for being the less suspected. I know the knowledge of natural things is valuable, and may be sanctified, and made some way useful to my highest ends, and I would be at any expense to procure more. But I must earnestly pray, "May the Lord forgive me the hours that I have spent in reading things less profitable, for the sake of pleasing a mind that would fain know every thing, instead of spending them for the increase of holiness in myself and others." Yet I must thankfully acknowledge to God, that "from my youth he taught me to begin with things of the greatest weight, and to refer most of my other studies thereto, and to spend my days under the motives of necessity and profit to myself, and those that were committed to me." I would have men most relish that learning in their health which they will find sweetest in sickness, and when near to death. And, alas! how expensive a vanity is this knowledge! Though it little differs from a pleasant dream, yet to attain a little excellency in it, how many laborious days and weeks must it cost us! "Much study is a weariness of the flesh, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." What painful diseases and loss of bodily ease and health has it occasioned me! What envy and opposition has it exposed me to! And should a man be loath to die for fear of leaving such troublesome, costly learning and knowledge? Let me especially consider that we shall certainly have a nobler sweeter, and

more extensive knowledge than is here attainable. Love never fails, and we can love no more than we know: "But prophecies shall fail; tongues shall cease; knowledge," such as we now have, "shall vanish away. 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. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known;" for though my knowledge will not be like that of the blessed God, it will be like that of holy spirits. In order for a physician to describe the disease of his patient, he needs much reading and close inquiry; and after all, he goes much upon conjectures, and his knowledge is mixed with many uncertainties and mistakes; but when he opens his corpse his knowledge is more full and true, and obtained with greater ease and speed. A countryman knows the town, fields, and rivers, plants, and animals, where he dwells, with ease, perspicuity, and certainty, when mere geographical knowledge is liable to many mistakes. So the sight of God and heaven will deserve the name of wisdom, while our present glimpse is but philosophy or the love of wisdom. We should not, therefore, fear death, for fear of losing our knowledge; but rather long for the world of glorious light, that we may get out of this darkness, into easy, joyful, and satisfying knowledge.

Friendship is one of the more rational plea-

asures enjoyed in this body, and from which I must depart. He that believes not that there are far more and better friends in heaven than there are on earth, believes not, as he ought, that there is a heaven. Our friends here are wise; but they are also unwise. They are faithful, but partly unfaithful. They are holy, but, alas! too sinful. They have the image of God, but it is blotted and dishonored by their faults. They do God and his church much service; but they also do too much for Satan, even when they intend the honor of God. They promote the Gospel; but they also hinder it by their weakness and ignorance, their selfishness, pride, and passion, their divisions and contentions. They are our helpers and comforters; but how often are they also our hinderance, trouble, and grief: in heaven they are perfectly wise, and holy, and faithful; and there is nothing in them, nor done by them, but what is amiable to God and man. With our faithful friends we have here a mixture of those that are useless and burdensome, or hypocritical and malicious. But in heaven there are none but the wise and holy; no hypocrites, no burdensome neighbors, no treacherous, oppressive, or persecuting enemies. Christ loved his disciples, his kindred, and all mankind, and took pleasure in doing good to all; and so did his apostles; but how poor a recompense had he or they from any but from God! Christ's "brethren believed not on him." Peter denied him. "All his disciples forsook him and fled." And

what then could be expected from others? No friends have a perfect suitableness to each other; and those inequalities that are nearest to us are most troublesome. So various and contrary are our apprehensions, interests, educations, our tempers, inclinations, and temptations, that instead of wondering at the discord and confusions of the world, we may rather admire the providence of God which maintains so much order and concord. The greatest crimes that have been charged upon me, have been those things which I thought to be my greatest duties; and for those parts of my obedience to God and my conscience which cost me dearest, and where I pleased my flesh least, I pleased the world least. And is this tumultuous, militant world, a place that I should be loath to leave?

I must depart from all the *means of grace*, though more precious to me than all earthly enjoyments. Shall I love the name of heaven better than heaven itself? Is not the possession of glory better than the promise of it? If a light and guide through the wilderness be good, surely the glorious end must be better. It hath pleased God that all things on earth, even the sacred Scriptures, should bear the marks of our state of imperfection. Imperfect persons were the penmen. Imperfect human language is the conveyance. Heaven will not, to perfect spirits, be made the occasion of so many errors and controversies as the Scriptures are to us imperfect mortals. Yea, heaven

is the more desirable, because there I shall better understand the Scriptures than here I can ever hope to do. To leave my Bible, and to go to the God and heaven which the Bible reveals, will be no otherwise my loss than to leave the picture for the presence of my friend. As for mere human writings and instructions, the pleasure of my mind is much abated by their great imperfection; and why should I think that my own are blameless? I must for ever be thankful for the holy instructions and writings of others, notwithstanding human frailty; and so must I be thankful that God hath made any use of my own for the good of souls and the edification of his church. But how many alloys are there to such comforts? If good men and good books or sermons make the world seem over-lovely, it will be the mercy of God to abate the temptation. When we are dead to the love of the godly themselves, of learning, books, and ordinances, so far as they serve a selfish interest and tempt our hearts from heavenly aspirations; then indeed "the world is crucified to us, and we to it."

Of all things, a departing soul has least cause to fear losing the knowledge of *worldly affairs*. If the sun gives light and heat to the earth, why should I think that blessed spirits have no acquaintance with earthly concerns? From the top of a hill I can see more than from below; and shall I know less of earth from heaven than I do now? It is unlikely that my capacity will be so little, or

that Christ and all the angels will be so strange to me as to give me no notice of things so interesting to my God and Redeemer, to the holy society of which I am member, and to myself as a member of that society. Spirits are most active and of quick and powerful communication. They need not send letters, nor write books, nor lift up a voice. And as activity, so unity is greatest where there is most perfection. Their knowledge, love and joy will be one. My celestial advancement, therefore, will be no diminution, but an inconceivable increase, of my desirable knowledge of things on earth. If, indeed, I shall know less of things below, it will be because the knowledge of them is a part of vanity and vexation, which have no place in heaven. I need not be afraid to hear any more of bloody wars, desolated countries, dissipated churches, persecuted Christians, silenced preachers, party conflicts, contentious divines, censorious professors of religion, with the cries of the poor, or the endless complaints of the melancholy.

Nor need I fear what other men are pleased to suggest, that the church will want me. Is it I, or God, that must choose his servants, and cut out their work? Am I doing God's work, or my own? If God's, must not he say what, and when, and how long? And will not his will and choice be best? If I believe not this, how do I take him for my God? Does God, or I, know best what is yet to be done, and who is fittest to do it?—

What am I to those more excellent persons who in all ages God hath taken out of the world? Have not many servants of Christ died in their youth, who were far more likely to win souls and glorify God than I am, or ever have been? And shall I, at seventy-six years of age, after such a life of unspeakable mercies, and after almost fifty-three years of comfortable help in the service of my Lord, be now afraid of my reward, and shrink at the sentence of death, and still be desirous to stay here, under pretence of farther service? We know not what is best for the church, as God does. The church and the world are not ours, but his: not our desires, therefore, but his will must measure out its mercies. Nothing ever lay so heavy on my heart as the sin and misery of mankind, and to think how much of the world lies in folly and wickedness. And for what can I so heartily pray, as for the world's recovery? And it is his will that I should show a holy and universal love, by praying, "Let thy name be hallowed; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Yet, alas! how unlike is earth to heaven! What sin and ignorance, confusion and cruelties, reign and prosper here! Without a wonderful change, even by a general miracle, how little hope appears that ever these prayers should be answered? Indeed, it makes us better to desire that others may be better; and God seems to permit the ignorance and confusion of this world, to help us the more to value and

desire the world of light, love, and order. If I am any way useful to the world, undeserved mercy hath made me so, for which I must be thankful; how long I shall be so, is not my business to determine, but my Lord's. As God will be served and pleased by a wonderful variety of animals and vegetables, so he will by their successive generations. If one flower fall or die, others in future summers shall arise from the same root. God will have other generations to succeed us; let us thank him that we have had our time. And could we without selfishness love others as ourselves, and God as God, it would comfort us at death to have others survive us, and the world continue, and God still be God, and be glorified in his works. Love would say, "I shall live in my successors; I shall more than live in the life of the world; and most of all, in the eternal life and glory of God." Nor will God try us with too long a life of temptations, lest we should grow too familiar where we should be strangers, and be utterly strangers to our home. No wonder the world was ready for a deluge, by a deluge of sin, when men lived six, seven, eight, or nine hundred years. Had our great sensualists any hope of living so long, they would be like incarnate devils; there would be no dwelling near them for the godly. Nor will God tire us with too long a life of afflictions. And shall we grudge at the wisdom and goodness which shortens them? Though holy duties be excellent and delightful, yet the weak

ness of the flesh makes us liable to weariness, and abates the willingness of the spirit. By our weariness and complaints, our fears and groans, we seem to think this life too long; and yet when we should yield to the call of God, we draw back as if we would have it to be everlasting.

“Willingly submit, then, O my soul! It is not thyself, but this flesh, that must be dissolved; this troublesome, vile, and corruptible flesh. Study thy duty, work while it is day, and let God choose thy time; and willingly stand to his disposal. When I die, the Gospel dies not—the church dies not—the praises of God die not—the world dies not; but perhaps it will grow better, and those prayers be answered which seemed to be lost; and perhaps some of the seed I have sown will spring up when I am dead. If my end was to do good, and glorify God; when good is done, and God is glorified, though I were annihilated, is not my end attained?” “Lord, let thy servant depart in peace,” even in thy peace, “which passeth all understanding,” and which Christ, the Prince of peace, gives, and which nothing in the world can take away! “O give me that peace which suits a soul who is so near the harbor, even the world of endless peace and love! Call home this soul by the encouraging voice of love, that it may joyfully hear, and say, It is my Father’s voice! Invite it to thee by the heavenly messenger! Attract it by the tokens and foretastes of love! The messengers that invited me to the feast of grace, com-

pelled me to come in without constraint; thy effectual call made me willing. And is not glory better than the grace which prepares for it? Shall I not more willingly come to the celestial feast? What was thy grace for, but to make me desirous of glory and the way to it? Why didst thou dart down thy beams of love, but to make me love thee, to call me up to the everlasting centre? Was not the feast of grace as a sacrament of the feast of glory? Did I not take it in remembrance of my Lord till he come? Did not he that told me, 'All things are ready,' tell me also, that 'He is gone to prepare a place for us, and that he will have us to be with him and see his glory?' They that are given him, and drawn to him, by the Father on earth, do come to Christ; give now, and draw my departing soul to my glorified Head! As I have glorified thee on earth in the measure of thy grace bestowed upon me, pardon the sins by which I have offended thee, and glorify me in the vision and participation of my Redeemer's glory! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with fuller life, and light, and love, into this too dead, and dark, and disaffected soul, that with joyful willingness it may come unto thee!

"Willingly depart, O lingering soul!—it is from a Sodom; though there be righteous Lots in it, they are not without their sad blemishes. Hast thou so often lamented the general blindness and wickedness of the world, and art thou loath to leave it for a better? How often wouldest thou

have rejoiced to see but the dawning of a day of universal peace and reformation! And wouldest thou not see it, where it shines in perfect beauty? Hast thou prayed and labored so hard to have the pleasure of a light at midnight; and is it not thy desire to behold the sun itself? Will the things of heaven please thee no where but on earth, where they are least and weakest? Away, away! Vindictive flames are ready to consume this sinful world. Sinners are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Look not then behind thee. Away from this unhappy world! 'Press toward the mark, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.'—As this world has used thee, so it would still do. When thou hast fared best in it, no thanks to it but to God. If thou hast had manifold deliverances and preservations, and hast been fed with angels' food, love not the wilderness, but thy heavenly guide, protector, and deliverer. Does God in his great mercy make pain and feebleness the harbingers of death, and wilt thou not understand their business? Wouldest thou dwell with thy beloved body in the grave, where it will rot in loathsome darkness? If not, why should it now, in its painful languor, seem to thee a more pleasing habitation than the glorious presence of thy Lord? In the grave it will be at rest, nor at the night wish, O that it were morning, nor in the morning say When will it be night? And is this a dwelling fit for thy delight? Patience in it, while God will

so try thee, is thy duty: but is such patience a better and sweeter life than rest and joy?"

But, alas! how deaf is flesh to reason! I have reason enough to be willing to depart, even much more willing than I am. O that I could be as willing as reason convinces me I ought to be! Could I love God as much as I know I ought to love him, then I should desire to depart and to be with Christ as much as I know I ought to desire it. But death must be a penalty, even where it is a gain; and therefore it must meet with some unwillingness. Because we willingly sinned, we must unwillingly suffer. All the faith and reason in the world will not make death to be no penalty, and therefore will not take away all unwillingness. No man ever reasoned or believed himself into a love of pain and death, as such. But since the gain is unspeakably greater than the pain and loss, therefore faith and holy reason may make our willingness greater than our unwillingness, and our hope and joy than our fear and sorrow. "Come then; my soul, and think believingly what is best for thee, (which will be the subject of the next chapter,) and wilt thou not love and desire that most which is certainly best?"

CHAPTER IV.

Why it is far better to be with Christ.

To say or hear that it is far better to be with Christ, is not enough to make us willing. If I firmly believe that it is best for me, I shall then desire it. And have I not reason to believe it? Let me seriously consider, for my full conviction—by what means I am preparing for this happiness—how this happiness is the end for which I am preparing—and how it will perfect my knowledge, will, and activity in doing good.

1. *The means by which I am preparing* to be with Christ, abundantly show that it is far better to be with him. As for instance, that is best for me which my heavenly Father's love designs and chooses for my good. I hope I shall never dare to say or think that he is mistaken, or that I could have chosen better for myself. Many a time hath the wise and good will of God crossed my foolish rebellious will, and afterward I have perceived it was best. It is not an enemy nor a tyrant that made me, preserves me, or calls me hence. The more I have tried him, the better I have found him. Had I better obeyed his ruling will, how happy had I been! And is not his disposing and rewarding will as good? Should I not die till myself or any of my dearest friends would have it, would this rejoice me? O foolish, sinful! soul, is it not

far better to be at God's choice than my own or any man's. "Be of good cheer then, O my soul! it is thy Father's voice that calls thee hence—his voice that called thee into being, and out of a state of sin and death, and bade thee live unto him—that called thee so often from the grave, forgave thy sins, renewed thy strength, restored thee to the comforts of his house and service, and hath so graciously led thee through this howling wilderness almost to the sight of the promised land. And wilt thou not willingly go when such infinite love calls thee? Art thou not desirous of his presence? Art thou afraid to go to him who is the only cure of thy fears? What was it but this glory to which he elected thee?—not to the riches and honors of this world, or to the pleasures of the flesh, but chose thee in Christ to an inheritance in glory? If God chose thee to blessedness, refuse it not thyself, nor behave like a refuser." That is my best state which my Savior purchased, and promised as best. As he bought me not with silver and gold, so neither did he live and die to make me rich and great in the world. Who have more of these than they that have least of Christ? Is it heaven that cost so dear a price as his merits, sacrifice, and intercession? Is that the end of so wonderful a design of grace, and shall I now be unwilling to receive the gift? That is best for me, for which God's holy Spirit is preparing me. He is not persuading me from day to day to love the world, but to come off from it, and to set my

heart upon things above. And would I now undo all, or cross and frustrate all his operations? Has grace been so long preparing me for glory, and shall I be loath to take possession of it? If I am not willing, I am not yet sufficiently prepared.

If heaven be not better for me than earth, God's word and ordinances have been all in vain. Surely that is my best, which is the gift of the better covenant; which is secured to me by so many sealed promises; to which I am directed by so many sacred precepts, doctrines, and examples; and for which I have been called to hear and read, meditate, watch, and pray. Was it fleshly interest or a longer life of worldly prosperity which the gospel covenant secured to me, which the sacraments and Spirit sealed to me, which the Bible was written to direct me to, which ministers preached to me, which my books were written for, and for which I prayed and served God? Or was it not for his grace on earth and glory in heaven? And is it not better for me to have the end of these means, than lose them and my hopes? Why have I used them, if I would not attain their end? That is my best state to which all God's fatherly providences tend. All his sweeter mercies and sharper corrections are to make me partaker of his holiness, and lead me to glory in the way in which my Savior and all his saints have gone before me. All things work together for the best to me, by preparing me for that which is best indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me

to this harbor; if I take them but for themselves and for this present life, I mistake them, unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, life, and sweetness. Every word and work of God, every day's mercies and changes look at heaven and intend eternity. God leads me no other way; if I follow him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking him; if I follow him, shall I be unwilling to be at home and arrive at the end of all this way?

Certainly that is best for me which God requires me principally to value, love, and seek. If my business in the world be only for the things of the world, how vain a creature is man, and how little is the difference between waking and sleeping, life and death! And is it my duty to seek heaven with all the fervor of my soul and diligence of my life, and is it not best to find it?—That must needs be best for me, for the sake of which all other things must be forsook. It is folly to forsake the better for the worse; but Scripture, reason and conscience tell me that all this world should be forsaken for the least hope of heaven, when it comes in competition. A possible everlasting glory should be preferred before a certainly perishing vanity. I am sure this life will shortly be nothing to me, and therefore it is nothing now. And must I forsake all for my everlasting hopes, and yet be unwilling to enter on the full possession? That is like to be our best which is our most mature state. Nature is ever tending toward perfection. Every fruit is best when it is ripe. And does God cause

saints to grow to greater ripeness only to be useless? It is not credible. "Our souls return to God that gave them;" and though he needs them not, he puts them to such heavenly uses as their maturity fits them for. Since love has ripened me for itself, shall I not willingly drop into its hand? That is like to be best which has been most esteemed and desired by the wisest and holiest in all ages, and which all men at death allow to be best. No men are usually worse than those who have no belief or hope of a life to come. And none are so holy, just, and sober, so charitable to others, and so useful to mankind, as those who firmly believe and hope for a state of immortality. And shall I fear such a state?—And is not that my best state which most displeases my greatest enemies? I need not say how much Satan does to keep me and other men from heaven; and in order to that, how he tempts us with worldly honor, pleasure, and wealth. Satan would not have me get to heaven, and shall I also be unwilling? All these things tell me that it is best to be with Christ.

2. As the *end of all my preparation*, it must be far better for me to be with Christ. Is not dwelling with God in glory far better than in this sinful world? He that is our beginning is our end. For our end all means are used: and the end attained is the rest of souls. How often has my soul groaned under a sense of distance, darkness, and alienation from God! How often has it looked up and panted after him, and said, "As the hart

panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. It is good for me to draw near to God." Wo to me if I dissembled: if not, why should my soul draw back? Is it because death stands in the way? And is not my passage secured by the love of my Father, and the resurrection and intercession of my Lord? Can I see the light of heavenly glory in this darksome shell and womb of flesh? All creatures are more or less excellent and glorious, as God communicates most of himself to them. They are said to be nearest to him that have the noblest natures. Therefore to be as near as my nature was intended to approach, is but to attain the end and perfection of my nature. As I am now under the government of his officers on earth, so I expect to be in heaven. If the law was given by angels, and the angel of God was in the burning bush, and the angel conducted the people through the wilderness, and yet all these things are ascribed to God; much more near and glorious will the divine government be in heaven. Here I am made, ruled, and sanctified for the good of many, as above my own. I am sure I must be finally for my glorified Redeemer; and that he who is the first will be the ultimate cause. In this respect I shall be as near to him as comports with the rank and order of my nature. It is the honor

of a servant to have an honorable master, and to be appointed to the most honorable work. My advancement will be ultimately for God, and in such services as are suitable to my spiritual and heavenly state. Activity will be my perfection and my rest. Though now I know not fully what service I must do, I know it will be good, and suitable to the blessed state I shall be in. It is not all the use and work of my soul now to care for my body, nor will it be hereafter. Though I shall not always have a body, I shall always have a God, and a Savior, and a world of fellow-creatures; and when I shine not in the lantern, nor see as in a glass, I shall yet see face to face. To fulfill God's will here would be the fulfilling of my own. I am sure my soul shall live, and that it shall live to God, and that I shall fulfill his blessed will; and so far as I am pleased in doing it, it will be my felicity. The soul's regular love to the body illustrates the love of Christ to his church, and to every member. Herein my Savior excels me in powerful faithful love. He will save me better from pain and death than I can save my body, and will more inseparably hold me to himself. If it pleases my soul to dwell in such a house of clay, how much more will it please my glorified Lord to dwell with his glorified body, the church triumphant, and to bless each member of it! It would be a kind of death to Christ to be separated from his body. And will he take incomparably greater pleasure in me for ever than

My soul does in my body? O then let me long to be with him! Though I am naturally loath to be absent from the body, let me not be willingly absent from the Lord! And though I would not be unclothed, had not sin made it necessary, let me "groan to be clothed upon with my heavenly habitation," to become the delight of my Redeemer, and to be perfectly loved by love itself! The love and delight of my glorified Head must be my felicity. I shall be loved as a living spirit, and not as a thing dead and insensible. If I must rejoice here with them that rejoice, shall I not rejoice to have my Lord rejoice in me and in all his glorified ones? Union will make his pleasure to be much my own. It will fitly be said by him, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The heavenly society also will joyfully welcome a holy soul. If now "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," what will there be over a perfect glorified soul? If our "angels" there "behold our Father's face," how glad will they be of our company! And will not love and union make their joy my own? Surely that will be my best condition which angels and blessed spirits will be best pleased with; and in that in which they most rejoice, I shall most rejoice myself.

3. It is far better for me to be with Christ, as thereby my *knowledge will be perfected*. A soul that is with Christ is more likely to know Christ and the Father in him, than a soul that is present

with the body and absent from the Lord. What less can promise of being with him signify? How much more excellent will intuitive or immediate knowledge be, than our present artificial knowledge? There will be no expensive labor in getting it. It will have no mixture of dark and bewildering uncertainty and ambiguity when it is acquired. It will be perfectly free from those contentions which so much rob the ingenious of their time, destroy their love, hinder their minds from ascending to God and heavenly things, and fill the church with sects and parties. Nor will it leave any of that dissatisfaction so common among the learned, while they have only the shadow of knowledge, licking but the outside of the glass, and leaving the wine within untasted. What an excellency will there be in each of the objects of this immediate knowledge! As for instance, I shall know God better. If an angel from heaven came down on earth to tell us all of God that we would know, who would not turn his back on libraries and universities, to go and discourse with such a messenger? For one hour's talk with him what travel should I think too far, what cost too great? But here we must only have such intimations as will exercise faith, excite desire, and try us under the temptations of the world and the flesh. The light of glory is to reward the victory obtained by the conduct of the light of grace. God in great mercy even here begins the reward. They that "follow on to know the Lord" usually

find such increase of light, not consisting in vain notions, but in the quickening and comforting knowledge of God, as greatly encourages them, and draws them still on to seek more. If the pleasure the mind has in common knowledge makes men spend successive years in traversing sea and land, or in turning over multitudes of tedious volumes; who then upon earth can possibly conceive how great a pleasure it will be for a glorified soul to see the Lord? All the pleasure I shall have in heaven in knowing any of the works of God, will be in my beholding God himself, his being, wisdom, love, and goodness, in those works; for he is the life and glory of them all. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And doubtless it will be no small part of my delight to know the universe better. It is exceedingly pleasant to know the least particle of the works of God. With what diligence and delight have men endeavored to anatomize a body, yea, a small part of a carcass, for to know and describe worms and insects, plants and minerals! But no man ever yet perfectly knew the nature and uses of the least of them. If, indeed, we clearly saw the nature and connection of every creature in sea or land, what a delightful spectacle would this spot of the creation be! How much more to see the whole creation! And I shall have as much of this as I shall be capable of; the wonders of God's works shall raise my soul in admiring joyful praise for ever. We have desires after such

knowledge in our present dark and infant state, for "the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." As these desires are of God, as he hath made his works to be known for his glory, and as it is little that is known of them by mortals, therefore they are known by them in heaven, who are fitted to improve that knowledge to his praise. If Christ, the wisdom of God will teach me the true philosophy how to love God and please him in all things here, I shall quickly in heaven be a perfect philosopher. Satan tempted Christ by "showing him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," promising to "give him all if he would worship him;" but God will show me more than Satan could show, and give me more of that which is best, than Satan could give.

Nor will it be the least of my felicity in heaven, that I shall better know Jesus Christ, and all the *mystery of our redemption* by him. O beatifying knowledge! to know him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" To know the mystery of his eternal Godhead, of his created nature, and of the union of both, and to see God's wonderful design and gracious work, in him, laid open to our clearest view! Then all the dark texts concerning his person, offices, and works, will be fully understood. All those strange and difficult things which were the great exercise and honor of faith, will then be plain. Difficulties will no more be Satan's advantage, to tempt us

to unbelief or doubting. The sight of the glory of my Lord will be my glory. If now, "though we see not Christ, yet believing, we love him, and rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" what love and joy will the everlasting sight of our blessed Head excite there in the souls of all the glorified! I shall better (O how much better!) "know the heavenly Jerusalem, the triumphant Church, the blessed angels and glorified saints." What a sight, what a joyful sight will death show me, by drawing aside the veil! or rather the Lord of life, by turning death to my advantage! As I now know the several rooms in my house, so shall I then know the "many mansions" which, Christ says, "are in his Father's house." If Nehemiah and the pious Jews rejoiced so much at seeing the walls of Jerusalem repaired, and others at the rebuilding the temple, O what a joyful sight shall I have of the heavenly Jerusalem! I know that angels now love us, minister unto us, rejoice in our good, and are themselves far more holy and excellent creatures than we are; it is therefore my comfort to think that I shall better know them, and live in near and perpetual acquaintance and communion with them, and bear my part in the same choir in which they preside. And when I think how sweet one wise and holy companion has been to me here on earth, and how lovely his graces have appeared; O what a sight will it be, when we shall see the millions of "the spirits of just men made perfect," shining

with Christ in perfect wisdom and holiness! If this world was full of wise, just, and holy persons, how lovely would it be! If one kingdom consisted of such, it would make us loath to die and leave such a country, were it not that the more the beauty of goodness appears, the more the perfection of it is desired. It is pleasant to me to pray in hope that earth may be made more like heaven, which is now become so like hell: but when I shall see the society perfected in number, holiness, and glory, employed in the high and joyful praises of Jehovah,—the glory of God and the Lamb shining on them, and God rejoicing over them as his delight, and myself partaking of the same—that will be the truly blessed day. And why does my soul, imprisoned in flesh, no more desire it?—I shall better understand all the word of God. Though I shall not have the use for it I now have in this life of faith, yet I shall see more of God's wisdom and goodness, love, mercy, and justice appearing in it, than ever man on earth could do. As the creatures, so the Scriptures are perfectly known only by perfect spirits. I shall then know how to solve all doubts, reconcile all seeming contradictions, and expound the hardest prophecies. That light will show me the admirable method of those sacred words where dark minds now suspect confusion. How joyfully shall I then praise my God and Savior for giving his church so clear a light to guide them through this darksome wilderness, and so sure a promise to sup

port them till they are come to life eternal! How joyfully shall I bless him, who, by that immortal seed, regenerated me to the hope of glory, and ruled me by so holy and just a law!

In that world of light I shall better understand God's works of *providence*. The wisdom and good of them is little understood in small parcels. It is the union and harmony of all the parts which displays the beauty of them. And no one can see the whole together but God, and they that see it in the light of his celestial glory. Then I shall clearly know why God prospered the wicked, and so much afflicted the righteous; why he set up the ungodly, and put the humble under their feet; why he permitted so much ignorance, pride, lust, oppression, persecution, falsehood, and other sins in the world; why the faithful are so few; and why so many kingdoms of the world are left in heathenism, Mahometanism, and infidelity. I shall know why I suffered what I did, and how many great deliverances I had, and how they were accomplished. All our misinterpretations of God's works and permissions will then be rectified, and all our controversies about them be at an end. Among all these works I shall especially know more of the nature and excellency of God's mercies. The lively sense of love and mercy makes lively Christians abound in love to God, and in mercy to others; but the enemy of God and man labors to obscure and diminish our views of divine love and mercy. Ingratitude is great misery,

as gratitude is true pleasure. We now receive thousands of mercies which we undervalue. But when I come to the state and work of perfect gratitude, I shall perfectly know all the mercies ever received by myself, by my neighbors and friends, by the church, and the world. Mercies remembered must be the matter of our everlasting thanks, and we cannot be perfectly thankful for them without a perfect knowledge of them. The worth of Christ and all his grace of the Gospel, and of all divine ordinances and church privileges, of our books and our friends, our health, and all the conveniences of our lives, will be better understood in heaven than the most holy and thankful Christian ever understood them here. Then shall I be much better acquainted with myself. I shall know the nature of souls and the way of their operations, and how the Spirit of God works upon them, and how that Spirit is sent from Christ to work upon them. I shall know what measure of grace I myself had, and how far I was mistaken concerning it. I shall know more of the number and greatness of my sins, and of my obligation to pardoning and healing grace. Yes, I shall know more of my body as the habitation of my soul, and how far it helped or hindered me, and what were all its diseases, and how wonderfully God supported, preserved, and often delivered me. I shall also far better know my fellow-creatures. The good and bad, the sincere and hypocrites, will there be discerned. Actions that were here thought hon-

orable, will then be found to be odious and unjust: and wickedness will no more be flattered or extenuated. Many a good and holy work which was reproached as criminal, will there be justified, honored and rewarded. Once more, I shall better know from what enemies, sins and dangers I was here delivered; what stratagems of Satan, and his instruments God defeated; how many snares I escaped; and how great is my deliverance by Christ from the wrath to come. All this knowledge will thus be advanced to my glorified soul, beyond my present conceptions; and is it not therefore far better to be with Christ?

4. It is far better for me to be with Christ, for the sake of having *my will perfected*. The will is to the soul what the heart is to the body. My greatest evil is there, and there will be my greatest good. Satan did most against it, and God will do most for it. When I am with Christ my will no more will be tied to a body, which is now the grand snare and enemy of my soul, by drawing my love and care, my fears and sorrows, to itself, and turning them from my highest interest. There my will shall not be tempted by a world of inferior good! nor shall meat and sleep, possessions and friends, be my snares and dangers; nor shall the mercies of God be the tempter's instruments; nor shall I have the flatteries or frowns of tyrants; nor will bad company infect or divert me; nor the errors of good men seduce me; nor the reputation of the wise and learned draw me to imitate them

in any sin. There will be none of Satan's solicitations to pervert my will.

My will shall there be better than here, as it shall have nothing in it displeasing to God—no sinful inclination, no striving against God's Spirit, no grudging at any word or work of God, nor any principle of enmity or rebellion left. There it shall have no inclination to injure my neighbor, or to do any thing against the common good; and there it shall have nothing in it opposite to itself; no more "law of my members warring against the law of my mind;" no more contrariety between sense and reason; but all will be unity and peace within.

There Christ will have perfectly sanctified my will, and made it conformable to his own, and to his Father's will. 'This is at least his meaning, when he prays, "that all his disciples may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that they may be one, even as we are one." I shall love and will the same that God loves and wills. And how can the will of man have greater honor? Assimilation to an earthly king is honorable; but much more to angels; but most of all to be like God. Indeed, here the divine image in us, is, in its degrees, a conformity to the will of God. But, alas, how many thousand wishes and desires have we had which are against the will of God! We shall have the full impression of God's will in heaven, as face answers to face in a glass, or the wax to the seal,

or the finger of the clock to the motion within, or as the echo to the voice. I shall desire and never be disappointed. I shall have as much love and joy as I wish. Before I desire any thing, I shall know whether it be God's will or not, and therefore shall never wish any thing that shall not be accomplished. Yea, my will shall be my enjoyment; for it shall not be the desire of what I want, but a complacency in what I possess. I shall want nothing. I shall thirst no more. Rightly is the will itself called love. My will shall be full of perfect joy, when enjoying love and pleasure will be my will. Thus shall I have within myself a spring of living waters. My will shall be confirmed and fixed in this conformity to the will of God. Now, both understanding and will are so lamentably mutable, that, farther than God promises to uphold us, we know not one day what we shall think, judge, or will the next. But when love becomes our fixed nature, we shall be no more weary of loving, than the sun of shining. God himself will be the full and everlasting object of my love. Perfect joyful complacency in God is the heaven which I desire and hope for. In God there is all that love can desire for its full everlasting feast. The nature of man's will is to love good, as good. God, who is infinitely good in himself, will be that most suitable good to me. He has all in himself that I need or can desire. There is nothing for love to cleave to, either above him, beyond him, or without him. He is

willing to be beloved by me. He disdains not my love. He might have refused such affections as have so often embraced vanity and filth. But he commands my love, and makes it my greatest duty. He invites and entreats me, as if he were a gainer by my happiness. He seeks to me to seek to him, and is both the first and most earnest suitor. He that so valued my cold imperfect love to him on earth, will not reject my perfect love in heaven. And he is near to me, not a distant God out of my reach, nor unsuitable to my love. Blind unbelievers may dream that he is far off; but even now he is as nigh to us as we are to ourselves. When he would sanctify us to love him, he brings us nigh to himself in Christ. Here we see him in his works and word; and there we shall see him in all the perfect glory of his works, and shall delightfully love that glorious perfection of the universe, even the image of God in all the world. I shall especially love the holy society, the triumphant universal church, consisting of Christ, angels, and saints. God himself loves them more than his inferior works, and my love, according to its measure, will imitate his.

“Think here, O my soul, how sweet thy condition will be, to love the Lord Jesus, thy glorified head, with perfect love! When the glory of God, which shines in him, will feast thy love with full and everlasting pleasure! The highest created perfection of power, wisdom, and goodness, refulgent in him, will not permit thy love to cease

or abate its fervor. When thou shalt see in the glorified church the precious fruits of Christ's redeeming grace and love; and when thou shalt see thyself possess of perfect happiness by his love to thee, and shalt remember what he did for thee, and in thee, here on earth; how he 'called thee with a holy calling;' how he 'washed thee in his blood from all thy sins;' how he kindled in thee desires after glory; how he renewed thy nature; how he instructed, guided, and preserved thee from sins, enemies and sufferings; all this will constrain thee everlastingly to love him. Think, also, O my soul, how delightful it will be to love those angels who most fervently love the Lord! They will be lovely to thee, as they have loved thee; and more as they have been lovers of the church and of mankind; but far more as they are so many refulgent stars which continually move, and shine, and burn, in perfect love to their Creator. O blessed difference between this amiable society and this dark, distracted, wicked world! There I shall see or hear no evil, no mixture of folly or pollution; no false doctrine; no bad example; no favoring wickedness; no accusing goodness, nor hurtful violence; but holy powerful, active love will be all, and do all, as their very nature, life, and work. And is not a day with them better than a thousand here? And with holy angels I shall also love holy souls that are made like them, and joined with them in the same society. All their infirmities are there put

off, and they also are spirits made up of holy life, and light, and love. When I think with what fervent love to God, to Jesus Christ, and to one another, they will be perfectly united there, grieve and blush, O my soul, that they should be here so disaffected and divided. The imperfect image of God upon them is amiable, but through their remaining pride, error, and uncharitableness, it is hard to live with some of them in peace. O how delightful will that communion of saints be where perfect love shall make them one! Forget not, my soul, how sweet God has made the course of my pilgrimage by the fragrance and usefulness of his servants' graces! How sweet have my bosom friends been! How sweet the neighborhood of the godly! How sweet their holy assemblies, their writings, conference, and prayers! What then will it be to live in perfect love with perfect saints in heaven for ever, and with them perfectly to love the God of love!"

As the act and object of love will constitute my future felicity, I shall not be the fountain of my own delights, but my receiving from the love of God and his creatures shall be sweeter to me than my own activity. All love is communicative, but none compared with God's. Whatever good is done in the world it is done by love. Therefore parents care and provide for children. Therefore my house and table are not neglected, nor my books and learning forgot, nor my friends despised, nor my life itself thrown away. If a man

love not his country, posterity, and the common good, he will be as a drone in the hive. And if created love be so necessary, so active and communicative, much more will be the infinite love of the Creator. His love is now the life of nature in the living, the life of holiness in the saints, and the life of glory in them that are glorified. In this love I and all the saints shall dwell for evermore. And if I dwell in love, and love in me, surely I shall "ever drink of the rivers of pleasure." Had I a great, wise, and good friend, that did for me the hundredth part of what God does, how dearly should I love him! "Think then, think believingly, seriously, constantly, O my soul, what a life thou shalt live for ever in the presence and bosom of infinite eternal Love! He now shineth on me by the sun, and on my soul by the Sun of righteousness, but it is as through the crevices of my darksome habitation; but then he will shine on me, and in me, openly, and with the fullest streams and beams of love." God is the same God in heaven as on earth, but I shall not be the same man. Here the windows of my soul are not open to his light; sin has raised clouds, and consequently storms, against my comforts. The entrances to my soul by the straits of flesh and sense are narrow, and they are made narrower by sin than they were by nature. Alas, how often would Love have spoken comfortably to me, and I was not at home to be spoken with, but abroad among a world of vanities; or was not at leisure, or was

asleep, and not willing to be awaked! How often would Love have come in and dwelt with me, and I have unkindly shut him out! How often would he have freely entertained me in secret, but I had some trifling company or business that I was loath to leave! When his table has been spread for me, and Christ, grace, and glory offered to me, how has my appetite been gone, or dull! He would have been all to me, if I would have been all for him. But in heaven I shall have none of those obstructions. All old unkindness and ingratitude will be forgiven. I shall then be wholly separated from the vanity which here deceived me. I shall joyfully behold the open face and attend the charming voice of glorifying Love, and delightfully relish his celestial provisions. No disease will corrupt my appetite. No sluggishness will renew my guilty neglects. "The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit" will triumph over all my folly, deadness, and disaffection; and my God-displeasing and self-undoing averseness and enmity will be gone for ever. "Study this heavenly work of love, O my soul! These are not dead or barren studies. It is only love that can relish love and understand it. Here the will has its taste. What can poor carnal worldlings know of glorious love, who study it without love? What sounding brass or tinkling cymbals are they that preach of God, and Christ, and heavenly glory, without love! But gazing on the face of love in

Christ, tasting its gifts, contemplating its glorious reign, is the way to kindle the sacred fire in thee. The burning-glass must be turned directly to the sun, in order to its setting any thing on fire. A holy love, like that in heaven, must be studiously fetched from heaven, and be kindled by the foresight of what is there, and what we shall be there for ever. Faith must ascend and look within the veil. Thou, my soul, must not live a stranger to thy home and hopes, to thy God and Savior. The fire that must warm thee is in heaven, and thou must come near it, and open thyself to its influence, if thou wilt feel its powerful efficacy. It is night and winter with carnal minds, when it is day and summer with those that set their faces heavenward."

But in heaven God will make use of second causes even in communicating his love and glory. There the Lord Jesus Christ will not only be the object of our delightful love, but his love to us will be as the vital heat and motion of the heart to all the members, the root of our life and joy. Did his tears for a dead Lazarus make men say, "Behold how he loved him!" What then will the reviving beams of heavenly life make us say of that love which fills us with the pleasures of his presence, and turns our souls into joy itself? "Believe, O my soul, thy Savior's love, that thou mayest have a foretaste of it, and be fit for complete enjoyment. Let thy believing be so much of thy daily work, that thou mayest say, "he dwells

in thy heart by faith," and "lives in thee," and that thy "life in the flesh" is not a fleshly life, but "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved thee, and gave himself for thee." Look upon the sun, and think with thyself how its motion, light and heat are communicated to millions of creatures all over the earth and in the seas. What if all these beams of light and heat were proportionable beams of perfect knowledge, love and joy! If all the creatures under the sun received from it as much wisdom, love and joy, as they have of light, heat and motion, what a blessed world would it be, even a heaven upon earth! Thus will the Sun of glory send forth life, light, and joyful love on all the heavenly inhabitants. Therefore now begin to live upon the influence of his grace, that thou mayest have his name and mark. He has not bid me seek his grace in vain. He more than bids me seek and ask. He teaches me to pray. He makes my prayers, and writes them on my heart. He gives me desires, and he loves to have me importunate with him, and is displeased with me that I will ask and have no more. How then comes my soul to be yet so fond of this wretched flesh and world, and so backward to go home and dwell with Christ? Alas! a taste of heaven on earth is too precious to be cast away upon such as have long grieved and quenched the Spirit, and are not, by diligent and patient seeking, prepared to receive it. My conscience remembers the follies of my youth, and many a later odious sin, and

tells me, that if heaven were quite hid from my sight, and I should never have a glimpse of the face of glorious eternal Love, it would be just. I look upward from day to day, and, better to know my God and my home, I cry to him daily, "My God, my hopes are better than all the possessions of this world; far better than all the pleasures of sin! Thy gracious looks have often revived me, and thy mercies have been unmeasurable to my soul and body. But O how far am I short of what, even forty years ago, I hoped sooner to have attained! Where is "the peace that passeth all understanding," which should keep my heart and mind "through Christ Jesus?" Where is the seeing, longing, and rejoicing faith? Where is that pleasant familiarity with Christ in heaven, that would make a thought of them sweeter than the thoughts of friends, health, or all the prosperity and pleasure of this world? Do those that "dwell in God, and God in them," and have their "hearts and conversations in heaven," attain no more clear and satisfactory perceptions of that blessed state than I have yet attained? Is there no livelier sense of future joys? No sweeter foretaste? nor fuller silencing of doubts and fears? Alas! how many of thy servants are less afraid to go to a prison than to their God; and had rather be banished to a land of strangers, than sent to heaven! Must I, that am called thy child, and an heir of heaven, and a co-heir with Christ, have no more acquaintance with my glorified Lord, and no more

love to thee, who art my portion, before I go hence? Shall I have no more of the heavenly life, and light, and love? Alas! I have scarce enough in my meditations, or prayers, or sermons, to denominate them heavenly. And must I go hence, so like a stranger, to my home? Wilt thou take strangers into heaven, and know them there as thine, who know thee no better here? O my God, vouchsafe a sinner yet more of the Spirit of thy Son, who came to earth to call up earthly minds to God, and to open heaven to all believers! What do I beg so frequently, so earnestly, for the sake of my Redeemer, as the Spirit of life and consolation, to show me the reconciled face of God, and unite all my affections to my glorified Head, and draw up this dark drowsy soul to love, and long to be with thee?"

Alas! though those are my daily groans, how little do I ascend! I dare not blame the God of love, nor my blessed Savior, nor the Sanctifier and Comforter of souls. Undoubtedly the cause is my sinful resistance of the Spirit, my unthankful neglects of grace and glory. But mercy can forgive; grace can overcome; and may I not hope for such a victory before I die? "Lord, I will lie at thy doors and pour out my complaints before thee! Thou hast told us how kindly the dogs licked the sores of a Lazarus that lay at a rich man's gate; thou hast commended the good Samaritan for taking care of a wounded man; thou sayest, "Blessed are the merciful;" thou com-

mandest us, "Be merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful;" and shall I wait at thy doors in vain? Give me the wedding garment, without which I shall but dishonor thy feast. Thou hast commanded me to rejoice, and how fain would I in this obey thee! O that I had more faithfully obeyed thee in ruling my senses, my thoughts, my tongue, and in the diligent improvement of all my talents; then I might more easily have rejoiced. Lord, help my love and joy! How can I rejoice in death and darkness? I hoped I was long since "translated from the kingdom of darkness, and delivered from the power of the prince of darkness, and brought into that light which is the entrance of the inheritance of saints; and yet, alas! darkness is still my misery. There is light round about me in thy word and works, but darkness is within me. And if my eye be dark, the sun will be no sun to me. What is my unbelief but the darkness of my soul? Lord Jesus, scatter all these mists! O thou Sun of righteousness, make thy way into this benighted mind. O send thy advocate to silence every temptation against thy truth and thee, to prosecute thy cause against thy enemies and mine, and to witness my sonship and salvation! I know, my Lord, heaven is not far from me, no, not a day nor an hour's journey to a separate soul. How quick is the communion of my eyes with the distant sun! And couldest thou not show me heaven in a moment? Is not faith a seeing grace? If, animated by thee, it can see the invisible God in

the unseen world, the "New Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; without thee, it can do nothing," and is nothing. Forgive all my sins, and remove this film that sin hath gathered, and my enlightened soul will see thy glory! I know this vail of flesh must also be rent before I shall see thee with open face, and know my fellow-citizens above, as I am known. It is not heaven on earth I am asking, but that I may see it from mount Nebo, and have the pledge and the first fruits! and that my faith and hope may kindle love and desire, and make me run my race with patience, and live and die in the joy which becomes an heir of heaven! But if my faith on earth must not increase, let it make me the more weary of this dungeon, and more fervently wish for the day when all my desires shall be satisfied, and my soul be filled with thy light and love!"

And in subordination to Christ I shall also be a receiver in heaven from angels and saints. If angels are greatly useful to me here, much more will they be there, where I shall be more capable of receiving from them. It will be no more diminution to the honor of Christ to make use of my fellow-creatures to my joy there than it was here. How gloriously will God shine in the glory of the blessed! how delightful will it be to see their perfection in wisdom, holiness, and love! They will love incomparably better than our dearest friends on earth can, who can only pity us in our pains,

and go weeping with our corpses to the grave; but the friends above will joyfully convoy or welcome our souls to their triumphant society. What a glorious state will it be, when all the love of angels and saints in full perfection shall be so united as to make one love to one God, and to each other, as made one in Christ! We little know how great a mercy it is here, to be commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves; and much more to be effectually taught of God to love one another. Did we all live in such unfeigned love, earth would resemble heaven. "Go, then, go willingly, O my soul! love joins with light to draw up thy desires. Art thou a lover of wisdom, holiness, and love, and wouldest thou not be united to the wise and holy, who are made up of love? Art thou a hater of discords and divisions on earth, and wouldest thou not be where all the just are one? Is not thy body, while kept together by an uniting soul, in a better state than when it is to be crumbled into lifeless dust? and does not death creep on thee by a gradual dissolution? Away, then, from this incoherent state! The farther from the centre, the farther from unity. It is now thy weakness and imperfection which makes thee so desirous that thy house, thy land, thy clothes, thy books, yea, thy knowledge and grace, should be thine, and thine only. How much more excellent if thou couldest say that all these, like the light of the sun, are mine, and every one's as well as mine! In heaven, thy knowledge, thy glory and felicity

shall be thine, and other's as well as thine. The knowledge, goodness and glory of all that perfect society shall be thine as far as thy capacity extends. Then hasten upward, O my soul, with thy most fervent desires, and breathe after that state with thy strongest hopes, where thou shalt not be rich and see thy neighbors poor; nor be poor while they are rich; nor be well while they are sick; nor sick while they are well!" Communion, as it constitutes the very being of the city of God, will be part of every one's felicity, and none will have the less for the participation of the rest. This celestial communion of saints in one holy church, above what is here attainable, is now an article of our belief; but believing will soon end in seeing and enjoying.

5. It is also far better for me to be with Christ, that I may have a perfect activity in doing good. There are good works in heaven, and far more and better than on earth. There will be more life and power for action; more love to God and one another, to excite to action; more likeness to God and Christ in doing good, as well as being good; more union with the beneficent Jesus, to make us also beneficent; and more communion, by each contributing to the welfare of the whole, and sharing in their common returns to God. What the heavenly works are we must perfectly know when we come thither. "We shall join with the whole society," as the Scriptures particularly describe, "in giving thanks and praise to God and our Re-

deemer." All passions earnestly desire to be freely exercised, especially our holy affections of love, joy, and admiration of Almighty God. In expressing such affections, we naturally desire communion with many. Methinks, when we are singing the praises of God in great assemblies with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven upon earth, and could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world, and to heaven itself. Nor could I ever be offended with the sober and seasonable use of instrumental music to help to tune my soul in so holy a work. Nothing comforts me more in my greatest sufferings, nor seems more fit for me while I wait for death, than singing psalms of praise to God, nor is there any exercise in which I had rather end my life. Should I not then willingly go to the heavenly choir, where God is praised with perfect love, and joy, and harmony? Had I more of a praising frame, of soul I should long no more for that life of praise. I never find myself more willing to be there than when I most joyfully speak or sing the praises of God. Though the "dead praise not God in the grave, nor dust celebrate him;" yet living souls in heaven do it joyfully, while their fleshly clothing turns to dust. "Lord, tune my soul to thy praises now, that sweet experience may make me long to be where I shall do it better! Wherever there is any excellent music, I see men naturally flock to it and hear it with delight. Surely: had I once heard the heavenly

choir, I should echo to their holy songs, and think it the truest blessedness to bear my part. My God, it is the inward melody of thy Spirit, and my own conscience, that must tune me for the heavenly melody. O speak thy love first to my heart, and then I shall joyfully speak it to others, and shall ardently seek after communion better than that of sinful mortals! Though my sins make a sad discord in my present songs, I hope my sighs and tears for sin have had the honor of thine acceptance, who despiseth not a contrite soul. But if thy Spirit will sing and speak within me, and help me against the jarring murmur of my unbelieving heart and pained flesh, I shall then offer thee what is more suitable to thy love and grace. I confess, Lord, that daily tears and sighs are not unsuitable to the eyes and voice of so great a sinner, now under thy correcting rod. But 'he that offereth praise glorifies thee;' and is not this the 'spiritual sacrifice, acceptable through Christ, for which we are made priests to God?' I refuse not, Lord, to lie in tears and groans when thou requirest it, nor do thou reject those tears and groans; but, O give me better, that I may have better of thine own to offer thee, and so prepare me for the far better which I shall find with Christ!"

Probably God makes glorified spirits the agents of his beneficence to inferior creatures. Where he bestows on any the noblest endowments, we see he makes most use of such for the benefit of others. Christ tells us we shall be like, or equal to the an-

gels, who are evidently the ministers of God for the good of his people in this world. The apostle says, "the saints shall judge the world" and 'angels;" intimating that devils and damned spirits shall be subjected to the saints. But if there were no more for us to do in heaven, but with perfect knowledge, love, and joy to hold communion with God and all the heavenly society, it is enough to excite, in a considerate soul, the most fervent desires to be at home with God.

CHAPTER V.

The author breathes after willingness to depart and to be with Christ.

I am convinced that it is far better to depart and to be with Christ, than to be here. But this conviction alone will not excite such desires in my soul. They are opposed by a natural aversion to death, which sin has greatly increased; by the remains of unbelief, which avails itself of our darkness in the flesh and our too great familiarity with this visible world; and also by the want of our more lively foretaste of heaven. What must be done to overcome this opposition? Is there no remedy? Yes, there is a divine teaching, by which we must learn "so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." When we

have read and heard, spoken and written the soundest truth and strongest arguments, we still know as if we knew not, and believe as if we believed not, unless God powerfully impresses the same things on our minds, and awakens our souls to feel what we know. Since we fell from God, the communion between our senses and understanding, and also between our understanding and our will and affections, is violated, and we are divided in ourselves by this schism in our faculties. All men may easily know that there is an almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and perfectly holy and good God, the maker, preserver, and governor of all, who deserves our whole trust, love, and obedience; but how little of this knowledge is to be perceived in men's hearts or lives! All men know that the world is vanity, that man must die, that riches cannot then profit, that time is precious, and that we have but little time to prepare for eternity; but how little do men seem to have of the real knowledge of these plain truths! Indeed, when God comes in with his powerful awakening light and love, then those things appear as different as if we were beginning to know them. All my best reasons for our immortality are but as the new-formed body of Adam before "God breathed into him the breath of life;" and he only can make them living reasons. To the Father of lights I must therefore still look up, and for his light and love I must still wait. I must learn both as a student and a beggar. When I

have hought and thought a thousand times, I must beg thy blessing, Lord, upon my thoughts. The eye of my understanding will be useless or vexatious to me without thy illuminating beams. O shine the soul of thy servant into a clearer knowledge of thyself and kingdom, and love him into more divine and heavenly love, and he will then willingly come to thee!

Why should I, by the fears of death, strive against the common course of nature, and against my only hopes of happiness? Is it not "appointed unto men once to die?" Would I have God make sinful man immortal upon earth? When we are sinless, we shall be immortal. The love of life was given to teach me to preserve it with care and use it well, and not to torment myself with the continual foresight of death. If it be the misery after death that is feared, O what have I to do but to receive the free reconciling grace which is offered me from heaven to save me from such misery, and to devote myself totally to him who has promised, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out?" Had I studied my duty, and remembered that I am not my own, and that my times are in God's hands, I had been quiet from these fruitless fears. Had my resignation and devotedness to God been more absolute, my trust in him would have been more easy. "But, Lord, thou knowest that I would fain be thine, and wholly thine, and that to thee I desire to live: therefore let me wholly trust thee with my soul."

Why should I have any remaining doubt of the future state of pious separate spirits? My Savior has entered into the holiest, and has assured me that "there are many mansions in his Father's house," and that when we are "absent from the body," we shall be "present with the Lord." Who can think that all holy souls that have gone hence from the beginning of the world, have been deceived in their faith and hope? and that all those whose hope was only in this life have been in the right? Shall I not abhor every suggestion that contains such absurdities? Wonderful, that Satan can keep up so much unbelief in the world, while he must make men fools in order to make them unbelievers and ungodly!

That my soul has no more lively foretastes of heaven, arises from those many willful sins by which I have quenched the Spirit, and from the soul's imprisonment in the flesh. This, O this is the misery and burden of my soul! Though I can say, I love God's truth and grace, his work and servants; yet that I have no more ardent and delightful love of heaven, where his loveliness will be more fully opened to my soul, is my sin, calamity, and shame. If I did not see that it is so with other of the servants of Christ as well as myself, I should doubt whether affections so disproportionate to my profession did not imply an unsound faith. It is strange that one who expects quickly to see the glorious world, and enter the holy celestial society, should not be more joyfully affected

with such hopes! and that I should think so much of the pain and perishing of the flesh, though it be the common way to such an end! O hateful sin, that has so darkened and corrupted souls as to indispose them for their only expected happiness! What did man, when he forsook the love and obedience of his God? How just that this flesh should be our prison, which we are for making our home! How mournful, that there is no more grace and holiness, knowledge of God and communion with him in this world! that so few are saints, and those few so very imperfect! that while the sun shines on all the earth, the Sun of righteousness shines on so small a part of it! He that made us capable of holy and heavenly affections, gave us not that capacity in vain. Yet, alas! how little of God and glory enters into the hearts of men! When recovering light shines upon us, how unthankfully do we entertain it! We cannot have the conduct and comfort of it while we shut our eyes and turn away. And though God give to the best not so much of it as they desire, it is an unspeakable mercy, that in this darksome world we may but hear of a better world, and may seek it in hope. We must not grudge in our prison to be denied such a presence of our king, and such pleasures of the kingdom, as innocent and free subjects have. Hope of pardon, and of a speedy deliverance, are great mercies to malefactors. And if my want of the knowledge and love of God, and of joyful communion with the heavenly society,

be my prison, and as the suburbs of hell, should it not make me long for the day of my redemption, and the glorious liberty of the sons of God? My sincere desires of deliverance, and of holiness and perfection, are my evidences that I shall obtain them. As the will is the sinner, so the obstinate continuance of a will to sin is the cause of continued sin. So far as God makes us willing to be delivered from sin, so far we are delivered, and our imperfect deliverance is the way to more. If pains make me groan for ease, and sickness for health, why should not my remains of ignorance, unbelief, and alienation from God, excite my desire after the day of my salvation? As it is the nature of my sin to draw down my heart from God and glory; so it is the nature of my faith, hope, and love, to raise my heart toward heavenly perfection; not to desire death, but that which is beyond it. And have I been so many years in the school of Christ, learning both how to live and die, praying for this grace, and exercising it against this sinful flesh; and after all, shall I not find flesh more powerful to draw me downward, than faith, hope, and love, to carry my desires up to God? "O God, forbid! O thou that freely gavest me thy grace, maintain it to the last against its enemies, and make it finally victorious! It came from thee; it has been preserved by thee; it is on thy side, and wholly for thee; without it I had lived as a beast, and should die more miserably than a beast; it is thine image that thou lovest; it is a

divine nature and a heavenly beam. What will a soul be without it, but a dungeon of darkness, and dead to holiness and heaven? Without it who shall plead thy cause against the devil, world, and flesh? Without thy glory, earth is but earth; and without thy grace, earth would be a hell. O rather deny me the light of the sun than the light of thy countenance! Less miserable had I been without life or being, than without thy grace. Without thine and my Savior's help, I can do nothing. I could not pray or learn without thee; I never could conquer a temptation without thee; and can I die, or be prepared to die, without thee? I shall but say, as Thomas of Christ, I know not whither my soul is going, and how can I know the way? My Lord having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. He even commended and rewarded those that had continued with him in his temptations. Thou lovest fidelity and perseverance in thy servants; and wilt thou forsake a sinner in his extremity, who consents to thy covenant, and would not forsake thee? My God, I have often sinned against thee; but thou knowest I would fain be thine. I can say with Paul, thou art the "God whose I am, and whom I serve;" and O that I could serve thee better! To serve thee is but to receive thy grace, and use it for my own and other's good, and thereby please and glorify thee. I have nothing to do in this world but to seek and serve thee. I have nothing to do with my tongue but to speak to thee, and for thee;

and with my pen, but to publish thy glory and thy will. What have I to do with all my reputation and influence over others, but to increase thy church, and propagate thy holy truth and service? What have I to do with my remaining time, even these last and languishing hours, but to look up unto thee, and wait for thy grace and thy salvation? O pardon all my carnal thoughts, all my unthankful treatment of thy grace and love, and all my willful sins against thy truth and thee! Under the terrors of the law thou didst even proclaim thyself "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And is not "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" revealed in the Gospel for our more abundant faith and consolation? My God, I know I can never be sufficiently confident of thy all-sufficient power, wisdom, and goodness. When I have said, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Conscience has replied, This is mine infirmity, I never wanted comfort for want of mercy in thee, but for want of faith and holiness in myself. And hast thou not mercy also to give me that faith and holiness? My God, all is of thee and through thee, and to thee; and when I have the felicity, the glory of all for ever will be thine.

None that trust in thy nature and promise shall be ashamed. If I can live and die trusting in thee, surely I shall not be confounded.

Why then should it seem a difficult question how my soul may willingly leave this world and go to Christ in peace? The same grace which regenerated me, must bring me to my desired end. "Believe and trust thy Father, thy Savior, and thy Comforter. Hope for the joyful entertainments of the promised blessedness; and long by love for nearer divine union and communion. Thus, O my soul, mayest thou depart in peace."

1. *Believe and trust* the promise of God. How sure is it, and how suitable to his love, to the nature of our souls, and to the operations of every grace! "Why, O my soul, art thou so vainly solicitous to have clear, distinct conceptions of the celestial world? When thou art possessed of a better state, thou shalt know it as a possessor ought to do; for such a knowledge as thou lookest after is part of the possession. Thy Savior and his glorified saints are possessors. His knowledge must now be thy chief satisfaction. Seek not vainly to usurp his prerogative. Wouldest thou be a God and Savior to thyself? Consider how much of the fall there is in this selfish desire to be as God, in knowing that which belongs not to thee to know. Thou knowest that there undoubtedly is a God of infinite perfection, "and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Labor more to know thy duty to this God, and absolutely

trust him as to the particulars of thy reward. Thou didst trust thy parents to provide thee food and raiment, and didst implicitly obey them. Thou hast trusted physicians to give thee medicines, without inquiring after every ingredient. If a pilot undertake to carry thee to the Indies, thou canst trust his conduct without knowing either the ship or how to govern it, or the way, or the place to which thou art conveyed. And must not thy God and Savior be trusted to bring thee safe to heaven unless he will satisfy all thy inquiries? The command to be "careful for nothing," and to "cast all thy care on God, who careth for thee," obligeth thee in all things that are God's part. To dispose of a departing soul is God's part. O how much evil is there in this distrusting, self-providing care! Be not "cast down," O departing soul, nor by unbelief "disquieted within me. 'Trust thou in God,' for soon shall experience teach thee to "praise him," who is "the health of my countenance, and my God."

How clearly does reason command me to trust him, absolutely and implicitly to trust him, and to distrust myself? He is essential, infinite perfection, wisdom, power, and love. There is nothing to be trusted in any creature but God working in it, or by it. I am altogether his own, by right, by devotion, and by consent. He is the giver of all good to every creature, as freely as the sun gives its light; and shall we not trust the sun to shine? He is my Father, and has taken me

into his family, and shall I not trust my heavenly Father? He has given me his Son, as the greatest pledge of his love, and "shall he not with him also freely give me all things?" His Son purposely came to reveal his Father's unspeakable love, and shall I not trust him who has proclaimed his love by such a messenger from heaven? He has given me the Spirit of his Son, even the Spirit of adoption, the witness, pledge, and earnest of heaven, the seal of God upon me, "holiness to the Lord," and shall I not believe his love and trust him? He has made me a member of his Son, and will he not take care of me, and is not Christ to be trusted with his members? I am his interest, and the interest of his Son, freely beloved and dearly bought, and may I not trust him with his treasure? He has made me the care of angels, who rejoiced at my repentance, and shall they lose their joy or ministration? He is in covenant with me, and has "given me many great and precious promises," and can he be unfaithful? My Savior is the forerunner, who has entered into the holiest, and is there interceding for me, having first conquered death to assure us of a future life, and ascended into heaven, to show us whither we must ascend, saying to his brethren, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God;" and shall I not follow him through death, and trust such a guide and captain of my salvation? He is there to "prepare a place for me, and will receive me unto himself," and may I not confi-

dently expect it? He told a malefactor on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," to show believing sinners what they may expect. His apostles and other saints have served him on earth with all these expectations. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are now possessing what I hope for, and I am a "follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promised" felicity; and may I not trust him to save me, who has already saved millions? I must be at the divine disposal, whether I will or not; and however I vex my soul with fears, and cares, and sorrows, I shall never prevail against the will of God which is the only rest of souls. Our own wills have undone us, and are our disease, our prison, and our death, till they are brought over to the will of God; and shall I die, distrustfully striving against his will, and preferring my own before it?

What abundant experience have I had of God's fidelity and love, and after all shall I not trust him? His undeserved mercy gave me being, chose my parents, gave them affectionate desires for my real good, taught them to instruct me early in his word, and educate me in his fear; made my habitation and companions suitable, endowed me with a teachable disposition, put excellent books into my hands, and placed me under wise and faithful schoolmasters and ministers. His mercy fixed me in the best of lands, and in the best age that land had seen. His mercy early destroyed in me all great expectations from the world, taught me to

bear the yoke from my youth, caused me rather to groan under my infirmities, than struggle with powerful lusts, and chastened me betimes, but did not give me over unto death. Ever since I was at the age of nineteen, great mercy has trained me up in the school of affliction, to keep my sluggish soul awake in the constant expectation of my change, to kill my proud and worldly thoughts, and to direct all my studies to things the most necessary. How has a life of constant but gentle chastisement urged me to "make my calling and election sure," and to prepare my accounts, as one that must quickly give them up to God! The face of death, and nearness of eternity, convinced me what books to read, what studies to prosecute, what companions to choose; drove me early into the vineyard of the Lord, and taught me to preach as a dying man to dying men. It was divine love and mercy which made sacred truth so pleasant to me that my life, under all my infirmities, has been almost a constant recreation. How far beyond my expectation has a merciful God encouraged me in his sacred work, choosing every place of my ministry and abode to this day, without my own seeking, and never sending me to labor in vain! How many are gone to heaven, and how many are in the way, through a divine blessing on the word which in weakness I delivered! Many good Christians are glad of now and then an hour to meditate on God's word, and refresh themselves in his holy worship, but God has allowed

and called me to make it the constant business of my life. In my library I have profitably and pleasantly dwelt among the shining lights, with which the learned, wise, and holy men of all ages have illuminated the world. How many comfortable hours have I had in the society of living saints, and in the love of faithful friends! How many joyful days in solemn worshiping assemblies where the Spirit of Christ has been manifestly present, both with ministers and people! How unworthy was such a sinful worm as I, who never had any academical helps, nor much from the mouth of any teacher, that books should become so great a blessing to me, and that God should induce or constrain me, quite beyond my own intentions, to provide any such like helps for others! How unworthy that God should use me above forty years in so comfortable a work as pleading and writing for love, peace, and concord, and with so much success! What mercy had I, amidst the calamities of a civil war, to live two years in safety at Coventry, a city of defence, and in the heart of the kingdom! When I afterward saw the effects of human folly, and fury, and of God's displeasure, in the ruin of towns and countries, and in the fields covered with carcasses of the slain, how mercifully was I preserved and brought home in peace! And O how great was the mercy showed me in a peacable, humble, unanimous people, so numerous, so exemplary, and who to this day maintain their integrity and

concord, when, for thirty-one years, I have been forced to remain at a distance from them! What a mercy, when I might not speak by voice to any single congregation, to be enabled to speak by writings to many, and to have the plainest writings attended with success, and some of them sent to preach in foreign lands and languages! Though I have been sent to the common jail for my service and obedience to God, yet he has there kept me in peace, and soon delivered me: and how often has he succored me when nature and art have failed! How he has cured my consumptive coughs, stopped my flowing blood, eased my pained limbs, and upheld an emaciated skeleton! I have had fifty years added to my days, though I expected not to live one of them: and what strange deliverances have been wrought for me, upon the importunate requests of many hundreds of my praying friends! How have I been kept in ordinary health and safety, when the raging pestilence came near my habitation and consumed an hundred thousand citizens! And how was my dwelling preserved, when I saw London, the glory of the land, in flames!—These, and many more, are my experiences of that wonderful mercy which has measured my pilgrimage, and filled up my days. Never did God break his promise with me. Never did he fail me, or forsake me. And shall I now distrust him at last?

“To thee, O Lord, as to ‘a faithful Creator,’ I commit my soul. I know that thou art ‘the faith-

ful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love thee and keep thy commandments. 'Thou art faithful, who hast called me to the fellowship of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thy faithfulness has saved me from temptation, and kept me from prevailing evil, and will 'preserve my whole spirit, and soul, and body, unto the coming of Christ.' It is in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, and shall I not trust thee to save me? 'It is thy faithful saying, that thy elect shall obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory; for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.'—To thee, O my Savior, I commit my soul; it is thine by redemption, thine by covenant; it is sealed by thy Spirit, and thou hast promised not to lose it. Thou wast 'made like unto thy brethren, that thou mightest be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for our sins.' By thy blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by a new and living way consecrated for us. Cause me to 'draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Thy name is faithful and true. True and faithful are all thy promises. Thou hast promised rest to weary souls that come to thee. I am weary of suffering, sin, and flesh: weary of my darkness, dullness, and distance. Whither should I look for rest, but home to my heavenly Father and thee? I am but a bruised reed, but thou wilt not break me. I am but smok-

ing flax, but thou wilt not quench what thy grace hath kindled. Thou, in whose name the nations trust, 'wilt bring forth judgment unto victory.' The Lord redeemeth the souls of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. I will wait on thy name, for it is good; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him. Sinful fear brings a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be safe. 'Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust. Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb; my praise shall be continually of thee. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth. O God! thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not. Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord! in thee is my trust, leave not my soul destitute. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living,' even where they that live shall die no more." The sun may cease to shine on man, and the earth to bear us; but God will never cease to be faithful to his promises. Blessed be the Lord, who has commanded me so safe and quieting a duty as to trust in him, and cast all my cares upon him who has promised to care for me!

2. *Hope* also for the salvation of God. Hope is the ease, yea, the life of our hearts, which would otherwise break, and even die within us. Despair is no small part of hell. God cherishes hope, as he is the lover of souls. Satan, our enemy, cherishes despair, when his more usual way of presumption fails. Hope anticipates salvation, as fear does evil. It is the hypocrite's hope that perishes; and all who hope for durable happiness on earth must be deceived. But "happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, which keepeth truth for ever." Wo to me "if in this life only I had hope. But the righteous hath hope in his death. And hope maketh not ashamed. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." "Lay hold, then, O my soul, 'upon the hope set before thee;' it is thy sure and steadfast anchor, without which thou wilt be as a shipwrecked vessel. Thy foundation is sure, even God himself. Our faith and hope are both in God. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, is in us the hope of glory. By this hope, better than the law of Moses could bring, we draw nigh unto God. We hope for that we see not, and with patience wait for it. We are saved by hope. It is an encouraging grace, it excites our diligence and helps to full assurance unto the end. It is a desiring grace, and is an earnest to obtain the glory hoped for. It is a comforting grace, for 'the God of hope fills us

with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Shake off despondency, O my soul, and 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Believe in hope, though dying flesh would tell thee that it is against hope."

What blessed preparations are made for our hope! "God has confirmed it by two immutable things," his promise and his oath. "His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." Grace teacheth us, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior." We are "renewed by the Holy Ghost, and justified by grace, that we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The eyes of our understanding are enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of this inheritance in the saints. The hope which is laid up for us in heaven, hath, through the Gospel, brought life and immortality to light. Having hope toward God, we exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence, and serve God day and night. For an helmet, we put on the hope of salvation. Death is not to us as to others which have no hope. Our Lord Jesus Christ

and God, even our Father, hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, to comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work: We must hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end, and continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel." "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live, and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Though our iniquities testify against us, yet, O Lord, the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, be not as a stranger, leave us not. We have been showed the praises of the Lord and his wonderful works, that we might set our hope in God. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Though my flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of my heart. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the

salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, and that he keepeth silence, and putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope."

God needs not flatter such worms as we are, nor promise us what he never means to perform. He has laid the rudiments of our hope in a nature capable of desiring, seeking and thinking of another life. He has called me, by grace, to actual desires and endeavors, and has vouchsafed some fore-tastes. I look for no heaven but the perfection of divine life, light, and love in endless glory with Christ and his saints, and this he has already begun in me. And shall I not boldly hope, when I have capacity, the promise, and the earnest and foretaste? Is it not God himself that caused me to hope? Was not nature, promise, and grace from him? And can a soul miscarry and be deceived that departs hence in a hope of God's own producing and encouraging? "Lord, I have lived in hope, I have prayed, labored, suffered, and waited in hope, and by thy grace I will die in hope; and is not this according to thy word and will? And wilt thou cast away a soul that hopes in thee by thine own command and operation?" Had wealth, and honor, and continuance on earth, or the favor of man, been my reward and hope my hope and I had died together. Were this our best, how vain were man! but the Lord liveth, and my Redeemer is glorified, and intercedes for me: and the same Spirit is in heaven who is in

my heart, as the same sun is in the firmament and in my house. The promise is sure to all Christ's seed; for millions are now in heaven who once lived and died in hope; they were sinners once, as I now am; they had no other Savior, sanctifier, or promise than I now have. "Confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly," where they now are. And shall I not follow them in hope, who have sped so well? "Then, O my soul, hope unto the end. Hope in the Lord, from henceforth and for ever. I will hope continually, and will yet praise him more and more. My mouth shall show forth his righteousness and salvation. The Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth, my flesh also shall rest in hope. God hath showed me the path of life; in his presence is fullness of joy, at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

3. What then remains, but that in faith and hope I *love* my God, my Savior, my Comforter, the glorious society, and my own perfection in glory, better than this burden of flesh, and this howling wilderness? How odious is that darkness and unbelief, that unholiness and disaffection, that deadness and stupidity, which makes such love seem hard and unsuitable! Is it unsuitable or hard for the eye to see the light or the beauties of creation, or for a man to love his life or health, his father or his friend? What should be easier to a

nature that has rational love, than to love him who is love itself? He that loveth all, and gives to all a capacity to love, should be loved by all; and he that hath especially loved me, should especially be loved by me.

Love desires to please God, and therefore to be in the most pleasing state, and freed from all that is displeasing to him; which is not to be hoped for on earth. It desires all suitable nearness, acquaintance, union, and communion. It is weary of distance and alienation. It takes advantage of every notice of God to renew and exercise these desires. Every message and mercy from God is fuel for love, and, while we are short of perfection, stirs up our desires after more of God. The soul is where it loves. If our friends dwell in our hearts by love; and if fleshly pleasures, riches, and honor dwell in the hearts of the voluptuous, covetous, and proud; surely God and Christ, heaven and holiness, dwell in the heart which loves them fervently. And if heaven dwell in my heart, shall I not desire to dwell in heaven? Would divine love more plentifully pour itself upon my heart, how easy would it be to leave this flesh and world! Death and the grave would be but a triumph for victorious love. It would be easier to die in peace and joy, than to go to rest at night after a fatiguing day, or eat when I am hungry. A little love has made me willingly study, preach, write, and even suffer; and would not more love make me willingly go to God? Shall the imagination

of house, gardens, walks, libraries, prospects, &c. allure the desires of deceived minds, and shall not the thoughts of heavenly mansions, converse and joys, more powerfully draw up my desires? Can I love such a world as this, where tyranny sheds streams of blood and lays cities and countries desolate; where the wicked are exalted, the just and innocent reproached and oppressed, the Gospel restrained, and idolatry and infidelity prevail? And shall I not think more delightfully of "the inheritance of the saints in light," and of the cordial love and joyful praises of the church triumphant? Should I not love a lovely and loving world much better than a world where there is comparatively so little loveliness or love? All that is of God is good and lovely. But here his glory shines not in felicitating splendor. I am taught to look upward when I pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven." God's works are amiable even in hell; and yet though I would know them. I would not be there. And, alas! how much of the works of man are here mixed with the works of God! Here is God's wisdom, but man's folly; God's government, but man's tyranny; God's love and mercy, but man's wrath and cruelty; much of God's beautiful order and harmony, but much of man's deformity and confusion. Here is much truth and justice, but how it is mixed! Here are wise, judicious teachers and companions, but comparatively how few! Here are worthy and religious families; but by the temptations of wealth, and worldly interest,

how full even of the sins "of Sodom," pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness," if not also of unmercifulness to the poor! And how few pious families of the great that do not quickly degenerate from their progenitors by error or sensuality! Here are some that educate their children wisely in the fear of God, and accordingly have comfort in them; but how many are there that train them up to the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil!

How many send their children to get sciences, trades, or to travel in foreign lands, before ever they were instructed, at home, against those temptations which they must encounter, and by which they are so often undone! How commonly, when they have first neglected this great duty to their children, do they plead a necessity of thrusting them out, from some punctilio of honor, or conformity to the world, or to adorn them with some of the plumes of fashionable modes and ceremonies, which will never compensate the loss of heavenly wisdom, mortification, and the love of God and man! As if they might send them to sea, for some trifling reason, without pilot or anchor, and think that God must save them from the waves! And when such children have forsaken God, and given themselves up to sensuality and profaneness, these parents wonder at the judgments of God, and with broken hearts lament their own infelicity, instead of lamenting their own misconduct. Thus families, churches, and kingdoms run on to blind-

ness, ungodliness, and confusion. Folly, sin, and misery, mistaking themselves for wit, honor, and prosperity, are the ordinary pursuits of mortals. Such a bedlam is most of the world become, that he is the bravest man who can sin and be damned with reputation and renown, and successfully draw the greatest number with him to hell. This is the world which stands in competition for my love, with the spiritual blessed world.

In this world I have had many of God's mercies and comforts; but their sweetness was their taste of divine love and their tendency to heavenly perfection. What was the end and use of all the good that ever I saw or that God ever did for my soul or body, but to teach me to love him, and to desire to love him more? Wherever I go, and whichever way I look, I see vanity and vexation written upon all things in this world, so far as they stand in competition with God: and I see holiness to the Lord written upon every thing, so far as it leads me to him as my ultimate end. The emptiness, danger, and bitterness of the world, and the all-sufficiency, faithfulness, and goodness of God, have been the sum of all the experiences of all my life. And shall a worldly, backward heart overcome the teachings of nature, Scripture, the Spirit of grace, and all experience? "O my God, love is thy great and special gift. All good is from thee. Come into this heart, for it cannot come up to thee! Can the plants go up to the sun for life, or the eye for light? Dwell in me by the Spirit

of love, and I shall dwell by love in thee. I easily feel that through thy grace I love thy word, thy image, thy work; and O how heartily do I love to love thee, and how long to know and love thee more! And if 'all things be of thee, and through thee, and to thee,' surely this love is eminently so. It means thee, Lord. It looks to thee; it serves thee: for thee it moves, and seeks, and sighs: in thee it trusts; and the hope, and peace, and comfort which support me are in thee. When I was a returning prodigal in rags, thou sawest me afar off, and didst meet me with the caresses of thy love; and shall I doubt whether he that has better clothed me, and has dwelt within me, will entertain me in the world of love?"

The suitableness of things below to my fleshly nature has detained my affections too much on earth; and shall not the suitableness of things above to my spiritual nature much more draw up my love to heaven? There is the God whom I have sought and served. He is also here, but veiled, and little known. There he shines to heavenly spirits in heavenly glory. There is the Savior in whom I have believed. He also dwelt on earth, but clothed in such meanness, and humbled to such a life and death, as was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Now he shines and reigns in glory, above the malice and contempt of sinners. And I shall live there because he lives; and in his light I shall see light, I had here some rays of heavenly light, but un-

der what eclipses, and even long and winter nights. There I shall dwell in the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no night nor eclipse. There are heavenly hosts, in whose holy love and joyful praises I would fain partake. I have here, though unseen, had some of their loving assistance : but there I shall be with them of the same nature, and the same triumphant church. There are perfected souls ; not striving, like the disciples, who should be the greatest - not like Noah in the old world, or Lot in Sodom, or Abraham among idolaters ; nor like those that "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, hid in dens and caves of the earth ;" nor like Job on the dung-hill, or Lazarus at the rich man's gate ; nor as we poor bewildered sinners, feeling evil and fearing more. Should I fear a darksome passage into a world of perfect light ? Should I fear to go to love itself ? O excellent grace of faith which fore-sees, and blessed word of faith which fore-shows this world of love !

"And canst thou doubt, O my soul, whether thou art going to a God that loveth thee ? If the Jews discerned the great love of Christ to Lazarus by his tears, canst not thou discern his love to thee in his blood ? It is not the less precious, because shed, not for thee alone, but for many. May I not say, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ? Yea, it is not so much I that live, but Christ liveth in

me. And will he forsake the habitation which his love has chosen, and which he has so dearly bought? What shall separate us from the love of God? If life has not, death shall not do it. O my soul, if leaning on Christ's breast at meat was a token of his peculiar love to John, is not his dwelling in thee by faith, and his living in thee by his Spirit, a sure token of his love to thee? Did his darkly saying, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee,' raise a report that the beloved disciple should not die? why should not plain promises assure thee that thou shalt live for ever with him that loveth thee? Be not so unthankful, O my soul, as to doubt whether thy heavenly Father and thy Lord love thee. Canst thou forget the sealed testimonies of it? Did I not lately repeat so many as ought to shame thy doubt? A multitude of thy friends have so entirely loved thee, that thou canst not doubt of it; and did any of them testify their love with the convincing evidence that God has done? Are they love itself? Is their love so full, so firm and unchangeable as his?" I think heaven the sweeter, because many of my old, lovely, affectionate, holy friends are there, and I am the more willing by death to follow them. And should it not be more pleasing to think that my God and Father, my Savior and Comforter are there? Was not Lazarus in the bosom of God? And yet he is said to be in Abraham's bosom; that is, not there alone, but as we are all to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

in the kingdom of God. I am often ready to entertain myself with naming such of my friends as are now with Christ; but in heaven they will love me better than they did on earth, and my love to them will be more pleasant. But all these sparks are little to the sun.

Every place I have lived in has its monuments of divine love. Every year and hour of my life has been a time of love. Every friend, neighbor, and even enemy, have been the messengers and instruments of love. Every state and change of my life, notwithstanding my sin, have opened to me the treasures and mysteries of love. And shall I doubt whether the same God loves me? Is he the God of the hills, and not of the valleys? Did he love me in my youth and health, and will he not also in my age, and pain, and sickness? Did he love all the saints better in their life than at their death? My groans grieve my friends, but abate not their love. God loved me when I was his enemy, to make me a friend. God will finish his own work. O the multitude of mercies to my soul and body, in peace and war, in youth and age, to myself and friends! Have I lived in the experience of the love of God to me, and shall I die doubting of it? I am not much in doubt of the truth of my love to him. I love his word, works and ways, and would fain be nearer to him, and love him more, and lothe myself for loving him no better. Peter may more confidently say, "Thou knowest that I love thee," than I know that thou

lovest me; because our knowledge of God's great love is less than his knowledge of our little love; and without the knowledge of our love to God, we can never be sure of his special love to us. I am not entirely a stranger to myself. I know for what I have lived and labored, and whom I have desired to please. The "God, whose I am and whom I serve," hath loved me in my youth, and will love me in my aged weakness. My pains seem grievous! but love chooses them, uses them for my good, moderates them, and will shortly end them. Why then should I doubt of my Father's love? Shall pain or dying make me doubt? Did God never love any but Enoch and Elijah? And what am I better than my fathers? O for a clearer, stronger faith. Methinks Daniel's title, "a man greatly beloved," should be enough to make one joyfully love and trust God, both in life and death. And have not all the saints that title in their degrees? What else signifies their mark, "holiness to the Lord?" It is but our separation to God as his peculiar, beloved people. And how are we separated but by mutual love? He that is no otherwise beloved than hypocrites and unbelievers, must have his portion with them; and the ungodly, unholy, and unregenerate shall not stand in judgment, nor see God, nor enter into his kingdom. Upright souls are to blame for their groundless doubts of God's love, not for their acknowledging it, rejoicing in it, or for being solicitous to make it sure. Love brought me into the world

and furnished me with a thousand mercies, and has provided for me, delivered and preserved me till now; and will it not entertain my separate soul? Is God like false or insufficient friends, that forsake us in adversity?

I confess I have by sin wronged Love; but all, except Christ, were sinners, whom Love has purified and received to glory. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace we are saved,) and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." O that I could love much, that have so much forgiven! The glorified praise "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God. Our Father, which hath loved us, hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." I know no sin which I repent not of with self-loathing, and I earnestly beg and labor that none of my sins may be unknown to me. O that God would bless my accusations, that I may not be unknown to myself, though some think me much better than I am! "Who can understand his errors?" Lord, "cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins! I have an Advocate with thee," and thy promise, that "if we confess our sins," thou wilt "forgive them." Wherever I have erred, Lord, make it known to me, that my confession may prevent the sin of others:

and where I have not erred, confirm and accept me in the right. And since an unworthy worm has had so many testimonies of thy love, let me not, when thou sayest "I have loved thee," unthankfully ask, "Wherein hast thou loved me?" Heaven is not more spangled with stars than thy word and works with the refulgent signatures of love. Thy well-beloved Son, the Son of thy love, undertaketh the message and work of the greatest love; which he shed abroad in the hearts of thine elect, that the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit may be their hope and life. By his works, sufferings, and gifts, as well as by his comfortable word, he said to his disciples, "As the Father loved me, so have I loved you, continue ye in my love." Lord, how shall we continue in it, but by the thankful belief of thy love and loveliness, desiring still to love thee more, and in all things to know and do thy will, which thou knowest is my soul's desire.

"Draw nearer, O my soul, to the Lord of love, and be not seldom and slight in thy contemplation of his love and loveliness. Dwell in the sunshine, and thou wilt know that it is light, and warm, and comfortable. Distance and strangeness cherish thy doubts. "Acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace." Look up, often and earnestly look up after thy ascended glorified Head. Think where, and what he is, and what he is now doing for all his own and once abased; suffering Love is now

triumphant, reigning, glorified Love ; and therefore not less now than in all its tender expressions on earth." Had I done this more and better, and as I have persuaded others to do it, I had lived in more convincing delights of God's love, which would have turned the fears of death into more joyful hopes, and more earnest "desires to be with Christ," in the arms, in the world, in the life of love, as far better than to be here in a world of darkness, doubts, and fears. "But, O my Father, thou infinite Love, though my arguments be many and strong, my heart is bad, my strength is weakness, and I am insufficient to plead the cause of thy love and loveliness to myself or others. O plead thy own cause, and what heart can resist ? Let it not be my word only, but thine, that thou lovest me, even me a sinner ! Say as Christ to Lazarus, "Arise !" Tell me as thou dost, that the sun is warm, yea, as thou didst, that my parents and dearest friends loved me ! Tell me, as by the consciousness and works of life thou tellest me, that thou hast given me life ; that while I can say, Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee, I may infer, Therefore I know I am beloved of thee ! Thus let me come to thee in the confidence of thy love, and long to be nearer, in the clearer sight, the fuller sense, and more joyful exercise of love for ever ! Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit ! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." *Amen.*

THE END.

THE LIFE

OF

REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

CHIEFLY COMPILED FROM HIS OWN WRITINGS.

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NOTE.

The life of this eminent servant of God, abounding with striking incidents, and adapted to be useful to all, is published nearly in the present form by the Religious Tract Society in London. Some corrections of obscure phraseology and antique style are here made, without altering the character of the narrative. The reader will be struck with his extraordinary reliance on the efficacy of prayer; his abundant labors as a pastor; the rudeness, ignorance, and persecuting spirit of the age in which he lived; his burning zeal for the spread of the Gospel at that early period of modern missions; the great variety of works he was enabled to write, though in a very low state of health; and the wonderful extent to which the powers of the mind may be kept up by the habitual exercise of them, even amid the multiplied infirmities of old age.

A more full account of the man, comprising a description of his voluminous writings, may be found by the student in "Baxter's Life and Times, by Rev. William Orme." 2 vols. octavo.



LIFE OF
THE
REV. RICHARD BAXTER.



CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY LIFE AND CONVERSION.

RICHARD BAXTER was born at Rowton, Shropshire, (England,) on the 12th of November, 1615. He resided in that village with his maternal grandfather till he was nearly ten years of age, when he was taken home to live with his parents at Eaton Constantine, in the same county. His father, he says, "had the competent estate of a freeholder, free from the temptations of poverty and riches; but having been addicted to gaming in his youth, as was also his father before him, it was so entangled by debts, that it occasioned some excess of worldly cares before it was freed."

The father of Richard Baxter, about the time of his son's birth, became seriously impressed with the importance of divine truth, and appears to have subsequently become a sincere follower of the Redeemer. His conversion was effected chiefly through the instrumentality of reading the Scriptures. He had but few opportunities of attending on other means of grace. Many of the pulpits were occupied by ministers igno-

rant of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and those who preached the Gospel in its purity were, for the most part, so despised and contemned, that it required no small share of moral courage to attend on their ministry. Converted himself, he became anxious for the salvation of his only son. He directed the attention of his youthful charge to the sacred Scriptures, whence he had himself derived so much benefit. Nor were his instructions and efforts altogether vain. Baxter thus ingenuously confesses his early sins and convictions, in his history of his own life and times :

“ At first my father set me to read the historical parts of Scripture, which, suiting with my nature, greatly delighted me ; and though all that time I neither understood nor relished much the doctrinal part and mystery of redemption, yet it did me good, by acquainting me with the matters of fact, and drawing me on to love the Bible, and to search by degrees into the rest.

“ But though my conscience would trouble me when I sinned, yet divers sins I was addicted to, and often committed against my conscience ; which, for the warning of others, I will here confess, to my shame.

“ 1. I was much addicted, when I feared correction, to lie, that I might escape.

“ 2. I was much addicted to the excessive gluttonous eating of apples and pears, which, I think, laid the foundation of that weakness of my stomach which caused the bodily calamities of my life.

“ 3. To this end, and to concur with naughty boys that gloried in evil, I have often gone into other men’s orchards, and stolen their fruit, when I had enough at home.

“ 4. I was somewhat excessively addicted to play, and that with covetousness for money.

“5. I was extremely bewitched with a love of romances, fables, and old tales, which corrupted my affections and wasted my time.

“6. I was guilty of much idle foolish chat, and imitation of boys in scurrilous foolish words and actions, though I durst not swear.

“7. I was too proud of the commendations of my instructors, who all of them fed my pride, making me seven or eight years the highest in the school, and boasting of me to others; which, though it furthered my learning, yet helped not my humility.

“8. I was too bold and irreverent towards my parents.

“These were my sins, with which, in my childhood, conscience troubled me for a great while before they were overcome.”

His convictions gathered strength, although occasionally resisted. The temptations to neglect religion were strong and powerful. The reproach cast on his father and others, who, for their desire and pursuit of holiness, were contemptuously designated “Puritans,” proved for a season a stumbling-block in his path. Still, however, the reflecting mind of the son led him to discern the difference between the conduct of his father and that of his calumniators, and to conclude that there was more of reason and truth in a life of holiness, than in a life of impiety and rebellion against the majesty of heaven. He says:

“In the village where I lived, the Reader read the common prayer briefly; and the rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except eating time, was spent in dancing under a may-pole and a great tree, not far from my father’s door, where all the town met together: and though one of my father’s own tenants was

the piper, he could not restrain him not break the sport; so that we could not read the Scripture in our family without the great disturbance of the taber and pipe, and noise in the street!* Many times my mind was inclined to be among them, and sometimes I broke loose from my conscience and joined with them; and the more I did it, the more I was inclined to it. But when I heard them call my father 'Puritan,' it did much to cure me and alienate me from them; for I considered that my father's exercise of reading the Scripture was better than theirs, and would surely be judged better by all men at the last; and I considered what it was, for which he and others were thus derided. When I heard them speak scornfully of others, as Puritans, whom I never knew, I was at first apt to believe all the lies and slanders wherewith they loaded them; but when I heard my own father so reproached, and perceived that drunkards were the most forward in the reproach, I perceived that it was mere malice. For my father never objected to common prayer or ceremonies, nor spoke against bishops, nor ever so much as prayed but by a book or form, being unacquainted then with any that did otherwise. But only for reading Scripture when the rest were dancing on the Lord's day, and for praying by a form out of the end of the common prayer book, in his house, and for reproving drunkards and swearers, and for talking sometimes a few words of Scripture, and about the life to come, he was reviled commonly by the name of Puritan, Precisian, and Hypocrite; and so were the godly ministers that lived in the country near us, not only by our neighbors, but by

* These profanations of the Lord's day were authorised and encouraged by the royal proclamation, called the Book of Sports, set forth A. D. 1618.—See Life of Bishop Hall, p. 36.

the common talk of the multitude all about us. By this observation I was fully convinced that godly people were the best; and those that despised them, and lived in sin and pleasure, were a malignant, unhappy sort of people; and this kept me out of their company, except now and then, when the love of sports and play enticed me."

When about fifteen years of age, "it pleased God," he writes, "of his wonderful mercy, to open my eyes with a clearer insight into the concerns and case of my own soul, and to touch my heart with a livelier feeling of things spiritual than ever I had found before." While under this concern, a poor man in the town lent his father an old torn book, entitled "Bunny's Resolutions." "In reading this book," he observes, "it pleased God to awaken my soul, and show me the folly of sinning, and the misery of the wicked, and the inexpressible weight of things eternal, and the necessity of resolving on a holy life, more than I was ever acquainted with before. The same things which I knew before, came now in another manner, with light, and sense, and seriousness to my heart."

"Yet, whether sincere conversion began now, or before, or after, I was never able to this day to know; for I had before had some love to the things and people that were good, and a restraint from sins, except those forementioned; and so much from most of those, that I seldom committed them, and when I did, it was with great reluctance. And, both now and formerly, I knew that Christ was the only mediator by whom we must have pardon, justification, and life; but I had little lively sense of the love of God in Christ to the world or me, or of my special need of him!"

"About this time it pleased God that a poor pedlar

came to the door with ballads and some good books, and my father bought of him Dr. Sibbs' 'Bruised Reed.' This, also, I read, and found it suited to my taste, and seasonably sent me; which opened more the love of God to me, and gave me a livelier apprehension of the mystery of redemption, and of my obligations to Jesus Christ."

"After this, we had a servant who had a little piece of Mr. Perkins' works, 'Of Repentance,' and the 'Art of living and dying well,' and the 'Government of the Tongue;' and the reading of that did further inform me, and confirm me. And thus, *without any means but books*, was God pleased to resolve me of himself."

Various are the means by which God awakens the soul to a sense of its danger, and leads it to the knowledge and enjoyment of himself. The pulpit and the school, conversation and reading, correspondence and advice, have been employed as instruments in the hands of the Eternal Spirit in effecting the conversion of souls. To preaching, as the express appointment of God, must be ascribed the highest place; but inferior only to it is the instrumentality of religious books. In places where the preaching of the Gospel is unknown or unattended, the distribution of such books is of the utmost importance. To such books Baxter was greatly indebted for his conversion: and having derived so much benefit from this means, he ever afterwards employed it extensively among his friends, his flock, and all to whom his influence would reach. The facilities afforded, in the present day, for the dissemination of religious knowledge are truly astonishing; and among others, the efforts of Religious Tract Societies, with their millions of publications, should not be overlooked.

any will arise in the last day, and acknowledge that their conversion was effected by means of these publications. Nor is it the least advantage of these institutions, that they afford an opportunity to persons in the most humble circumstances to be instrumental in doing good to their fellow-creatures. They can give a Tract, though they cannot deliver a discourse; they can send a Tract where they cannot visit in person; they can circulate books where they cannot engage in religious conversation. In the formation of Baxter's early religious opinions and character, we see the instrumentality of a laborer, a pedlar, and a servant employed. The sovereignty of God is clearly seen in the agents and means of salvation. "His wisdom is unsearchable, and his ways are past finding out." "To God, by wise, be all the glory."

Baxter's early education was greatly neglected. His confessed teachers were either incompetent to their duty, or suffered him to be occupied rather as he chose than according to any regular plan. Notwithstanding this neglect and irregularity, he made considerable progress. He rose superior to every difficulty, and in due time became qualified to enter the university. He was persuaded, however, not to enter college, but to pursue his studies under the direction of Mr. Wickham, chaplain to the council at Ludlow Castle. Being only a pupil, it was expected that, through the undivided attention of his tutor, his proficiency would be greater than either at Cambridge or Oxford. The tutor became much attached to the pupil; but being in earnest quest of place and preferment, he neglected his charge. He allowed him "books and time enough," but never seriously attempted to instruct and improve his mind. Nor was this the only

disadvantage attending his residence at Ludlow, for he was thrown into gay and fashionable society, and was exposed to the various temptations incident to such a situation. His religious principles were in danger of being corrupted or destroyed by the practice of gambling; but he was enabled, by the grace of God, to escape the snare, and to resist all subsequent attempts to lead him astray. In this situation he formed an intimacy with a young man of professed piety, but who, at length, by the seductive influence of liquor, became an apostate. At this period, however, he instructed young Baxter "in the way of God more perfectly;" prayed with him, exhorted and encouraged him in his religious course, and thus became of essential service to his young friend. Baxter remained with his tutor about a year and a half, and then returned home. At the request of lord Newport, he took the charge of the grammar school at Wroxeter for a short time, as the master was in a dying state. On his death, Baxter left this charge, and pursued his studies and religious inquiries under the direction of the venerable Mr. Garbett, a minister of Wroxeter.

The health of Baxter was in a precarious state, and, in the prospect of eternity, he became more solicitous to improve his remaining days in the worship, and ways, and service of God. He says:

"Being in expectation of death, by a violent cough, with spitting of blood, &c. of two years continuance, supposed to be a consumption, I was awakened to be more solicitous about my soul's everlasting state; and I came so short of that sense and seriousness which a matter of such infinite weight required, that I was many years in doubt of my sincerity, and thought I had no spiritual life at all. I wondered at the senseless

hardness of my heart, that I could think and talk of sin and hell, and Christ and grace, of God and heaven with no more feeling. I cried from day to day to God for grace against this senseless deadness. I called myself the most hard-hearted sinner, that could feel nothing of all that I knew and talked of. I was not then sensible of the incomparable excellence of holy love and delight in God, nor much employed in thanksgiving and praise; but all my groans were for more contrition and a broken heart, and I prayed most for tears and tenderness.

“ Thus was I long kept with the calls of approaching death at one ear, and the questionings of a doubtful conscience at the other; and since then I have found that this method of God’s was very wise, and no other was so likely to have tended to my good. These benefits of it I sensibly perceived.

“ 1. It made me vile and loathsome to myself, and made pride one of the most hateful sins in the world to me. I thought of myself as I now think of a detestable sinner, and my enemy: that is, with a love of benevolence, wishing them well, but with little love of complacency at all; and the long continuance of it tended the more effectually to a habit.

“ 2. It much restrained me from that sportful levity and vanity to which my nature and youthfulness much inclined me, and caused me to meet temptations to sensuality with the greatest fear, and made them less effectual against me.

“ 3. It made the doctrine of redemption the more savory to me, and my thoughts of Christ more serious and clear. I remember, in the beginning, how beneficial to me were Mr. Perkins’ short treatise of the ‘Right Knowledge of Christ crucified,’ and his ‘Ex-

position of the Creed,' because they taught me how to live by faith on Christ.

"4. It made the world seem to me as a carcass that had neither life nor loveliness, and it destroyed that ambitious desire after literary fame which was the sin of my childhood. I had a desire before to have attained the highest academical degrees and reputation of learning, and to have chosen out my studies accordingly ; but sickness, and solicitousness for my doubting soul, shamed away all these thoughts as fooleries and children's plays.

"5. It set me upon that method of my studies, of which, since then, I have found the benefit, though at the time I was not satisfied with myself. It caused me first to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness, and most to mind the one thing needful ; and to determine first on my ultimate end, by which I was engaged to choose out and prosecute all other studies but as meant to that end. Therefore divinity not only shared with the rest of my studies, but always had the first and chief place. And it caused me to study a practical divinity first, in the most practical books, in a practical order ; doing all purposely for the informing and reforming of my own soul."

"And as for those doubts of my own salvation, which exercised me many years, the chief causes of them were these :

"1. Because I could not distinctly trace the workings of the Spirit upon my heart, in that method which Mr. Bolton, Mr. Hooker, Mr. Rogers, and other divines describe ; nor knew the time of my conversion, being wrought on by the forementioned degrees. But, since then, I understood that the soul is in too dark and passionate a plight at first to be able to keep an

exact account of the order of its own operations; and that preparatory grace, being sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, and the first degree of special grace being usually very small, it is not to be expected that many will be able to give a true account of the time when special grace began.

“ 2. My second doubt was as aforesaid, because of the hardness of my heart, or want of such lively apprehensions of things spiritual as I had about things corporeal. And though I still groan under this as my sin and want, yet I now perceive that a soul in flesh works so much after the manner of the flesh, that it much desires sensible apprehensions; but things spiritual and distant are not so apt to excite emotion and stir the passions.

“ 3. My next doubt was lest education and fear had done all that ever was done upon my soul, and regeneration and love were yet to be sought; because I had found conviction from my childhood, and found more fear than love in all my duties and restraints.

“ But I afterwards perceived that education is an ordinary way for the conveyance of God's grace, and ought no more to be set in opposition to the Spirit, than the preaching of the word; and that it was the great mercy of God to begin with me so soon, and to prevent such sins as else might have been my shame and sorrow while I lived. And I understood, that, though fear without love be not a state of saving grace, and greater love to the world than to God be not consistent with sincerity, yet a little predominant love, prevailing against worldly love, conjoined with a far greater measure of fear, may be a state of special grace. And I found that my hearty love of the word of God, and of the servants of God, and my desires to be more ho-

ly, and especially the hatred of my heart for loving God no more, and my wish to love him, and be pleasing to him, were not without some true love to himself, though it appeared more sensibly afterwards.

“4. Another of my doubts was, because my grief and humiliation were no greater, and because I could weep no more for this.

“But I understood, at last, that God breaks not all men’s hearts alike, and that the gradual proceedings of his grace might be one cause, and my nature, not apt to weep for other things, another; and that the change of our heart from sin to God is true repentance; and a loathing of ourselves is true humiliation; and that he that had rather leave his sin, than have leave to keep it, and had rather be the most holy, than have leave to be unholy or less holy, is neither without true repentance nor the love of God.

“5. Another of my doubts was, because I had, after my change, committed some sins deliberately and knowingly. And, be they ever so small, I thought, he that could sin upon knowledge and deliberation, had no true grace; and that, if I had but had as strong temptations to fornication, drunkenness, fraud, or other more heinous sins, I might also have committed them. And if these proved that I had then no saving grace, after all that I had felt, I thought it unlikely that ever I should have any.”

“The means by which God was pleased to give me some peace and comfort were—

“1. The reading of many consolatory books.

“2. The observation of the condition of other men. When I heard many make the very same complaints that I did, who were people of whom I had the best esteem for the uprightness and holiness of their lives,

it much abated my fears and troubles. And, in particular, it much comforted me to read him whom I loved as one of the holiest of all the martyrs, John Bradford, subscribing himself so often, 'The hard-hearted sinner,' and 'The miserable hard-hearted sinner,' even as I was used to do myself.

"3. And it much increased my peace, when God's providence called me to the comforting of many others that had the same complaints. While I answered their doubts, I answered my own; and the charity which I was constrained to exercise for them, redounded to myself, and insensibly abated my fears, and procured me an increase of quietness of mind.

"And yet, after all, I was glad of probabilities instead of full undoubted certainties; and to this very day, though I have no such degree of doubtfulness as is any great trouble to my soul, or procures any great disquieting fears, yet I cannot say that I have such a certainty of my own sincerity in grace, as excludes all doubts and fears of the contrary."

Baxter's old preceptor induced him for a season to lay aside all thoughts of the ministry, and to become an attendant at court. He resided for a month at Whitehall, but became so disgusted with the scenes and practices of high life, that his conscience would not allow his longer continuance from home. He says: "I had, quickly, enough of the court; when I saw a stage-play, instead of a sermon, on the Lord's day in the afternoon, and saw what course was there in fashion, and heard little preaching but what was, in some part, against the puritans, I was glad to be gone. At the same time, it pleased God, my mother fell sick, and desired my return; and so I resolved to bid farewell to those kinds of employments and expectations."

When he was going home into the country, about Christmas day, A. D. 1634, he relates that, on meeting a loaded wagon, his horse fell on the side of a bank, by which he was thrown before the wheel, which he says "had gone over me, but that, as it pleased God, the horses suddenly stopped, without any discernable cause, till I was recovered; which commanded me to observe the mercy of my Protector."

On his return he found his mother extremely ill. She lingered till May, and then expired.

Baxter's own health was in a very precarious state; but he was anxiously desirous of doing good during the short time which he supposed would be allotted to him on earth. He states:

"My own soul being under serious apprehensions of another world, I was exceedingly desirous to communicate those apprehensions to ignorant, presumptuous, careless sinners. But I was in a very great perplexity between my encouragements and my discouragements. I was conscious of my personal insufficiency, for want of that measure of learning and experience which so great and high a work required. I knew that the want of academical honors and degrees was likely to make me contemptible with the most, and consequently hinder the success of my endeavors. But yet, expecting to be so quickly in another world, the great concerns of miserable souls prevailed with me against all these impediments; and being conscious of a thirsty desire of men's conversion and salvation, and of some competent persuading faculty of expression which fervent affections might help to actuate, I resolved, that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would recompense all the dishonor I might receive from men!"

CHAPTER II.

HIS ORDINATION, AND FIRST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS.

Baxter was induced, by the advice of his friend Berry, to accept the head mastership of a newly endowed grammar school at Dudley, Worcestershire. He was the more ready to accept this situation, as it would afford him an opportunity of preaching in that unenlightened neighborhood. He applied for ordination to the Bishop of Winchester, which, after examination and subscription, was duly administered. He, moreover, received the bishop's license to teach in the school at Dudley. In a subsequent period of his life, he dedicated his treatise on "Self-denial" to his friend Colonel Berry, whose character had undergone a considerable change. The following passage from his dedicatory letter describes his views and feelings on entering the ministry, and his obligation to his friend and adviser. "You brought me into the ministry. I am confident you know to what ends, and with what intentions I desired it. I was then very ignorant, young, and raw. Though my weakness be yet such as I must lament, I must say, to the praise of the great Shepherd of the flock, that he hath, since then, afforded me precious opportunities, much assistance, and as much encouragement as to any man that I know alive. You know my education and initial weakness were such as forbid me to glory in the flesh; but I will not rob God of his glory to avoid the appearance of ostentation, lest I be proud of seeming not to be proud. I doubt not but many thousand souls will thank you,

when they have read that you were the man that led me into the ministry."

"Being settled in the new school at Dudley, I there preached my first public sermon in the upper parish church, and afterwards preached in the villages about; and there had occasion to enter afresh upon the study of *Conformity*;* for there were many private Christians thereabouts that were non-conformists, and one in the house with me. And that excellent man, Mr. William Fenner, had lately lived two miles off, at Sedgley, who, by defending conformity, and honoring it by a wonderfully powerful and successful way of preaching, conference, and holy living, had stirred up the non-conformists the more to a vehement pleading of their cause. And though they were there generally godly honest people, yet they were smartly censorious, and made conformity no small fault. And they lent me manuscripts and books which I never saw before; whereupon I thought it my duty to set upon a serious impartial trial of the whole cause.

"In the town of Dudley I lived in much comfort, amongst a poor tractable people, lately noted for drunkenness, but commonly more ready to hear God's word with submission and reformation than most places where I have been, so that having, since the wars, set up a monthly lecture there, the church was usually as much crowded within, and at the windows, as ever I saw any London congregation; partly through the great willingness of the people, and partly by the exceeding populousness of the country, where the woods and commons are planted with nailers, scythe-smiths, and other iron laborers, like a continued village.

* To the enactments of the established church.

“When I had been but three quarters of a year at Dudley, I was, by God’s very gracious providence, invited to Bridgnorth, the second town of Shropshire, to preach there, as assistant to the worthy pastor of that place. As soon as I heard the place described, I judged it was the fittest for me; for there was just such employment as I desired and could submit to without violating conscience, and some probability of peace and quietness.

“But the people proved a very ignorant, dead-hearted people, the town consisting too much of inns and ale-houses, and having no general trade to employ the inhabitants, which is the undoing of many large towns. So that though, through the great mercy of God, my first labors were not without success in the conversion of some ignorant and careless sinners to him, and were over-valued by those that were already regardful of the concerns of their souls, yet they were not so successful as they proved afterwards in other places. Though I was in the fervor of my affections, and never any where preached with more vehement desires of men’s conversion, yet, with the generality, applause of the preacher was most of the success of the sermon which I could hear of; and their tippling, and ill-company, and dead-heartedness quickly drowned all.”

Though a friend to episcopacy, yet the omission of some required ceremonies, together with his refusal to take the “*et cetera*” oath, (binding him never to give his consent to alter the government of the church in particulars not distinctly defined,) had nearly occasioned his expulsion from the ministry, and the loss of his liberty, if not, in his weak and infirm state of health, of life itself. Indeed, some of his accusers threatened him with “*hanging*” if he did not comply. God, how-

ever, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, changed the purposes and restrained the malice of his adversaries. He continued to preach at Bridgnorth a year and three-quarters, in the uninterrupted enjoyment of liberty, which, says he, "I took to be a very great mercy to me in these troublesome times."

He says, "The long parliament, among other parts of their reformation, resolved to reform the corrupted clergy, and appointed a committee to receive petitions and complaints against them; which was no sooner understood, but multitudes in all countries came up with petitions against their ministers."

"Among all these complainers, the town of Kidderminster, in Worcestershire, drew up a petition against their minister. The vicar of the place they represented as utterly insufficient for the ministry; presented by a papist; unlearned; preaching but once a quarter, and that so feebly as exposed him to laughter, and showed that he understood not the essential articles of Christianity; as one that frequented ale houses; had sometimes been drunk, &c.

"The vicar, knowing his insufficiency, and hearing how two others in this case had fared, desired to compound the business with them, which was soon accomplished. Hereupon they invited me to them from Bridgnorth. The bailiff of the town, and all the feoffees, desired me to preach with them, in order to a full determination. My mind was much to the place, as soon as it was described to me, because it was a full congregation, with a most convenient temple; they were an ignorant, rude, and revelling people for the most part, who had need of preaching; and yet had among them a small company of converts, humble, godly, and of good conversation, and not much hated

by the rest, and therefore the fitter to assist their teacher: but above all, because they had hardly ever had any lively, serious preaching among them. For Bridgnorth had made me resolve that I would never more go among a people that had been hardened in unprofitableness under an awakening ministry; but either to such as never had any convincing preacher, or to such as had profited by him. As soon as I came to Kidderminster, and had preached there one day, I was chosen, without opposition; for though fourteen only had the power of choosing, they desired to please the rest. And thus I was brought, by the gracious providence of God, to that place which had the chief of my labors, and yielded me the greatest fruits. And I noted the mercy of God in this, that I never went to any place in my life, among all my changes, which I had before designed, or thought of, much less sought, but only to those that I never thought of, till the sudden invitation surprised me."

CHAPTER III.

HIS LABORS, TRIALS, AND SUCCESS AT KIDDERMINSTER.

To this important and interesting scene of labor Baxter was invited on the 9th of March, 1640. His legal appointment, after laboring among the people during the interval, is dated April 5, 1641.

For this station of public and extensive usefulness, he had been prepared by various painful and alarming afflictions. He says: "All this forementioned time of

my ministry was passed under my foredescribed weaknesses, which were so great as made me live and preach in continual expectation of death, supposing still that I had not long to live. And this I found, through all my life, to be an invaluable mercy to me: for—

“1. It greatly weakened temptations.

“2. It kept me in great contempt of the world.

“3. It taught me highly to esteem time; so that, if any of it passed away in idleness or unprofitableness, it was so long a pain and burden to my mind. So that I must say, to the praise of my most wise Conductor, that time has still seemed to me much more precious than gold, or any earthly gain, and its minutes have not been despised, nor have I been much tempted to any of the sins which go under the name of pastime, since I undertook my work.

“4. It made me study and preach things necessary, and a little stirred up my sluggish heart to speak to sinners with some compassion, as a dying man to dying men.

“These, with the rest which I mentioned before, when I spake of my infirmities, were the benefits which God afforded me by affliction. I humbly bless his gracious providence, who gave me his treasure in an earthen vessel, and trained me up in the school of affliction, and taught me the cross of Christ so soon, that I might be rather, as Luther speaks, ‘a cross-bearer, than a cross-maker, or imposer.’”

His spiritual conflicts, too, were of a distressing character, and tended, eventually, by the grace of God, to qualify him to be an instructor of others, both as a preacher and writer. He says:

“At one time, above all the rest, struggling under a new and unusual disease, which put me upon the

present expectation of my change, and going for comfort to the promises, as I was used, the tempter strongly assaulted my faith, and would have drawn me towards infidelity itself. Till I was ready to enter into the ministry, all my troubles had been raised by the hardness of my heart and the doubtings of my own sincerity; but now all these began to vanish, and never much returned to this day. And, instead of these, I was now assaulted with more pernicious temptations; especially to question the certain truth of the sacred Scriptures; and also the life to come, and the immortality of the soul. And these temptations assaulted me, not as they do the melancholy, with horrid vexing importunity; but, by pretence of sober reason, they would have drawn me to a settled doubting of Christianity.

“And here I found my own miscarriage and the great mercy of God. My miscarriage, in that I had so long neglected the well settling of the foundations on which I rested, while I had bestowed so much time in the superstructure and the applicatory part. For, not daring to question the truth of the Scriptures and the life to come, I had either taken it for a certainty upon trust, or taken up with common reasons of it, which I had never well considered, digested, or made my own; insomuch, that when this temptation came, it seemed at first to answer and enervate all the former reasons of my feeble faith, which made me take the Scriptures for the word of God; and it set before me such mountains of difficulty in the incarnation, the person of Christ, his undertaking and performance, with the scripture chronology, histories, style, &c. as had overwhelmed me, if God had not been my strength. And here I saw much of the mercy of God, that he let not out these terrible and dangerous temptations upon

me while I was weak and in the infancy of my faith; for then I had never been able to withstand them. But faith is like a tree whose top is small while the root is young and shallow; and therefore, as then it has but small rooting, so it is not liable to the shaking winds and tempests as the large and high-grown trees are; but, as the top rises higher, so the root at once grows greater and deeper fixed, to cause it to endure its greater assaults.

“Though formerly I was wont, when any such temptation came, to cast it aside, as fitter to be abhorred than considered, yet now this would not give me satisfaction; but I was disposed to dig to the very foundations, and seriously to examine the reasons of Christianity, and to give a hearing to all that could be said against it, that so my faith might be indeed my own. And at last I found that ‘Nothing is so firmly believed as that which has been some time doubted.’

“In the storm of this temptation, I questioned awhile whether I were indeed a Christian or an infidel, and whether faith could consist with such doubts as I was conscious of. For I had read, in the works of papists and protestants, that faith had certainty, and was more than an opinion; and that, if a man should live a godly life, from the bare apprehensions of the probability of the truth of Scripture and the life to come, it would not save him, as being no true godliness or faith. But my judgment closed with the reason of Dr. Jackson’s determination of this case, which supported me much; that as in the very assenting act of faith there may be such weakness as may make us cry—‘Lord, increase our faith: we believe; Lord, help our belief;’ so, when faith and unbelief are in their conflict, it is the effects which must show us which of them is victo-

rious. And that he that has so much faith as will cause him to deny himself, take up his cross, and forsake all the profits, honors, and pleasures of this world, for the sake of Christ, the love of God, and the hope of glory, has a saving faith, how weak soever. For God cannot condemn the soul that truly loves and seeks him; and those that Christ brings to persevere in the love of God, he brings to salvation. And there were divers things that, in this assault, proved great assistances to my faith."

"From this assault I was forced to take notice that our belief of the truth of the word of God, and the life to come, is the spring of all grace; and with which it rises or falls, flourishes or decays, is actuated or stands still: and that there is more of this secret unbelief at the root than most of us are aware of; and that our love of the world, our boldness in sin, our neglect of duty, are caused hence. I observed easily in myself, that if at any time Satan, more than at other times, weakened my belief of Scripture and the life to come, my zeal in every religious duty abated with it, and I grew more indifferent in religion than before. I was more inclined to conformity in those points which I had taken to be sinful, and was ready to think, Why should I be singular, and offend the bishops and other superiors, and make myself contemptible in the world, and expose myself to censures, scorns and sufferings, and all for such little things as these, when the foundations themselves have such great difficulties as I am unable to overcome? But when faith revived, then none of the parts or concerns of religion seemed small; and then man seemed nothing, and the world a shadow, and God was all.

"In the beginning, I doubted not of the truth of the

Holy Scriptures, or of the life to come, because I saw not the difficulties which might cause doubting. After that, I saw them, and I doubted, because I saw not that which should satisfy the mind against them. Since that, having seen both difficulties and evidences, though I am not so unmolested as at the first, yet is my faith, I hope, much stronger, and far better able to repel the temptations of Satan, and the sophisms of infidels, than before. But yet it is my daily prayer that God would increase my faith, and give my soul a clear sight of the evidences of his truth, and of himself, and of the invisible world."

Nor was Baxter exempt from slander: his moral character was assailed by base and unfounded calumnies. These he was enabled successfully to refute. His chief calumniator was obliged to confess that the charges were fabrications, and to beg his forgiveness, which was freely given.

The trials of ministers are frequently of a painful character, but, like those of private Christians, "they work together for good." They are over-ruled, not only for their personal benefit, but for the edification of their flocks. "If their sufferings abound, so do their consolations also," and that in order to their being the comforters of others. 2 Cor. 1 : 1-5.

Baxter entered on his work with spirit and zeal; nor was he suffered to labor long without witnessing blessed results in the conversion of sinners to God. At first he used to register the names, characters, &c. of his converts; but they became, at length, so numerous, that he discontinued the practice.

He continued successfully discharging his ministerial and pastoral labors for nearly two years, when the civil wars (growing out of a rupture between the king

and his parliament) threw the whole country into confusion. His situation, though he was no partizan, was critical and dangerous. He was at length advised by his friends to retire from Kidderminster till public affairs should assume a more peaceable aspect. The immediate occasion of his leaving, he thus describes .

“About that time the parliament sent down an order for the demolishing of all statues and images of any of the three persons in the blessed Trinity, or of the virgin Mary, which should be found in churches, or on the crosses in churchyards. My judgment was for the obeying of this order, thinking it came from just authority; but I meddled not in it, but left the churchwarden to do what he thought good. The churchwarden, an honest, sober, quiet man, seeing a crucifix upon the cross in the churchyard, set up a ladder to have reached it, but it proved too short: whilst he was gone to seek another, a crew of the drunken riotous party of the town, poor journeymen and servants, took the alarm, and ran together with weapons to defend the crucifix and the church images, of which there were many remaining since the time of popery. The report was among them that I was the actor, and it was me they sought; but I was walking almost a mile out of town, or else, I suppose, I had there ended my days. When they missed me and the churchwarden both, they went raving about the streets to seek us. Two neighbors that dwelt in other parishes, hearing that they sought my life, ran in among them to see whether I were there, and they knocked them both down in the streets; and both of them are since dead, and, I think, never perfectly recovered of the wounds then received. When they had foamed about half an hour, and met with none of us, I came in from my

walk, and hearing the people cursing at me in their doors, I wondered what the matter was, but quickly found how fairly I had escaped. 'The next Lord's day I dealt plainly with them, and laid open to them the quality of that action, and told them, seeing they so requited me as to seek my blood, I was willing to leave them, and save them from that guilt. But the poor sots were so amazed and ashamed that they took on sorrily, and were reluctant to part with me.

"About this time the king's declarations were read in our market-place, and the Reader, a violent country gentleman, seeing me pass the streets, stopped, and said, 'There goes a traitor,' without ever giving a syllable of reason for it.

"And the commission of array was set afoot, for the parliament meddled not with the militia of that county, Lord Howard, their lieutenant, not appearing. Then the rage of the rioters grew greater than before. And in preparation for the war, they had got the word among them—'Down with the roundheads;' insomuch that if a stranger passed in many places, that had short hair and a civil habit, the rabble presently cried, 'Down with the roundheads;' and some they knocked down in the open streets.

"In this fury of the rabble I was advised to withdraw awhile from home; whereupon I went to Gloucester. As I passed but through a corner of the suburbs of Worcester, they that knew me not cried, 'Down with the roundheads;' and I was glad to spur on and begone. But when I came to Gloucester, among strangers also that had never known me, I found a civil, courteous, and religious people, as different from Worcester as if they had lived under another government."

"When I had been at Gloucester a month, my neigh-

bors of Kidderminster came for me home, and told me that if I stayed any longer the people would interpret it either that I was afraid, upon some guilt, or that I was against the king; so I bid my host, Mr. Darney, the town-clerk, and my friends, farewell, and never went to Gloucester more.

“For myself, I knew not what course to take. To live at home I was uneasy; but especially now, when soldiers, on one side or other, would be frequently among us, and we must be still at the mercy of every furious beast that would make a prey of us. I had neither money nor friends. I knew not who would receive me in any place of safety; nor had I any thing to satisfy them for my diet and entertainment. Hereupon I was persuaded, by one that was with me, to go to Coventry, where one of my old acquaintance was minister, Mr. Simon King, some time schoolmaster at Bridgnorth. So thither I went, with a purpose to stay there till one side or other had got the victory, and the war was ended, and then to return home.

“Whilst I was thinking what course to take, the committee and governor of the city desired me that I would stay with them, and lodge in the governor’s house, and preach to the soldiers. The offer suited well with my necessities, but I resolved that I would not be chaplain to the regiment, nor take a commission; but, if the mere preaching of a sermon once or twice a week to the garrison would satisfy them, I would accept of the offer, till I could go home again. Here I lived in the governor’s house, and followed my studies as quietly as in a time of peace, for about a year, only preaching once a week to the soldiers, and once on the Lord’s day to the people, not taking from any of them a penny for either, save my diet only.”

The war continued with unabated fury and severity. During his stay at Coventry he was invited by Cromwell to become chaplain to his troops which lay at Cambridge. This invitation he declined; but some time after, on learning the state of the army and the prospects of usefulness among the soldiers, at the solicitation of Captain Evanson, he became chaplain to Colonel Whalley's regiment, and left his quarters at Coventry, to the deep and universal regret of the residents in the garrison.

On joining his regiment he writes:

"I set myself, from day to day, to find out the corruptions of the soldiers, and to adapt my discourses and conversation to their mistakes, both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more tractable."

His "efforts to do good" were unremitting. His time was occupied "in preaching, conference, and disputing against confounding errors," and in directing and comforting believers under the difficulties and perils of the times. His success, however, did not equal his expectations: party spirit ran exceedingly high; the soldiers were divided in their religious opinions; the camp afforded but few facilities for collecting any considerable numbers together, and besides, was constantly changing its position, according to the direction of war. And probably his desire to reconcile their religious differences, and to unite them under one religious discipline, led him more frequently to dispute than to preach, to dwell more on the details and minutiae of the Gospel than on its essential truths; to labor as though they were at peace and had time for punctilios, rather than as being in a state of war, and in

danger every hour of being hurried into eternity. These, with other untoward circumstances, contributed to diminish the probability of success, but at the same time to illustrate the zeal, the piety, and the perseverance of the conscientious chaplain. He was never in any engagement, nor took part, personally, in any contests, though present at some sieges.

After the fatal battle of Worcester, with health enfeebled by his excessive exertions in the army, he visited his old flock at Kidderminster, and thence proceeded to London for medical advice. His physician directed him to visit Tunbridge Wells, and try the efficacy of its waters. With this advice he complied. His health was in consequence improved, and in due time he returned to his quarters in Worcestershire, where the army still lay.

In all his peregrinations with the army and otherwise, he preached in most of the churches in the towns through which he passed; and no doubt can be entertained that his earnest, affectionate, and faithful preaching was attended with important results.

While staying at the house of Sir John Cook, Melbourne, Derbyshire, he was seized with a violent bleeding at the nose, which so reduced his strength that his case was considered almost hopeless. His countenance was so altered as scarcely to be recognized by his most intimate friends. As soon as he could remove, he visited a friend in Leicestershire, where he remained three weeks in an exhausted state. In this state he was invited by his friends Sir Thomas and Lady Rous to take lodgings at their mansion. Thither he was conveyed, and experienced the greatest kindness and attention. At the end of three months, having recovered his strength, he returned to Kidderminster.

During this period of sickness and retirement from public labors; he was anxious to be useful, and to be restored, if agreeable to the Divine will, that his usefulness might be increased. He states concerning himself, "Being conscious that my time had not been improved to the service of God as I wished it had been, I put up many an earnest prayer to God that he would restore me, and use me more successfully in his work. And, blessed be that mercy which heard my groans in the day of my distress, and granted my desires, and wrought my deliverance, when men and means failed, and gave me opportunity to celebrate his praise."

It was during this affliction that he wrote his celebrated work, "the Saints' Everlasting Rest:"* a work, the usefulness of which no mortal can estimate. It was a blessing to the age in which he lived, and will continue to be so to the remotest ages of time. Had he lived only to write this work, his name would have been held in "everlasting remembrance."

His own account of the origin and progress of the work is interesting. "The second book which I wrote, and the first which I began, was that called 'The Saints' Everlasting Rest.' Whilst I was in health, I had not the least thought of writing books, or of serving God in any more public way than preaching; but, when I was weakened with great bleeding, and left solitary in my chamber, at Sir John Cook's, in Derbyshire, without any acquaintance but my servant about me, and was sentenced to death by the physicians, I began to contemplate more seriously the everlasting rest which I apprehended myself to be just on the borders of. And that my thoughts might not too

* Published by the American Tract Society.

much scatter in my meditation, I began to write something on that subject, intending but a quantity of a sermon or two, but being continued long in weakness, where I had no books, and no better employment, I pursued it, till it was enlarged to the buik in which it is published. The first three weeks I spent in it was at Mr. Nowel's, in Leicestershire; a quarter of a year more, at the seasons which so great weakness would allow, I bestowed on it at the house of Sir Thomas Rous, in Worcestershire; and I finished it, shortly after, at Kidderminster. The first and last parts were first done, being all that I intended for my own use; and the second and third parts were written afterwards, beyond my first intention.

This book it pleased God so far to bless to the profit of many, that it encouraged me to be guilty of all those writings which afterwards followed. The marginal citations I put in after I came home to my books; but almost all the book itself was written when I had no book but a Bible and a concordance. And I found that the transcript of the heart has the greatest force on the hearts of others. For the good that I have heard that multitudes have received by that book, and the benefit which I have again received by their prayers, I here numbly return my thanks to Him that compelled me to write it."

Anticipating that some objection might be made in respect to its style, he says, in his dedication of the work to the people of Kidderminster, "It is no wonder, therefore, if I am too abrupt in the beginning, seeing I then intended but the length of a sermon or two. Much less may you wonder if the whole is very imperfect, seeing it was written, as it were, with one foot in the grave, by a man that was betwixt living and

dead, that wanted strength of nature to quicken invention or affection, and had no book but his Bible until the chief part was finished, nor had any regard to human ornaments. But, O how sweet is this providence now to my review! that so happily forced me to the work of meditation, which I had formerly found so profitable to my soul! and showed me more mercy in depriving me of other helps than I was aware of! and has caused my thoughts to feed on this heavenly subject, which has more benefited me than all the studies of my life!"

On his recovery he received a pressing invitation to return to his old charge at Kidderminster, which he instantly and cordially accepted. He was devotedly attached to his people, and considered himself bound to resist all attempts to procure his services in other places. He thus affectionately writes to "his beloved friends:" "If either I or my labors have any public use or worth, it is wholly, though not only yours; and I am convinced, by providence, that it is the will of God it should be so. This I clearly discerned on my first coming to you, in my former abode with you, and in the time of my forced absence from you. When I was separated by the miseries of the late unhappy wars, I durst not fix in any other congregation, but lived in a military displeasing state, lest I should forestall my return to you, for whom I conceived myself reserved. The offer of great worldly accommodations, with five times the means I receive with you, was no temptation to me once to question whether I should leave you. Your free invitation of my return, your obedience to my doctrine, the strong affection I have yet towards you, above all people, and the general hearty return of love which I find from you, do all persuade me that

I was sent into the world especially for the service of your souls."

He resumed his labors under great bodily weakness, "being seldom an hour free from pain." He was subject to repeated attacks, from which he recovered, according to his own account, chiefly through the intercessions and fervent prayers of his friends. "Many a time have I been brought very low, and received the sentence of death in myself, when my poor, honest, praying neighbors have met, and, upon their fasting and earnest prayers, I have recovered. Once, when I had continued very feeble three weeks, and was unable to go abroad, the very day that they prayed for me I recovered, and was able to preach on the following Sabbath, and administered the Lord's supper; and was better after it, it being the first time that ever I administered it. And ever after that, whatever weakness was upon me, when I had, after preaching, administered that ordinance to many hundred people, I was much revived and eased of my infirmities."

"O how often," he writes in his 'Dying Thoughts,' "have I cried to Him, when men and means were nothing, and when no help in second causes appeared; and how often, and suddenly, and mercifully has he delivered me! What sudden ease, what removal of long affliction have I had! Such extraordinary changes, beyond my own and others' expectations, when many plain-hearted, upright Christians have, by fasting and prayer, sought God on my behalf, as have over and over convinced me of a special providence, and that God is indeed a hearer of prayer. And wonders have I seen done for others also, upon such prayer, more than for myself: yea, and wonders for the church, and for public societies." "Shall I therefore forget how

often he has heard prayers for me? and how wonderfully he often has helped both me and others; my faith has been helped by such experiences, and shall I forget them, or question them without cause at last?"

Baxter relates several extraordinary instances of answers to prayer, in the recovery and preservation both of himself and friends. He was attentive in seeking such blessings, and in observing such circumstances; and, as an old divine justly observes, "they that watch providence shall never want a providence to watch." Having now brought down Baxter's life to the period when he settled again amongst his old friends, and resumed his accustomed labors, it will be desirable to introduce, in an abridged form, his own account of his "employments, success, and advantages," during his fourteen years' continuance among them.

1. Employments.

"I preached, before the wars, twice each Lord's day; but, after the war, but once, and once every Thursday, besides occasional sermons. Every Thursday evening, my neighbors that were most desirous, and had opportunity, met at my house, and there one of them repeated the sermon; and afterwards they proposed what doubts any of them had about the sermon, or any other case of conscience, and I resolved their doubts. And, last of all, I caused sometimes one, and sometimes another of them to pray, sometimes praying with them myself. Once a week, also, some of the young who were not prepared to pray in so great an assembly, met among a few more privately, where they spent three hours in prayer together. Every Saturday night they met at some of their houses to repeat the sermon of the last Lord's day, and to pray and prepare themselves for the following day. Once in a few

weeks we had a day of humiliation, on one occasion or other. Two days every week my assistant and myself took fourteen families between us for private catechising and conference; he going through the parish, and the town coming to me. I first heard them recite the words of the catechism, and then examined them about the sense, and lastly urged them, with all possible engaging reason and vehemence, to answerable affection and practice. If any of them were perplexed through ignorance or bashfulness, I forbore to press them any farther to answers, but made them hearers, and either examined others, or turned all into instruction and exhortation. But this, I have opened more fully in my 'Reformed Pastor.' I spent about an hour with a family, and admitted no others to be present, lest bashfulness should make it burdensome, or any should talk of the weaknesses of others. So that all the afternoons, on Mondays and Tuesdays, I spent in this, after I had begun it; for it was many years before I attempted it; and my assistant spent the mornings of the same days in the same employment. Before that, I only catechised them in the church, and conferred with, now and then one occasionally.

“ Besides all this, I was forced five or six years, by the people's necessity, to practise physic. A common pleurisy happening one year, and no physician being near, I was forced to advise them, to save their lives; and I could not afterwards avoid the importunity of the town and country round about. And because I never once took a penny of any one, I was crowded with patients, so that almost twenty would be at my door at once; and though God, by more success than I expected, so long encouraged me, yet, at last, I could endure it no longer; partly because it hindered my

other studies, and partly because the very fear of mis-carrying and doing any one harm, made it an intolerable burden to me. So that, after some years' practice, I procured a godly diligent physician to come and live in town, and bound myself, by promise, to practise no more, unless in consultation with him in case of any seeming necessity. And so with that answer I turned them all off, and never meddled with it more."

2. Success.

"I have mentioned my sweet and acceptable employment; let me, to the praise of my gracious Lord, acquaint you with some of my success. And I will not suppress it, though I foreknow that the malignant will impute the mention of it to pride and ostentation. For it is the sacrifice of thanksgiving which I owe to my most gracious God, which I will not deny him for fear of being censured as proud, lest I prove myself proud indeed, while I cannot undergo the imputation of pride in the offering of my thanks for such undeserved mercies.

"My public preaching met with an attentive, diligent auditory. Having broke over the brunt of the opposition of the rabble before the wars, I found them afterwards tractable and unprejudiced.

"Before I ever entered into the ministry, God blessed my private conference to the conversion of some, who remain firm and eminent in holiness to this day. Then, and in the beginning of my ministry, I was wont to number them as jewels; but since then I could not keep any number of them.

"The congregation was usually full, so that we were led to build five galleries after my coming thither, the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in.

Our private meetings also were full. On the Lord's day there was no disorder to be seen in the streets, but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons, as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name; and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not more than one family in the side of a street that did not so; and that did not, in professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And of those families which were the worst, being inns and ale-houses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious. Though our administration of the Lord's supper was so ordered as displeased many, and the far greater part kept themselves away, yet we had six hundred that were communicants, of whom there were not twelve that I had not good hopes of, as to their sincerity; and those few that came to our communion, and yet lived scandalously, were excommunicated afterwards. And I hope there were many who feared God that came not to our communion, some of them being kept off by husbands, by parents, by masters, and some dissuaded by men that differed from us.

“When I commenced personal conference with each family and catechising them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come; and those few were beggars at the town's ends, who were so ignorant that they were ashamed it should be manifest. And few families went from me without some tears, or seemingly serious promises for a godly life. Yet many ignorant and ungodly persons there were still among us; but most of them were in the parish, and not in the town, and in those parts of the parish which were

farthest from the town. Some of the poor men competently understood the body of divinity, and were able to judge in difficult controversies. Some of them were so able in prayer, that very few ministers equalled them in order and fullness, apt expressions, holy oratory, and fervency. A great number of them were able to pray very appropriately with their families, or with others. The temper of their minds, and the correctness of their lives, were even more commendable than their talents. The professors of serious godliness were generally of very humble minds and carriage; of meek and quiet behavior towards others; and blameless in their conversation.

“And in my poor endeavors with my brethren in the ministry, my labors were not lost. Our discussions proved not unprofitable; our meetings were never contentious, but always comfortable. We took great delight in the company of each other; so that I know the remembrance of those days is pleasant both to them and me. When discouragements had long kept me from proposing a way of church order and discipline which all might agree in, that we might neither have churches ungoverned, nor fall into divisions among ourselves at the first mention of it, I found a readier consent than I could expect, and all went on without any great difficulties. And when I attempted to bring them all conjointly to the work of catechising and instructing every family by itself, I found a ready consent in most, and performance in many. So that I must here, to the praise of my dear Redeemer, set up this pillar of remembrance, even to his praise who hath employed me so many years in so comfortable a work, with such encouraging success! O what am I, a worthless worm, not only wanting academical ho-

nors, but much of that furniture which is needful to so high a work, that God should thus abundantly encourage me, when the reverend instructors of my youth labored fifty years together in one place, and could scarcely say they had been instrumental in the conversion of even one or two of their hearers. And the greater was this mercy, because I was naturally of a desponding spirit; so that if I had preached one year, and seen no fruits of it, I should hardly have forborne running away like Jonah, but should have thought that God called me not to that place."

3. Advantages.

"Having related my encouraging successes in this place, I shall next tell you by what and how many advantages so much was effected, under that grace which worketh by means, though with a free diversity; which I do for the help of others in managing ignorant and sinful people.

"One advantage was, that I came to a people that never had any awakening ministry before. For if they had been hardened under a powerful ministry, and been sermon proof, I should have expected less.

"Another advantage was, that at first I was in the vigor of my spirits, and had naturally a familiar moving voice, which is a great matter with the common hearers; and doing all in bodily weakness, as a dying man, my soul was the more easily brought to seriousness, and to preach as a dying man to dying men; for drowsy formality does but stupify the hearers and rock them asleep. It must be serious preaching which makes men serious in hearing and obeying it."

"Another advantage which I had was, the acceptance of my person. Though to win estimation and love to ourselves only, be an end that none but proud

men and hypocrites intend, yet it is most certain that the acceptableness of the person ingratiate the message, and greatly prepares the people to receive the truth. Had they taken me to be ignorant, erroneous, scandalous, worldly, self-seeking, or such like, I could have expected small success among them.

“Another advantage which I had was through the zeal and diligence of the godly people of the place, who thirsted after the salvation of their neighbors, and were, in private, my assistants; and being dispersed through the town, they were ready, in almost all companies, to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, and convince, reprove, and exhort men according to their needs; and also to teach them how to pray, and to help them to sanctify the Lord’s day. Those people that had none in their families who could pray or repeat the sermons, went to the houses of their neighbors who could do it, and joined with them; so that some houses of the ablest men in each street were filled with them that could do nothing or little in their own.

“And the holy, humble, blameless lives of the religious was a great advantage to me. The malicious people could not say, Your professors here are as proud and covetous as any. But the blameless lives of godly people shamed opposers, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and many were won by their good conversation.”

“Our private meetings were a marvellous help to the propagating of godliness among them; for thereby truths that slipped away were recalled, and the seriousness of the people’s minds renewed, and good desires cherished; and hereby their knowledge was much increased; and here the younger Christians learned to pray, by frequently hearing others. And here I had

opportunity to know their case; for if any were touched and awakened in public, I would presently see them drop in to our private meetings."

"Another furtherance of my work was the works which I wrote and distributed among them. Of some small books I gave each family one, which came to about eight hundred; of the larger I gave fewer; and to every family that was poor, and had not a Bible, I gave a Bible. I had found, myself, the benefit of reading to be so great, that I could not but think it would be profitable to others.

"And it was a great advantage to me, that my neighbors were of such a trade as allowed them time enough to read or talk of holy things; for the town liveth upon the weaving of Kidderminster stuffs, and as they stand in their loom they can set a book before them, or edify one another."

"And I found that my single life afforded me much advantage; for I could the more easily take my people for my children, and think all that I had too little for them, in that I had no children of my own to tempt me to another way of using it. And being discharged from the most of family cares, keeping but one servant, I had the more time and liberty for the labors of my calling.

"And God made use of my practice of physic among them as a very great advantage to my ministry; for they that cared not for their souls, loved their lives and cared for their bodies. And by this they were made almost as observant as a tenant is of his landlord. Sometimes I could see before me in the church a very considerable part of the congregation, whose lives God had made me a means to save, or to recover

their health ; and doing it for nothing, so obliged them, that they would readily hear me.

“ And it was a great advantage to me, that there were at last few that were bad, who had not some of their own relations converted. Many children were subjects of God’s grace at fourteen, or fifteen, or sixteen years of age; and this did marvellously reconcile the minds of their parents to godliness. They that would not hear me, would hear their own children. They that before could have talked against godliness, would not hear it spoken against when it was their children’s case. Many that would not be brought to it themselves, were gratified that they had intelligent religious children. And we had some persons near eighty years of age, who are, I hope, in heaven, and the conversion of their own children was the chief means to overcome their prejudice, and old customs, and conceits.

“ And God made great use of sickness to do good to many. For though sick-bed promises are usually soon forgotten, yet was it otherwise with many among us; and as soon as they were recovered, they first came to our private meetings, and so kept in a learning state, till further fruits of piety appeared.”

“ Another of my great advantages was, the true worth and unanimity of the honest ministers of the country round about us, who associated in a way of concord with us. Their preaching was powerful and sober; their spirits peaceable and meek, disowning the treasons and iniquities of the times, as well as we; they were wholly devoted to the winning of souls; self-denying, and of most blameless lives; evil spoken of by no sober men, but greatly beloved by their own people and all that knew them; adhering to no faction; neither Episcopal, Presbyterian, nor Independ-

ent, as to parties; but desiring union, and loving that which is good, in all."

"Another great help to my success at last, was the before described work of personal conference with every family apart, and catechising and instructing them. That which was spoken to them personally and sometimes drew forth their answers, awakened their attention, and was more easily applied than public preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them.

"And the exercise of church discipline was no small furtherance of the people's good; for I found plainly, that without it I could not have kept the more spiritual from separations and divisions. There is something generally in their dispositions which inclines them to separate from open ungodly sinners, as men of another nature and society; and if they had not seen me do something reasonable for a regular separation of the notorious obstinate sinners from the rest, they would have withdrawn themselves irregularly; and it would not have been in my power to satisfy them."

"Another means of success was, directing my instructions to them in a suitableness to the main end, and yet so as might suit their dispositions and diseases. I daily opened to them, and with the greatest importunity labored to imprint upon their minds the great fundamental principles of Christianity, even a right knowledge and belief of, and subjection and love to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and love to all men, and concord with the church and one another. I daily so inculcated the knowledge of God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and love and obedience to God, and unity with the spiritual church, and love to men, and hope of life eternal, that these were the matter of their daily thoughts and discourses

and indeed their religion. And yet I usually put something in my sermon which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before; and this I did, that they might be kept humble, and still perceive their ignorance, and be willing to keep in a learning state. And I did this also to increase their knowledge and make religion pleasant to them, by a daily addition to their former light, and to draw them on with desire and delight. But these things which they did not know before, were not unprofitable controversies, which tended not to edification, nor novelties in doctrine, contrary to the universal church; but either such points as tended to illustrate the great doctrines before-mentioned, or usually about the right methodizing of them; as the opening of the true and profitable method of the creed or doctrine of faith, the Lord's prayer or matter of our desires, and the ten commandments or law of practice; which afford matter to add to the knowledge of most professors of religion a long time. And when that is done, they must be led on still further, by degrees, as they are capable; but so as not to leave the weak behind; and so as shall still be truly subservient to the great points of faith, hope, and love, holiness and unity, which must be still inculcated as the beginning and the end of all."

"And it much furthered my success, that I stayed still in this one place near two years before the wars, and above fourteen years after; for he that removeth often from place to place, may sow good seed in many places, but is not likely to see much fruit in any, unless some other skillful hand shall follow him to water it. It was a great advantage to me to have almost all the religious people of the place of my own instructing and informing; and that they were not formed

into erroneous and factious principles before ; and that I stayed to see them grown up to some confirmedness and maturity."

These passages strikingly depict the means and effects of a revival of religion. Only let love to the Redeemer burn with quenchless ardor in the breast, and eternity with its tremendous and unutterable consequences be distinctly realized ; compassion to immortal spirits infuse its tenderness and solicitude throughout the soul ; a deep and unfailing sense of ministerial responsibility rest upon the conscience ; then all the powers, talents, and influence that can be commanded, will be brought into exercise, and made to bear with unceasing energy on the great work of saving immortal souls, and then the Lord will command his " blessing, even life for evermore."

The secret of Baxter's success, perhaps, consisted prominently in the zeal, affection, and perseverance he displayed in *following his people to their homes*. His visits from house to house were for the purpose of applying with more close and pungent force the truths which were taught from the pulpit, or learned in the systematic instructions which were given to families and to children. And it is remarkable that his success in the earliest period of his ministry was chiefly amongst the young. In the preface to his work entitled "Compassionate Counsel to all Young Men," &c. he observes—"At Kidderminster, where God most blessed my labors, my first and greatest success was with the youth : and what was a marvellous way of divine mercy, when God had touched the hearts of young people, and brought them to the love and obedience of the truth, the parents and grand-parents who had grown old in an ignorant and worldly state, embrac-

ed religion, led by the love of their children, whom they perceived to be made, by it, much wiser and better, and more dutiful to them."—"By much experience I have been made more sensible of the necessity of warning and instructing youth, than I was before. Many say reports have taught it to me; the sad complaints of mournful parents have taught it me; the sad observation of the willful impenitence of some of my acquaintance tells it me; the many scores, if not hundreds of bills, that have been publicly put up to me to pray for wicked and obstinate children, have told it me; and, by the grace of God, the penitent confessions, lamentations, and restitutions of many converts, have made me more particularly acquainted with their case; which moved me for a time, on my Thursday's lecture, the first of every month, to speak to youth and those that educate them."

The religious education of youth is of infinite importance to families and to a nation, to the church and the world.

The youthful members of his congregation should engage the anxious attention of every pastor. They are the hopes of his ministry. With them truth meets the readiest reception. Among them conversion most frequently takes place. From them the most valuable members of Christian society are obtained. Rising into life, their influence is exerted wholly on the side of truth and piety; and when more matured in years, their instructions and example benefit and bless their families, their connexions, and the world. The conversion of a soul in the period of youth prevents its entering on a course of sin, engages it to the practice of holiness, ensures the exertion of its influence in behalf of God and his cause through the whole of its

earthly being ; and thus a career of happiness begins which shall extend throughout eternity.

In connection with this statement of Baxter's labors and success, some notice may be taken of his work entitled the "Reformed Pastor," written expressly to arouse the attention and excite the efforts of the Christian ministry to the great work in which he himself had so successfully engaged. His reverend brethren had witnessed the astonishing results of his pastoral engagements, and were anxious to make some efforts to accomplish among their own people similar results. A day of fasting and prayer was appointed by themselves at Worcester, before entering on their untried labors, and Baxter was requested to preach on the occasion. He prepared his sermon, but his illness prevented his preaching. He therefore enlarged his sermon into a treatise, and published it. Concerning this work he says :

"I have very great cause to be thankful to God for the success of that book, as hoping many thousand souls are the better for it, in that it prevailed with many ministers to set upon that work which I there exhort them to. Even from beyond the seas I have had letters of request to direct them how they might promote that work, according as that book had convinced them that it was their duty. If God would but reform the ministry, and set them on their duties zealously and faithfully, the people would certainly be reformed. All churches either rise or fall as the ministry rise or fall, not in riches and worldly grandeur, but in knowledge, zeal, and ability for their work."

Many and just encomiums have been passed on this work. "In the whole compass of divinity there is

scarcely any thing superior to it, in close pathetic appeals to the conscience of the minister of Christ, upon the primary duties of his office." The editor of a recent edition justly says, "Of the excellence of this work it is scarcely possible to speak in too high terms. For powerful, pathetic, pungent, and heart-piercing address, we know of no work on the pastoral care to be compared with it. Could we suppose it to be read by an angel, or by some other being possessed of an unfallen nature, the argumentation and expostulations of our author would be felt to be altogether irresistible: and hard must be the heart of that minister who can read it without being moved, melted, and overwhelmed: hard must be his heart, if he be not roused to greater faithfulness, diligence, and activity in winning souls to Christ. It is a work worthy of being printed in letters of gold. It deserves, at least, to be engraven on the heart of every minister. I cannot help suggesting to the friends of religion that they could not, perhaps, do more good at less expense, than by presenting copies of this work to the ministers of Christ throughout the country. They are the chief instruments through whom good is to be effected in any country. How important, then, must it be to stir them up to holy zeal and activity in the cause of the Redeemer! A tract given to a poor man may be the means of his conversion; but a work, such as this, presented to a minister, may, through his increased faithfulness and energy, prove the conversion of multitudes."

In addition to Baxter's numerous ministerial and pastoral labors, he was consulted by persons of all classes and professions on the various subjects connected with church and state, which at that period were

hotly and fiercely agitated. His pacific disposition, and his desire to promote universal concord among all religious parties, were generally known. Hence his advice was eagerly sought by all. This must have occupied no small portion of his time, and caused him no little anxiety. He gives a curious account of his being consulted by Cromwell, and his preaching before him.

“At this time Lord Broghill and the Earl of Warwick brought me to preach before Cromwell, the protector, which was the only time that ever I preached to him, save once long before, when he was an inferior man among other auditors. I knew not which way to provoke him better to his duty, than by preaching on 1 Cor. 1:10, against the divisions and distractions of the church, and showing how mischievous a thing it was for politicians to maintain such divisions for their own ends, that they might fish in troubled waters, and keep the church, by its divisions, in a state of weakness, lest it should be able to offend them: and to show the necessity and means of union. But the plainness and nearness, I heard, was displeasing to him and his courtiers; yet they bore with it.

“A while after, Cromwell sent to speak with me; and when I came, in the presence only of three of his chief men, he began a long and tedious speech to me of God’s providence in the change of the government, and how God had owned it, and what great things had been done at home and abroad, in the peace with Spain and Holland, &c. When he had wearied us all with speaking thus slowly about an hour, I told him it was too great condescension to acquaint me so fully with all these matters which were above me, but that we took our ancient monarchy to be a blessing, and not an evil to the land, and humbly craved his patience,

that I might ask him how England had ever forfeited that blessing, and unto whom the forfeiture was made? I was led to speak of the species of government only, for they had lately made it treason by a law to speak for the person of the king. Upon that question he was awakened into some passion, and told me it was no forfeiture, but God had changed it as pleased him; and then he let fly at the parliament, which thwarted him; and especially by name at four or five of those members who were my chief acquaintance; and I presumed to defend them against his passion; and thus four or five hours were spent.

“A few days after, he sent for me again, to hear my judgment about liberty of conscience, which he pretended to be most zealous for, before almost all his privy council, where, after another slow, tedious speech of his, I told him a little of my judgment.”

Baxter was also consulted by various private individuals on cases of conscience, which he was requested to solve. To these he lent a willing ear, and administered suitable advice; or he replied to them in suitable and interesting letters. This must have occupied his time considerably. Besides, during his residence at Kidderminster, and while pursuing his indefatigable labors among his flock, he wrote and published nearly *sixty different works*, many of them quarto volumes of considerable size. Among these may be specially enumerated, in addition to those already noticed, his “Call to the Unconverted,”* his “Treatise on Conversion,” “On Self-denial,” on “Crucifying the World,” on “Peace of Conscience,” &c. &c. &c.

These herculean labors seem incredible. But for the

* Published by the American Tract Society.

existence of the works themselves, his own declarations, and the concurring testimony of his several biographers, it would have been deemed impossible that, with his enfeebled health and incessant pain, he could have accomplished so much in so short a time.

His own account of his general labors shows at once his piety and devotedness, his spirit and energy, his zeal and perseverance. He remarks :

“But all these my labors, except my private conferences with the families, even preaching and preparing for it, were but my recreations, and, as it were, the work of my spare hours ; for my writings were my chief daily labor, which yet went the more slowly on, that I never one hour had an amanuensis to dictate to, and especially because my weakness took up so much of my time. For all the pains that my infirmities ever brought upon me, were never half so grievous an affliction to me as the unavoidable loss of my time which they occasioned.”

His treatise on “Self-denial” originated in his deep conviction of the “breadth, and length, and depth of the radical, universal, odious sin of selfishness.” Under this conviction he preached a series of sermons on the subject, and, at the urgent entreaty of his friends, he published them in the form they now assume. He says that the work “found better acceptance than most of his others, but yet prevented not the ruin of church and state, and millions of souls by that sin.”

Previous to this he had published his work on “Conversion.” This he says “was taken from plain sermons which Mr. Baldwin had transcribed out of my notes. And though I had no leisure, in this or other writings, to take much care of the style, nor to add any ornaments, or citations of authors, I thought it might better

pass as it was, than not at all; and that i the author missed of the applause of the learned, yet the book might be profitable to the ignorant, as it proved, through the great mercy of God."

Apologizing for the plainness and earnestness of his manner, he observes, "The commonness and the greatness of men's necessity commanded me to do any thing that I could for their relief, and to bring forth some water to cast upon this fire, though I had not at hand a silver vessel to carry it in, nor thought it the most fit. The plainest words are the most profitable oratory in the weightiest matters. Fineness is for ornament, and delicacy for delight; but they answer not necessity, though sometimes they may modestly attend that which answers it. Yea, when they are conjunct, it is hard for the necessitous hearer or reader to observe the matter of ornament and delicacy, and not to be carried from the matter of necessity; and to hear or read a neat, concise, sententious discourse, and not to be hurt by it; for it usually hinders the due operation of the matter, keeps it from the heart, stops it in the fancy, and makes it seem as light as the style. We use not compliments when we run to quench a common fire, nor do we call men to escape from it by an eloquent speech. If we see a man fall into fire or water, we regard not the manner of plucking him out, but lay hands upon him as we can, without delay."

Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted" was made remarkably useful. He says, "The occasion of this was my converse with Bishop Usher, while I was at London, who, much approving my method or directions for peace of conscience, was importunate with me to write directions suited to the various states of Christians and also against particular sins. I revered the

man, but disregarded these persuasions, supposing I could do nothing but what was done as well or better already. But when he was dead, his words went deeper to my mind, and I purposed to obey his counsel; yet so as that to the first sort of men, the ungodly, I thought vehement persuasions meeter than directions only. And so for such I published this little book, which God has blessed with unexpected success beyond all the rest that I have written, except the *Saints' Rest*. In a little more than a year there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since, besides many thousands by stolen impressions, which men stole for lucre's sake. Through God's mercy I have had information of almost whole households converted by this small book, which I set so light by. And as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland were not mercy enough to me, God, since I was silenced, has sent it over on his message to many beyond the seas; for when Mr. Eliot had printed the Bible in the Indian language, he next translated this my '*Call to the Unconverted,*' as he wrote to us here."

In addition to its usefulness mentioned by Baxter himself, Dr. Bates relates an instance of six brothers being converted at one time by this invaluable book. To this work, multitudes now in glory, and many advancing thither, stand indebted for their first serious impressions. Urged by its awful denunciations, they have fled from the "city of destruction;" they have sought refuge at the cross of Calvary. Like the preaching of John, it awakens, alarms, and terrifies, that it may lead to peace, holiness, and glory, through Christ.

Among other methods of doing good, Baxter adopted the plan which is now so generally employed, of

publishing small tracts, broadsheets, or handbills. He published various broadsheets, and had them affixed to walls and public buildings, that the attention of passengers might be arrested, and that those who had no leisure for larger works, or were indisposed to purchase treatises, might be informed, edified, and saved. This plan he adopted with great success during the raging of the plague.

This was certainly the most active, useful, and important period of his life. His labors subsequently to this were of a more chequered, desultory, and less obvious character. Their results, though undoubtedly great, inasmuch as he labored with the same zeal, piety, and devotedness as heretofore, yet could not be perceived so manifestly as when his efforts were concentrated in one spot, and were superintended by his untiring pastoral vigilance. The time of persecution for conscience' sake was at hand. He therefore, in common with multitudes of his brethren, was obliged to labor in such places, and on such occasions only, as the providence of God pointed out. But these labors were not in vain, for, as in days of old, they "that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word."

CHAPTER IV.

HIS ENGAGEMENTS AFTER LEAVING KIDDERMINSTER.

BAXTER had acquired great celebrity, both as a preacher and writer. He was known, moreover, to be

an ardent friend to civil and ecclesiastical peace. Hence he was frequently consulted on these subjects, not only by ministers, but by the higher powers. On various occasions he went to London, and it would seem chiefly on business relating both to the church and the nation. Early in April, 1660, he left Kidderminster, and reached London on the 13th of that month. The reason of his leaving is not stated, but it appears evidently to have been in connexion with the state of public affairs.

It was a saying of Baxter's, that we are "no more choosers of our employments than of our successes." The truth of this observation he was now especially called to verify by his own experience. On reaching London he was consulted on the subject of the (king's) "Restoration." This event he, in common with multitudes of his brethren, was desirous of seeing accomplished.

The new parliament appointed a day of fasting and prayer, and required Baxter to preach before them on the occasion. This occurred the day before the bill was passed for the return of the exiled monarch. Shortly after he was called to preach a thanksgiving sermon, on Monk's success, at St. Paul's, before the lord mayor and aldermen. Neither of the sermons appear to have given entire satisfaction. His moderate views displeased partizans of all sides: some charged him with sedition; others with vacillation and temporizing in politics. He was, however, a friend to the king, and rejoiced in the prospect of his restoration. He used all his efforts to promote its accomplishment.

When king Charles was restored, amid the general acclamations of the nation, several of the Presbyterian ministers were made chaplains in ordinary to him,

among whom was Baxter. His certificate of appointment to the office is dated June 26, 1660. Various conferences were held by Baxter and his friends, to promote a union between episcopacy and presbyterianism. A meeting was held on the subject, in the presence of Charles, at which Baxter was the chief speaker. His address on the occasion is distinguished alike by its piety and fidelity. He was desirous of promoting and securing the religious liberties of the people, and of preventing those measures which he perceived were contemplated to remove many of the most holy and zealous preachers from their flocks. The following passage from his address to the king shows the efforts that had been made to preserve the Gospel ministry during the commonwealth, and his desire that, under the dominion of their rightful monarch, the same invaluable privilege might be preserved.

“ I presumed to tell him (his majesty) that the people we spake for were such as were contented with an interest in heaven, and the liberty and advantages of the Gospel to promote it; and if this were taken from them, and they were deprived of their faithful pastors, and liberty of worshipping God, they would consider themselves undone in this world, whatever plenty else they should enjoy; and the hearts of his most faithful subjects, who hoped for his help, would even be broken; and that we doubted not but his majesty desired to govern a people made happy by him, and not a broken-hearted people, that considered themselves undone by the loss of that which is dearer to them than all the riches of the world. And I presumed to tell him that the late usurpers that were over us, so well understood their own interest, that, to promote it, they had found this way of doing good to be the most effectual means,

and had placed and encouraged many thousand faithful ministers in the church, even such as detested their usurpation. And so far had they attained their ends hereby, that it was the principal means of their interest in the people, and the good opinion that any had conceived of them; and those of them that had taken the contrary course, had thereby broken themselves to pieces. Wherefore I humbly craved his majesty's patience that we might have the freedom to request of him that, as he was our lawful king, in whom all his people, save a few inconsiderable persons, were prepared to centre, as weary of their divisions, and glad of the satisfactory means of union in him, so he would be pleased to undertake this blessed work of promoting their holiness and concord; for it was not faction or disobedience which we desired him to indulge. And that he would never suffer himself to be tempted to undo the good which Cromwell or any other had done, because they were usurpers that did it; or discountenance a faithful ministry because his enemies had set them up. But that he would rather outgo them in doing good, and opposing and rejecting the ignorant and ungodly, of what opinion or party soever. For the people whose cause we recommended to him, had their eyes on him as the officer of God, to defend them in the possession of the helps of their salvation; which, if he were pleased to vouchsafe them, their estates and lives would be cheerfully offered to his service."

"The king gave us not only a free audience, but as gracious an answer as we could expect; professing his gladness to hear our inclinations to agreement, and his resolution to do his part to bring us together; and that it must not be by bringing one party over to the other,

but by abating somewhat on both sides, and meeting in the midway ; and that, if it were not accomplished, it should be of ourselves, and not of him : nay, that he was resolved to see it brought to pass, and that he would draw us together himself : with some more to this purpose. Insomuch that old Mr. Ash burst out into tears with joy, and could not forbear expressing what gladness this promise of his majesty had put into his heart."

Proposals of agreement were submitted to the king and his advisers, but without effect. Subsequently to this, Baxter was offered a bishopric by the lord chancellor ; but this, for various reasons, he declined. He did not consider it "as a thing unlawful in itself," but he thought he "could better serve the church without it." In the letter in which he declines episcopal honors, he begs of the lord chancellor that he might be allowed to preach to his old charge at Kidderminster. He says :

"When I had refused a bishopric, I did it on such reasons as offended not the lord chancellor ; and therefore, instead of it, I presumed to crave his favor to restore me to preach to my people at Kidderminster again, from whence I had been cast out, when many hundreds of others were ejected upon the restoration of all them that had been sequestered. It was but a vicarage ; and the vicar was a poor, unlearned, ignorant, silly reader, that little understood what Christianity and the articles of his creed did signify ; but once a quarter he said something which he called a sermon, which made him the pity or laughter of the people. This man, being unable to preach himself, kept always a curate under him to preach. Before the wars, I had preached there only as a lecturer, and he

was bound in a bond of £500 to pay me £60 per annum, and afterwards he was sequestered, as is before sufficiently declared. My people were so dear to me, and I to them, that I would have been with them upon the lowest lawful terms. Some laughed at me for refusing a bishopric, and petitioning to be a reading vicar's curate. But I had little hopes of so good a condition, at least for any considerable time."

His application, however, proved unsuccessful; for arrangements could not be made between the patron and the chancellor respecting the removal of the old vicar, who retained the charge of four thousand souls, though utterly incompetent for his important duties, and Baxter was left without a charge.

Though not permitted to return to his charge, he nevertheless exerted himself in various ways to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. His attention was, at this period, drawn to the subject of missions among the North American Indians. Eliot the "Apostle of the Indians," and his assistants, have effected much good among the roving tribes of America. Cromwell had entered warmly into the cause, and ordered collections to be made in every parish for the propagation of the Gospel in those regions. Funds were raised, a society was formed and incorporated, and much good was effected. At the "Restoration," some parties, inimical to the truth, endeavored to destroy the institution, and to appropriate the funds to other objects. Baxter, assisted by others, exerted himself to prevent this spoliation; and by his influence at court, succeeded in securing the property, and in restoring the society to its original design.

For his exertions he received a letter of thanks from the Governor of New England, and another from the

venerable Eliot. The latter informs Baxter of his intention to translate the "Call to the Unconverted" into the Indian language, but waited for his permission, his counsel, and his prayers. To this letter Baxter replied. A few extracts from his reply will show the interest that both he and many others felt in the cause of missions in those troublous times.

"Reverend and much honored brother,—Though our sins have separated us from the people of our love and care, and deprived us of all public liberty of preaching the Gospel of our Lord, I greatly rejoice in the liberty, help, and success which Christ has so long vouchsafed you in his work. There is no man on earth whose work I think more honorable than yours. To propagate the Gospel and kingdom of Christ in those dark parts of the world, is a better work than our hating and devouring one another. There are many here that would be ambitious of being your fellow-laborers, but that they are informed you have access to no greater a number of the Indians than you yourself and your present assistants are able to instruct. An honorable gentleman, Mr. Robert Boyle, the governor of the corporation for your work, a man of great learning and worth, and of a very public universal mind, did motion to me a public collection, in all our churches, for the maintaining of such ministers as are willing to go hence to you, while they are learning the Indian languages and laboring in the work, as also to transport them. But I find those backward that I have spoken to about it, partly suspecting it a design of those that would be rid of them; (but if it would promote the work of God, this objection were too carnal to be regarded by good men;) partly fearing that, when the

money is gathered, the work may be frustrated by the alienation of it, but this I think they need not fear so far as to hinder any ; partly because they think there will be nothing considerable gathered, because the people that are unwillingly divorced from their teachers will give nothing to send them farther from them, but specially because they think, on the aforesaid grounds, that there is no work for them to do if they were with you. There are many here, I conjecture, that would be glad to go any where, to Persians, Taftars, Indians, or any unbelieving nation, to propagate the Gospel, if they thought they could be serviceable ; but the defect of their languages is their great discouragement. The industry of the jesuits and friars, and their successes in Congo, Japan, China, &c. shame us all, save you. I should be glad to learn from you how far your Indian tongue extends ; how large or populous the country is that uses it, if it be known ; and whether it reach only to a few scattered neighbors, who cannot themselves convey their knowledge far because of other languages. We very much rejoice in your happy work, the translation of the Bible, and bless God that hath strengthened you to finish it. If any thing of mine may be honored to contribute in the least measure to your blessed work, I shall have great cause to be thankful to God, and wholly submit the alteration and use of it to your wisdom."

The state of the heathen appears to have occupied the thoughts of Baxter through the whole course of his ministry. Numerous allusions and references to the subject are found in his writings. In the preface to his work entitled the "Reasons of the Christian Religion," he states that his desire to promote "the conversion of idolaters and infidels to God and the

Christian faith," was one of the reasons which prompted him to write that work. "The doleful thought that five parts of the world were still heathens and Mohammedans, and that Christian princes and preachers did no more for their recovery," awakened the most painful anxiety and distress in his mind. In his work, "How to do Good to Many," &c. he asks, "Is it not possible, at least, to help the poor ignorant Armenians, Greeks, Muscovites, and other Christians, who have no printing among them, nor much preaching and knowledge; and for want of printing, have very few Bibles, even for their churches or ministers? Could nothing be done to get some Bibles, catechisms, and practical books printed in their own tongues, and given among them? I know there is difficulty in the way; but money, and willingness, and diligence, might do something. Might not something be done in other plantations, as well as in New-England, towards the conversion of the natives there? Might not some skillful, zealous preachers be sent thither, who would promote serious piety among those of the English that have too little of it, teach the natives the Gospel, and our planters how to behave themselves so as to win souls to Christ?"

How powerfully affecting, and yet how truly applicable, even at the present hour, is the following passage, contained in his life!—"It would make a believer's heart bleed, if any thing in the world will do it, to think that five parts in six of the world are still heathens, Mohammedans, and infidels, and that the wicked lives of Christians, with fopperies, ignorance, and divisions, form the great impediment to their conversion! to read and hear travelers and merchants tell that the Banians, and other heathens in Hindostan,

Cambaia, and many other lands, and the Mohammedans adjoining to the Greeks, and the Abyssinians, &c. do commonly fly from Christianity, and say, 'God will not save us if we be Christians, for Christians are drunkards, and proud, and deceivers,' &c. and that the Mohammedans and many heathens have more, both of devotion and honesty, than nominal Christians that live among them! O wretched men, calling themselves after the name of Christ! that are not content to damn themselves, but thus lay stumbling-blocks before the world! It were better for these men that they had never been born!

At the close of his life, and on the near approach of eternity, his mind was deeply interested on this important subject. The unbounded benevolence of his heart is poured forth in the following extract from his solemn review of his own character, made in his last days:

"My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable world, and more drawn out in desire of their conversion, than heretofore. I was wont to look but little farther than England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world: or, if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now, as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of the Lord's prayer, so there is nothing that lies so heavy upon my heart as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God's providence to me, that he so far forsakes almost all the world, and confines his special favor to so few; that so small a part of the world has the profession of Christianity, in comparison of heathens, Mohammedans, and infidels! and that, among professed Christians, there are

so few that are saved from gross delusions, and have any competent knowledge; and that among those there are so few that are seriously religious, and truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations, or of the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, Mohammedan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayers is so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Nor was I ever before so sensible what a plague the division of languages was, which hinders our speaking to them for their conversion; nor what a great sin tyranny is, which keeps out the Gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartars, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland and Ireland. There being no employment in the world so desirable in my eyes, as to labor for the winning of such miserable souls, which makes me greatly honor Mr. John Eliot, the apostle of the Indians in New-England, and whoever else have labored in such work."

Baxter almost despaired of the conversion of the world. The obstacles to missionary enterprise were at that time insurmountable. "He that surveys the present state of the earth," writes Baxter to his friend Eliot, "and considers that scarcely a sixth part is Christian, and how small a part of them have much of the power of godliness, will be ready to think that Christ has called almost all his chosen, and is ready

to forsake the earth, rather than that he intends us such blessed days as we desire." But "what hath God wrought!" How great the change in the state of religion, both at home and abroad, since the days of Baxter! Persecution has fled; religion has revived; the missionary spirit has been enkindled; prayer has been offered; money has been contributed; commerce has presented facilities for introducing the Gospel into all parts of the earth; wide and effectual doors have been opened; missionaries have gone forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and great success has attended their labors: so that we are evidently approaching nearer to the period when the proclamation shall be made, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

About this period the celebrated "Savoy Conference" was held. The object was to effect a reconciliation between the different religious parties, that they might be united in one common profession of Christianity. At this conference Baxter took a prominent part. He was sincerely desirous for the peace of the church, and that an accommodation should ensue. For this purpose he submitted various propositions, but without effect: and, after some weeks' deliberation, the conference was broken up, without the least hope or possibility, under existing circumstances, of reconciliation. Baxter was charged by his antagonists with "speaking too boldly, and too long;" but this he accounted not a crime, but a virtue. "I thought it," says he, "a cause I could cheerfully suffer for; and should as willingly be a martyr for charity as for faith."

This was the last public and authorized attempt to promote peace and unity by argument and persuasion.

Thenceforward other measures were tried to effect so desirable an object, and, most unhappily, the divergence of the parties became greater than ever.

From the termination of the "Savoy Conference," the case of the dissidents became more trying and perplexing. They were calumniated and charged with preaching sedition, or with forming plots against the government. Baxter, whose loyalty was unimpeachable, and whose ruling passion was a desire for peace, whose very soul was love, appears to have been particularly marked as an object for the shafts of calumny. He says: "So vehement was the endeavor in court, city, and country, to make me contemptible and odious, as if the authors had thought that the safety either of church or state did lie upon it, and all would have been safe if I were but vilified and hated. So that any stranger that had but heard and seen all this, would have asked, What monster of villany is this man? and what is the wickedness that he is guilty of? Yet was I never questioned to this day before a magistrate. Nor do my adversaries charge me with any personal wrong to them; nor did they ever accuse me of any heresy, nor much contemn my judgment, nor ever accuse my life, but for preaching where another had been sequestered that was an insufficient reader, and for preaching to the soldiers of the parliament; though none of them knew my business there, nor the service that I did them. These are all the crimes, besides my writings, that I ever knew they charged my life with."

"Though no one accused me of any thing, nor spake a word to me of it, being (they knew I had long been) near a hundred miles off, yet did they defame me all over the land, as guilty of a plot; and when men were taken up and sent to prison, in other countries, it was

said to be for Baxter's plot: so easy was it, and so necessary a thing it seemed then, to cast reproach upon my name."

During the two years of his residence in London, previous to his final ejection, Baxter preached in various places, as opportunities presented themselves.

He says: "Being removed from my ancient flock in Worcestershire, and yet being uncertain whether I might return to them or not, I refused to take any other charge, but preached up and down London, for nothing, according as I was invited. When I had done thus above a year, I thought a fixed place was better, and so I joined with Dr. Bates, at St. Dunstan's in the West, in Fleet-street, and preached once a week, for which the people allowed me some maintenance. Before this time I scarcely ever preached a sermon in the city.

"The congregations being crowded, was that which provoked envy to accuse me; and one day the crowd drove me from my place. In the midst of a sermon at Dunstan's church, a little lime and dust, and perhaps a piece of a brick or two, fell down in the steeple or belfry, which alarmed the congregation with the idea that the steeple and church were falling; and indeed, in their confusion and haste to get away, the noise of the feet in the galleries sounded like the falling of the stones. I sat still in the pulpit, seeing and pitying their terror; and, as soon as I could be heard, I entreated their silence, and went on. The people were no sooner quieted, and got in again, and the auditory composed, but a wainscot bench, near the communion-table, broke with the weight of those who stood upon it; the noise renewed the fear, and they were worse disordered than before; so that one old woman was heard, at the church

door, asking forgiveness of God for not taking the first warning, and promising, if God would deliver her this once, she would take heed of coming thither again. When they were again quieted I went on. But the church having before an ill name, as very old, and rotten, and dangerous, it was agreed to pull down all the roof and repair the building, which is now much more commodious.

“While these repairs were made I preached out my quarter at Bride’s church, in the other end of Fleet-street; where the common prayer being used by the curate before sermon, I occasioned abundance to be at common prayer, who before avoided it. And yet accusations against me still continued.

“On the week days, Mr. Ashurst, with about twenty more citizens, desired me to preach a lecture in Milk street, for which they allowed me forty pounds per annum, which I continued near a year, till we were all silenced. And at the same time I preached once every Lord’s day at Blackfriars, where Mr. Gibbons, a judicious man, was minister. In Milk-street I took money, because it came not from the parishioners, but strangers, and so was no wrong to the minister, Mr. Vincent a very holy, blameless man. But at Blackfriars I never took a penny, because it was the parishioners who called me, who would else be less able and ready to help their worthy pastor, who went to God by a consumption, a little after he was silenced. At these two churches I ended the course of my public ministry, unless God cause an undeserved resurrection.”

“Shortly after our disputation at the Savoy, I went to Rickmansworth, in Hertfordshire, and preached there but once, upon Matt. 22 : 12, ‘And he was speechless;’ where I spake not a word that was any nearer

kin to sedition, or that had any greater tendency to provoke them, than by showing 'that wicked men, and the refusers of grace, however they may now have many things to say to excuse their sins, will at last be speechless before God.'" Yet did the bishop of Worcester tell me, when he silenced me, that the bishop of London had showed him letters from one of the hearers, assuring him that I preached seditiously: so little security was any man's innocency to his reputation, if he had but one auditor that desired to get favor by accusing him.

"Shortly after my return to London I went into Worcestershire, to try whether it were possible to have any honest terms from the reading vicar there, that I might preach to my former flock; but when I had preached twice or thrice, he denied me liberty to preach any more. I offered him to take my lecture, which he was bound to allow me, under a bond of five hundred pounds, but he refused it. I next offered him to be his curate, and he refused it. I next offered him to preach for nothing, and he refused it. And lastly, I desired leave but once to administer the Lord's supper to the people, and preach my farewell sermon to them, but he would not consent. At last I understood that he was directed by his superiors to do what he did. But Mr. Baldwin, an able preacher whom I left there, was yet permitted.

"At that time, my aged father lying in great pain of the stone and strangury, I went to visit him, twenty miles further. And while I was there Mr. Baldwin came to me, and told me that he also was forbidden to preach. We both returned to Kidderminster."

"Having parted with my dear flock, I need not say with mutual tears, I left Mr Baldwin to live privately

among them, and oversee them in my stead, and visit them from house to house; advising them, notwithstanding all the injuries they had received, and all the failings of the ministers that preached to them, and the defects of the present way of worship, that yet they should keep to the public assemblies, and make use of such helps as might be had in public, together with their private helps."

The great crisis, which was foreseen by many, had now arrived. The parliamentary attempt to promote ecclesiastical peace, by the "Act of Uniformity," demanding an oath of absolute subjection to every requisition of the church, ended in the ejection of two thousand of the best and holiest ministers in the land from their livings and labors. Baxter determined on not taking the oath, and hence relinquished public preaching as soon as the act was passed, and before it came into operation. His reason for so doing, he states to be, that as his example was looked to by many throughout the country, it might be known that he could not conform.

In the earlier period of his ministry Baxter had resolved not to enter into the married state, that he might pursue his pastoral and ministerial labors with less anxiety and interruption. After his ejection, however, having no public charge, and seeing little prospect of ever being able to resume his ministerial engagements, he deemed himself at liberty, and that it would conduce to his comfort, to be united in the bonds of matrimony. He married Miss Charlton, a lady who, though much younger than himself, proved to be in every respect a suitable partner for this eminent saint.

His marriage excited much curiosity and remark throughout the kingdom; and "I think," he observes,

“the king’s marriage was scarce more talked of than mine.” He and his wife lived a very unsettled life; being obliged, on account of persecutions, frequently to remove from one place of residence to another.

He says: “Having lived three years and more in London since I left Kidderminster, but only three quarters of a year since my marriage, and finding it neither agree with my health or studies, the one being brought very low, and the other interrupted, and all public service being at an end, I betook myself to live in the country, at Acton, that I might set myself to writing, and do what service I could for posterity, and live, as much as possibly I could, out of the world. Thither I came, 1663, July 14, where I followed my studies privately in quietness, and went every Lord’s day to the public assembly, when there was any preaching or catechising, and spent the rest of the day with my family, and a few poor neighbors that came in; spending now and then a day in London. And the next year, 1664, I had the company of divers godly faithful friends that tabled with me in summer, with whom I solaced myself with much content.”

“On March 26, being the Lord’s day, 1665, as I was preaching in a private house, where we received the Lord’s supper, a bullet came in at the window among us, and passed by me, and narrowly missed the head of a sister-in-law of mine that was there, and hurt none of us; and we could never discover whence it came.

“In June following, an ancient gentlewoman, with her sons and daughter, came four miles in her coach, to hear me preach in my family, as out of special respect to me. It happened that, contrary to our custom, we let her knock long at the door, and did not

open it; and so a second time, when she had gone away and came again; and the third time she came, we had ended. She was so earnest to know when she might come again to hear me, that I appointed her a time. But before she came, I had secret intelligence, from one that was nigh her, that she came with a heart exceeding full of malice, resolving, if possible, to do me what mischief she could by accusation; and so that danger was avoided."

The "plague of London" now burst forth with tremendous fury, on which Baxter thus remarks:

"And now, after all the breaches on the churches, the ejection of the ministers, and impenitency under all, wars, and plague, and danger of famine began all at once on us. War with the Hollanders, which yet continues; and the driest winter, spring, and summer that ever man alive knew, or our forefathers mention of late ages; so that the grounds were burnt, like the highways, where the cattle should have fed! The meadow grounds, where I lived, bare but four loads of hay, which before bare forty. The plague has seized on the most famous and most excellent city in Christendom, and at this time eight thousand die of all diseases in a week. It has scattered and consumed the inhabitants, multitudes being dead and fled. The calamities and cries of the diseased and impoverished are not to be conceived by those that are absent from them! Every man is a terror to his neighbor and himself; for God, for our sins, is a terror to us all. O! how is London, the place which God has honored with his Gospel above all the places of the earth, laid in low horrors, and wasted almost to desolation by the wrath of God, whom England hath contemned; and a God-hating generation are consumed in their sins, and the

righteous are also taken away, as from greater evil yet to come."

"The number that died in London alone was about a hundred thousand. The richer sort removing out of the city, the greatest blow fell on the poor. At first, so few of the most religious were taken away, that, according to the mode of too many such, they began to be puffed up, and boast of the great difference which God made; but quickly after, they all fell alike. Yet not many pious ministers were taken away: I remember but three, who were all of my own acquaintance.

"It is scarcely possible for people that live in a time of health and security, to apprehend the dreadfulness of that pestilence! How fearful people were, thirty or forty, if not a hundred miles from London, of any thing that they bought from any mercer's or draper's shop! or of any goods that were brought to them! or of any person that came to their houses! How they would shut their doors against their friends! and if a man passed over the fields, how one would avoid another, as we did in the time of wars; and how every man was a terror to another! O how sinfully unthankful are we for our quiet societies, habitations, and health!"

Many of the ejected ministers seized the opportunity of preaching in the neglected or deserted pulpits, and in the public places of resort, to the terror-stricken inhabitants of London, and blessed results followed. "Those heard them one day often, that were sick the next, and quickly died. The face of death so awakened both preachers and hearers, that preachers exceeded themselves in fervent preaching, and the people crowded constantly to hear them; and all was done with such great seriousness that, through the blessing of

God, many were converted from their carelessness, impenitency, and youthful lusts and vanities ; and religion took such a hold on the people's hearts as could never afterwards be loosed."

When the plague reached Acton, in July, Mr. Baxter retired to Hampden, in Bucks, where he continued with his friend Mr. Hampden till the following March. The plague, he says, "having ceased on March 1st following, I returned home, and found the churchyard like a ploughed field with graves, and many of my neighbors dead ; but my house, near the churchyard, uninfected, and that part of my family which I left here, all safe, through the great mercy of God."

Scarcely had the plague ceased its ravages before the great fire commenced its destructive career in London. Churches in great numbers were destroyed in the general conflagration. The zealous, though silenced watchmen, ventured, amid the ashes of a ruined city, to urge the inhabitants to flee from the "wrath to come," and to seek, in their impoverished condition, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The distress occasioned by these calamities was great. "Many thousands were cast into utter want and beggary, and many thousands of the formerly rich were disabled from relieving them." To the friends of Christ in London, the silenced ministers in the country had been accustomed to look for assistance in their distresses. By these providences their resources were in a measure dried up. But, though enduring dreadful privations, few, if any, were suffered to perish through want. Baxter says :

"Whilst I was living at Acton, as long as the act against conventicles was in force, though I preached to my family, few of the town came to hear me, part-

ly because they thought it would endanger me, and partly for fear of suffering themselves, but especially because they were an ignorant poor people, and had no appetite for such things. But when the act was expired, there came so many that I wanted room; and when once they had come and heard, they afterwards came constantly; insomuch that in a little time there was a great number of them that seemed very seriously affected with the things they heard; and almost all the town, besides multitudes from Brentford and the neighboring places, came."

He attended the services of the church, and between the interval of service preached in his own house to as many as chose to come. This gave umbrage to the minister. "It pleased the parson," says Baxter, "that I came to church, and brought others with me; but he was not able to bear the sight of people's crowding into my house, though they heard him also; so that, though he spoke kindly to me, and we lived in seeming love and peace while he was there, yet he could not long endure it. And when I had brought the people to church to hear him, he would fall upon them with groundless reproaches, as if he had done it purposely to drive them away; and yet thought that my preaching to them, because it was in a private house, did all the mischief, though he never accused me of any thing that I spake. For I preached nothing but Christianity and submission to our superiors, faith, repentance, hope, love, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, and obedience."

During his residence at Acton, Baxter became acquainted with Lord Chief Justice Hale, who occupied the house adjoining his own. With his simplicity, integrity, piety, and learning, he was delighted and

charmed. He denominates him "the pillar of justice the refuge of the subject who feared oppression, and one of the greatest honors of his majesty's government." His lordship, too, appears to have been equally interested in the character of his neighbor. His avowed esteem and respect for the despised nonconformist was a means of encouraging and strengthening the hands of Baxter. "When the people crowded in and out of my house to hear, he openly showed me such great respect before them at the door, and never spake a word against it, as was no small encouragement to the common people to go on; though the other sort muttered that a judge should seem so far to countenance that which they took to be against the law."

CHAPTER V.

HIS PERSECUTIONS, TRIAL, AND DEATH.

At length Baxter's preaching at Acton could no longer be connived at. Information was laid against him, and a warrant was issued for his apprehension. He was taken before two justices of the peace. "When I came," he writes, "they shut out all persons from the room, and would not give leave for any one person, no, not their own clerk or servant, or the constable, to hear a word that was said between us. Then they told me that I was convicted of keeping conventicles contrary to law, and so they would tender me

the Oxford oath. I desired my accusers might come face to face, and that I might see and speak with the witnesses who testified that I kept conventicles contrary to the law, which I denied, as far as I understood law ; but they would not grant it. I pressed that I might speak in the hearing of some witnesses, and not in secret ; for I supposed that they were my judges, and that their presence and business made the place a place of judicature, where none should be excluded, or at least some should be admitted. But I could not prevail. Had I resolved on silence, they were resolved to proceed ; and I thought a Christian should rather submit to violence, and give place to injuries, than stand upon his right, when it will give others occasion to account him obstinate. I asked them whether I might freely speak for myself, and they said yea ; but, when I began to speak, still interrupted me, and put me by. But, with much importunity, I got them once to hear me, while I told them why I took not my meeting to be contrary to law, and why the Oxford act concerned me not, and they had no power to put that oath on me by the act ; but all the answer I could get was, 'That they were satisfied of what they did.' And when, among other reasonings against their course, I told them, though Christ's ministers had, in many ages, been men esteemed and used as we now are, and their afflictors had insulted over them, the providence of God had still so ordered it that the names and memory of their silencers and afflictors have been left to posterity for a reproach, insomuch that I wondered that those who fear not God, and care not for their own or the people's souls, should yet be so careless of their fame, when honor seems so great a matter with them. To which Ross answered,

that he desired no greater honor to his name, than that it should be remembered of him that he did this against me, and such as I, which he was doing."

The result of this interview was, that Baxter was fully committed, for six months, to the New Prison, Clerkenwell. He begged that his liberty might be granted till the following Monday; but as he would not promise not to preach on the intervening Lord's day, his request was denied.

The inhabitants of Acton were grieved at the loss of their neighbor, and the more so, as the incumbent of the parish was the means of his imprisonment. "The whole town of Acton were greatly exasperated against the dean when I was going to prison, insomuch that ever since they abhorred him as a selfish persecutor. Nor could he devise to do more to hinder the success of his (seldom) preaching there. But it was his own choice: 'Let them hate me, so they fear me.' And so I finally left that place, being grieved most that Satan had prevailed to stop the poor people in such hopeful beginnings of a common reformation, and that I was to be deprived of the exceeding grateful neighborhood of the Lord Chief Justice Hale, who could scarce refrain tears when he heard of the first warrant for my appearance.

"My imprisonment was, at present, no great suffering to me, for I had an honest jailer, who showed me all the kindness he could. I had a large room, and the liberty of walking in a fair garden; and my wife was never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison, and was very much against my seeking to be released; and she had brought so many necessaries, that we kept house as contentedly and as comfortably as at home, though in a narrower room; and I had

the sight of more of my friends in a day, than I had at home in half a year."

Efforts were made, by his friends, to procure his release, which, in consequence of some informalities in his commitment, were successful. His reflections on his imprisonment show his piety and submission.

"While I stayed in prison, I saw somewhat to blame myself for, and somewhat to wonder at others for, and somewhat to advise my visitors about.

"I blamed myself that I was no more sensible of the spiritual part of my affliction; such as the interruption of my work among the poor people from whom I was removed, and the advantage Satan had got against them, and the loss of my own public liberty, for worshiping in the assemblies of God's people.

"I marvelled at some who suffered more than I, as Mr. Rutherford, when he was confined to Aberdeen, that their sufferings occasioned them such great joys as they express; which surely was from the free grace of God, to encourage others by their example, and not that their own impatience made them need it much more than at other times. For surely so small a suffering needs not a quarter of the patience which many poor nonconforming ministers, and thousands of others need, that are at liberty; whose own houses, through poverty, are made far worse to them than my prison was to me.

"I found reason to entreat my Acton neighbors not to let their passion against their parson, on my account, hinder them from a due regard to his doctrine, nor from any of the duty which they owed him; and to blame some who aggravated my sufferings, and to tell them that I had no mind to fancy myself hurt before I felt it. I used, at home to confine my-

self voluntarily almost as much. I had ten-fold more public life here, and converse with my friends, than I had at home. If I had been to take lodgings at London for six months, and had not known that this had been a prison, and had knocked at the door and asked for rooms, I should as soon have taken this which I was put into, as most in town, save only for the interruption of my sleep.

“I found cause to desire of my brethren, that, when they suffered, they would remember that the design of Satan was more against their souls than their bodies; that it was not the least of *his* hopes to destroy the love due to those by whom they suffered; to render our superiors odious to the people; and to make us take such a poor suffering as this for a sign of true grace, instead of faith, hope, love, mortification, and a heavenly mind; and that the loss of one grain of love was worse than a long imprisonment. Also that it much more concerned us to be sure that we deserve not suffering, than that we be delivered from it; and to see that we wrong not our superiors, than that they wrong not us; seeing we are not near so much hurt by their severities as we are by our sins. Some told me that they hoped this would make me stand a little further from the prelates and their worship than I had done. To whom I answered, that I wondered that they should think that a prison should change my judgment. I rather thought now it was my duty to set a stricter watch upon my passions, lest they should pervert my judgment, and carry me into extremes in opposition to those who afflicted me. If passion made me lose my love, or my religion, the loss would be my own. And truth did not change because I was in a jail.”

His time was now chiefly occupied in writing and publishing various works on controversial and experimental divinity, and in making some attempts to procure a union between the Presbyterians and Independents. He frequently conversed and corresponded with Dr. Owen on this subject. Owen requested Baxter to draw up a scheme of agreement. This scheme Owen attentively considered, but could not adopt. Baxter's attempts to unite all parties satisfied none.

Baxter, with a few others of the nonconformists, defended the practice of occasional attendance and communion in the parish churches where the Gospel was preached. It was, in consequence, currently reported at this time, that he had actually conformed. He was offered preferment in Scotland by the king. A mitre, a professor's gown, or a surplice, was presented to his choice. But he declined accepting his majesty's offer. His refusal is contained in his letter to the Earl of Lauderdale, through whom the offer was presented.

“My Lord,—Being deeply sensible of your lordship's favors, and in special of your liberal offers for my entertainment in Scotland, I humbly return you my very hearty thanks. But these considerations forbid me to entertain any hopes or further thoughts of such a remove :

“1. The experience of my great weakness and decay of strength, and particularly of this last winter's pain, and how much worse I am in winter than in summer, doth fully persuade me that I should live but a little while in Scotland, and that in a disabled, useless condition, rather keeping my bed than the pulpit.

“2. I am engaged in writing a book, which, if I could hope to live to finish, is almost all the service

that I expect to do God and his church more in the world—a Latin Methodus Theologiæ; and I can hardly hope to live so long, it requiring near a year's labor more. Now, if I should go and spend that one half year, or year, which should finish that work, in travel, and the trouble of such a removal, and then leave my intended work undone, it would disappoint me of the ends of my life; for I live only for work, and therefore should remove only for work, and not for wealth and honor, if ever I remove.

“3. If I were there, all that I could hope for were liberty to preach the Gospel of salvation, and especially in some university among young scholars. But I hear that you have enough already for this work, that are like to do it better than I can.

“4. I have a family, and in it a mother-in-law, eighty years of age, of honorable extraction and great worth, whom I must not neglect, and who cannot travel. And it is to such a one as I, so great a business to remove a family, and all our goods and books so far, as deters me from thinking of it, having paid so dear for removals these eight years as I have done, and being but yesterday settled in a house which I have newly taken, and that with great trouble and loss of time.

“All this concurs to deprive me of this benefit of your lordship's favor. But, my lord, there are other fruits of it, which I am not altogether hopeless of receiving. When I am commanded to pray for kings, and all in authority, I am allowed the ambition of this preferment, which is all that ever I aspired after: ‘to live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.’

“I am weary of the noise of contentious revilers and have often had thoughts to go into a foreign land.

if I could find any, where I might have a healthful air and quietness, that I might but live and die in peace. When I sit in a corner, and meddle with nobody, and hope the world will forget that I am alive, court, city, and country is still filled with clamors against me; and when a preacher wants preferment, his way is to preach or write a book against the nonconformists, and me by name. So that the press and pulpits of some, utter bloody invectives against myself, as if my peace were inconsistent with the kingdom's happiness. And never did my eyes read such impudent untruths, in matter of fact, as these writings contain; and they cry out for answers and reasons of my nonconformity, while they know the law forbids me to answer them unlicensed. I expect not that any favor or justice of my superiors should cure any of this. But a few things I would desire:

"1. If I might but be heard to speak for myself, before I be judged by them, and such things be believed. For to contemn the judgment of my rulers is to dishonor them.

"2. If I might live quietly to follow my private study, and might once again have the use of my books, which I have not seen these ten years, still paying for a room in which they stand at Kidderminster, where they are eaten with worms and rats, having no security for my quiet abode in any place long enough to encourage me to send for them. And if I might have the liberty that every beggar has, to travel from town to town; I mean, but to London, to oversee the press, when any thing of mine is licensed for it. And,

"3. If I be sent to Newgate for preaching Christ's Gospel, (for I dare not sacrilegiously renounce my calling, to which I am consecrated,) that I may have the fa-

vor of a better prison, where I may but walk and write.

“These I should take as very great favors, and acknowledge your lordship my benefactor, if you procure them. For I will not so much injure you as to desire, or my reason as to expect, any greater things; no, not the benefit of the law. I think I broke no law in any of the preachings which I am accused of; and I most confidently think that no law imposes on me the Oxford oath, any more than any conformable minister; and I am past doubting the present mittimus for my imprisonment is quite without law. But if the justices think otherwise now, or at any time, I know no remedy. I have yet a license to preach publicly in London diocess, under the archbishop’s own hand and seal, which is yet valid for occasional sermons, though not for lectures or cures; but I dare not use it, because it is in the bishop’s power to recall it. Would but the bishop, who, one would think, should not be against the preaching of the Gospel, not recall my license, I could preach occasional sermons, which would absolve my conscience from all obligations to private preaching. For it is not maintenance that I expect; I have never received a farthing for my preaching, to my knowledge, since May 1, 1662. I thank God I have food and raiment without being chargeable to any man, which is all that I desire, had I but leave to preach for nothing, and that only where there is a notorious necessity. I humbly crave your lordship’s pardon for this tediousness, and again return you my very great thanks for your great favors; remaining, &c.

“*June 24, 1670.*

RICHARD BAXTER.”

He says: “On October 11, 1672, I fell into a dangerous fit of sickness, which God, in his wonted mer

cy, in time so far removed as to return me to some capacity of service.

“I had till now forborne, for several reasons, to seek a license for preaching from the king, upon the toleration. But when all others had taken theirs, and were settled in London and other places, as they could get opportunity, I delayed no longer, but sent to seek one, on condition I might have it without the title of Independent, Presbyterian, or any other party, but only as a nonconformist. And before I sent, Sir Thomas Player, chamberlain of London, had procured it me without my knowledge or endeavor. I had sought none hitherto.

“1. Because I was unwilling to be, or seem any cause of that way of liberty, if a better might have been had, and therefore would not meddle in it.

“2. I lived ten miles from London, and thought it not just to come and set up a congregation there, till the ministers had fully settled theirs, who had borne the burden there in the times of the raging plague and fire, and other calamities, lest I should draw away any of their auditors, and hinder their maintenance.

“3. I perceived that no one, that ever I heard of till mine, could get a license, unless he would be entitled in it, a Presbyterian, Independent, or of some sect.

“The 19th of November was the first day, after ten years' silence, that I preached in a tolerated public assembly, though not yet tolerated in any consecrated church, but only, against law, in my own house.

“Some merchants set up a Tuesday's lecture in London, to be kept by six ministers at Pinner's Hall, allowing them twenty shillings a piece each sermon, of whom they chose me to be one.”

“January 24, 1672-3, I began a Friday lecture at Mr. Turner’s church in New-street, near Fetter-lane, with great convenience and God’s encouraging blessing; but I never took a penny of money for it of any one. And on the Lord’s days I had no congregation to preach to, but occasionally to any that desire me, being unwilling to set up a church and become the pastor of any, or take maintenance, in this distracted and unsettled way, unless further changes shall manifest it to be my duty. Nor did I ever yet administer the Lord’s supper to any one person, but to my old flock at Kidderminster.”

“On February 20th I took my house in Bloomsbury, in London, and removed thither with my family; God having mercifully given me three years’ great peace among quiet neighbors at Totteridge, and much more health and ease than I expected, and some opportunity to serve him.”

In this situation he continued for some time, employing his flying pen and his unwearied efforts to promote the peace of the churches and to instruct and bless mankind. In April, 1674, he writes, “God has so much increased my languishing, and laid me so low, that I have reason to think that my time on earth will not be long. And O how good has the will of God proved hitherto to me! And will it not be best at last? Experience causes me to say to his praise, ‘Great peace have they that love his law, and nothing shall offend them;’ and though my flesh and heart fail, God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever.

“At this time came out my book called ‘The Poor Man’s Family Book,’ which the remembrance of the great use of Mr. Dent’s ‘Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven,’ now laid by, occasioned me to write for

poor country families, who cannot buy or read many books."

Anxiously bent on doing good, and encouraged by the reception and success his "Poor Man's Family Book" met with, he prepared several other works for the promotion and increase of family religion. He justly believed that domestic piety was of the utmost importance for the maintenance and progress of Christianity. To promote "household religion" he employed all his energies while at Kidderminster. In his "Reformed Pastor," he urges ministers seriously to consider the subject. He says: "The life of religion, and the welfare and glory, both of the church and state, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we shall undo all. What are we like to do ourselves for reforming a congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone, and masters of families neglect that necessary duty of their own by which they are bound to help us? If any good be begun by the ministry in any soul, a careless, prayerless, worldly family, is likely to stifle it, or very much hinder it; whereas, if you could but get the rulers of families to do their duty, to take up the work where you left it, and help it on, what abundance of good might be done! I beseech you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion."

He prosecuted his Master's work with unwearied zeal, though suffering great bodily affliction, and exposed to much vexatious and embarrassing opposition.

He says: "Taking it to be my duty to preach while toleration continues, I removed, the last spring, to London, where my diseases, increasing this winter, a constant head-ache added to the rest, and continuing

strong for about half a year, constrained me to cease my Friday's lecture, and an afternoon sermon on the Lord's days in my house, to my grief; and to preach only one sermon a week, at St. James's market-house, where some had hired an inconvenient place. But I had great encouragement to labor there, because of the notorious necessity of the people; it being the habitation of the most ignorant, atheistical, and popish about London; and because, beyond my expectation, the people generally proved exceedingly willing, and attentive, and tractable, and gave me great hopes of much success."

"On July 5, 1674, at our meeting over St. James's market-house, God vouchsafed us a great deliverance. A main beam, before weakened by the weight of the people, so cracked, that three times they ran in terror out of the room, thinking it was falling; but remembering the like at Dunstan's in the west, I reprov'd their fear as causeless. But the next day, taking up the boards, we found that two rents in the beam were so great that it was a wonder of Providence that the floor had not fallen, and the roof with it, to the destruction of multitudes. The Lord make us thankful!"

"It pleased God to give me marvellous encouragement in my preaching at St. James's. The crack having frightened away most of the richer sort, especially the women, most of the congregation were young men, of the most capable age, who heard with great attention; and many that had not come to church for many years, manifested so great a change, (some papists and divers others, returning public thanks to God for their conversion) as made all my charge and trouble easy to me. Among all the popish, rude, and ignorant people who were inhabitants of those parts, we had

scarcely any that opened their mouths against us, and that did not speak well of the preaching of the word among them ; though, when I came first thither, the most knowing inhabitants assured me that some of the same persons wished my death. Among the ruder sort, a common reformation was noticed in the place, in their conversation as well as in their judgments."

"The dangerous crack over the market-house at St. James's, made many desire that I had a larger safer place for meeting. And though my own dullness, and great backwardness to troublesome business, made me very averse to so great an undertaking, judging that, it being in the face of the court, it would never be endured, yet the great and incessant importunity of many, out of a fervent desire of the good of souls, constrained me to undertake it. And when it was almost finished, in Oxendon-street, Mr. Henry Coventry, one of his majesty's principal secretaries, who had a house joining to it, and was a member of parliament, spake twice against it in the parliament ; but no one seconded him."

"And that we might do the more good, my wife urged the building of another meeting place in Bloomsbury, for Mr. Reed, to be furthered by my sometimes helping him ; the neighborhood being very full of people, rich and poor.

"I was so long wearied with keeping my doors shut against them that came to distrain on my goods for preaching, that I was induced to go from my house, and to sell all my goods, and to hide my library first, and afterwards to sell it. So that if books had been my treasure, and I valued little more on earth, I had been now without a treasure. About twelve years I was driven a hundred miles from them ; and when I

had paid dear for the carriage, after two or three years I was forced to sell them. And the prelates, to hinder me from preaching, deprived me also of these private comforts. But God saw that they were my snare. We brought nothing into the world, and we must carry nothing out.

“I was the more willing to part with goods, books, and all, that I might have nothing to be distrained, and so go on to preach. And accordingly removing my dwelling to the new chapel which I had built, I purposed to venture there to preach, there being forty thousand persons in the parish, as is supposed, more than can hear in the parish church, who have no place to go to for God’s public worship. So that I set not up church against church, but preached to those that must else have none, being unwilling that London should turn atheists, or live worse than infidels. But when I had preached there but once, a resolution was taken to surprise me the next day, and send me for six months to the common jail, upon the act for the Oxford oath. Not knowing of this, it being the hottest part of the year, I agreed to go for a few weeks into the country, twenty miles off. But the night before I should go, I fell so ill that I was induced to send to disappoint both the coach and my intended companion, Mr. Silvester. And when I was thus fully resolved to stay, it pleased God, after the ordinary coach hour, that three men, from three parts of the city, met at my house accidentally, just at the same time, almost to a minute, of whom, if any one had not been there, I had not gone, namely, the coachman again to urge me, Mr. Silvester, whom I had put off, and Dr. Coxe, who compelled me, and told me he would carry me into the coach. It proved a special merciful providence of

God; for after one week of languishing and pain, I had nine weeks greater ease than ever I expected in this world, and greater comfort in my work. My good friend Richard Berisford, Esq. clerk of the exchequer, whose importunity drew me to his house, spared no cost, labor, or kindness for my health or service."

Baxter was now constantly harassed with informations, fines, and warrants of distress, but he bore them all with astonishing meekness and patience. He endeavored to convince and convert the informers and officers, who, on several occasions, came to apprehend him. In some cases his exhortations were successful, if not to their actual conversion, at least to induce them to relinquish their persecuting practices.

A striking instance of his placable and forgiving disposition is given in the following extract. "Keting, the informer, being commonly detested for prosecuting me, was cast into jail for debt, and wrote to me to endeavor his deliverance, which I did; and in his letters says, 'Sir, I assure you I do verily believe that God has bestowed all this affliction on me because I was so vile a wretch as to trouble you. And I assure you I never did a thing in my life that has so much troubled myself as that did. I pray God to forgive me. And truly, I do not think of any that went that way to work, that ever God would favor with his mercy. And truly, without great mercy from God, I do not think that ever I shall thrive or prosper. And I hope you will be pleased to pray to God for me.'"

Baxter considered that the "vows of God were upon him," and that he must continue to preach wherever Divine providence opened a door for the purpose. His obligations to God he considered superior to those by which he was bound to obey the ordinances of man.

and therefore, though forbidden by law, and in despite of persecution, he continued to preach the Gospel to his ignorant and perishing countrymen.

He says: "Being driven from home, and having an old license of the bishop's yet in force, by the countenance of that, and the great industry of Mr. Berisford, I had leave and invitation for ten Lord's days to preach in the churches round about. The first that I preached in, after thirteen years' ejection and prohibition, was Rickmanworth, and after that, at Sarratt, at King's Langley, at Chesham, at Charlfont, and at Amersham, and that often twice a-day. Those heard who had not come to church for seven years; and two or three thousand heard, where scarcely a hundred were wont to come; and with so much attention and willingness, as gave me very great hopes that I never spake to them in vain. And thus soul and body had these special mercies."

"When I had been kept a whole year from preaching in the chapel which I built, on the 16th of April, 1676, I began in another, in a tempestuous time; such was the necessity of the parish of St. Martin's, where about 60,000 souls have no church to go to, nor any public worship of God! How long, Lord!"

"Being denied forcibly the use of the chapel which I had built, I was forced to let it stand empty, and pay thirty pounds per annum for the ground-rent myself, and glad to preach for nothing, near it, at a chapel built by another, formerly in Swallow-street, because it was among the same poor people that had no preaching."

Interruptions and informations were so numerous at Swallow-street that he was obliged to discontinue his labors there. "It pleased God to take away, by tor

ment of the stone, that excellent faithful minister, Mr. Thomas Wadsworth, in Southwark; and just when I was thus kept out at Swallow-street, his flock invited me to Southwark, where, though I refused to be their pastor, I preached many months in peace, there being no justice willing to disturb us."

"When Dr. Lloyd became pastor of St Martin's in the Fields, I was encouraged by Dr. Tillotson to offer him my chapel in Oxendon-street for public worship, which he accepted, to my great satisfaction, and now there is constant preaching there. Be it by conformist or nonconformists, I rejoice that Christ is preached."

His reputation, too, was assailed. He was charged with uttering falsehood, and with the crime of murder! He was able, however, successfully to refute the calumnies, and to confound his calumniators.

About this period, 1681, Baxter was called to endure a severe and trying providence, in the death of his wife. They had lived together nineteen years. She had been his companion in tribulation; his comforter in sorrow. Animated by her piety and her influence, he had persevered in all his attempts to do good. But, now, in the advance of life, in weakened health, in persecution, and in no distant prospect of imprisonment, he was left to pursue his journey alone. She died in the faith and hope of the Gospel, June 17, 1681.

He still pursued his studies and his occasional labors. "Having been for retirement in the country, from July till August 14, 1682, returning in great weakness, I was able only to preach twice, of which the last was in my usual lecture in New-street, and it fell out to be August 24, just that day twenty years, that I, and near two thousand more, had been by law forbidden to preach any more. I was sensible of God's wonderful

mercy that had kept so many of us twenty years in so much liberty and peace, while so many severe laws were in force against us, and so great a number were round about us who wanted neither malice nor power to afflict us. And so I took, that day, my leave of the pulpit and public work, in a thankful congregation. And it is like, indeed, to be my last.

“But after this, when I had ceased preaching, I was, being newly arisen from extremity of pain, suddenly surprised in my house by a poor violent informer, and many constables and officers, who rushed in and apprehended me, and served on me one warrant to seize on my person, for coming within five miles of a corporation; and five more warrants, to distrain for a hundred and ninety pounds for five sermons. They cast my servants into fears, and were about to take all my books and goods, and I contentedly went with them towards the justice to be sent to jail, and left my house to their will. But Dr. Thomas Coxe, meeting me, forced me in again to my couch and bed, and went to five justices and took his oath, without my knowledge, that I could not go to prison without danger of death. Upon that the justices delayed a day, till they could speak with the king, and told him what the doctor had sworn; and the king consented that the present imprisonment should be forborne, that I might die at home. But they executed all their warrants on my books and goods, even the bed that I lay sick on, and sold them all; and some friends paid them as much money as they were prized at, which I repaid.”

“When I borrowed some necessaries I was never the quieter; for they threatened to come upon me again and take all as mine, whosoever it was, which they found in my possession. So that I had no reme-

dy, but utterly to forsake my house, and goods, and all, and take secret lodgings distant in a stranger's house. But having a long lease of my own house, which binds me to pay a greater rent than now it is worth, wherever I go I must pay that rent.

“The separation from my books would have been a greater part of my small affliction, but that I found I was near the end both of that work and life which needeth books, and so I easily let go all. Naked came I into the world, and naked must I go out.

“But I never wanted less what man can give, than when men had taken all. My old friends, and strangers to me, were so liberal, that I was constrained to check their bounty. Their kindness was a surer and larger revenue to me than my own.

“But God was pleased quickly to put me past all fear of man, and all desire of avoiding suffering from them by concealment, by laying on me more himself than man can do. Their imprisonment, with tolerable health, would have seemed a palace to me; and had they put me to death for such a duty as they persecute me for, it would have been a joyful end of my calamity. But day and night I groan and languish under God's just afflicting hand. As waves follow waves in the tempestuous seas, so one pain and danger follows another in this sinful miserable flesh. I die daily, and yet remain alive. God, in his great mercy, knowing my dullness in health and ease, makes it much easier to repent and hate my sin, and loath myself, and contemn the world, and submit to the sentence of death with willingness, than otherwise it was ever like to have been. O how little is it that wrathful enemies can do against us, in comparison of what our sin and the justice of God can do! And O how little is it that

the best and kindest of friends can do for a pained body or a guilty soul, in comparison of one gracious look or word from God! Wo be to him that has no better help than man; and blessed is he whose help and hope is in the Lord."

"While I continued, night and day, under constant pain, and often strong, and under the sentence of approaching death by an incurable disease, which age and great debility yields to, I found great need of the constant exercise of patience by obedient submission to God; and, writing a small Tract of it for my own use, I saw reason to yield to them that desired it might be published, there being especially so common need of 'obedient patience.'"

"Under my daily pains I was drawn to a work which I had never the least thoughts of, and is like to be the last of my life, to write a paraphrase on the New Testament. Mr. John Humphrey having long importuned me to write a paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans, when I had done that, the usefulness of it to myself drew me farther and farther, till I had done all. But having confessed my ignorance of the Revelation, and yet unwilling wholly to omit it, I gave but general notes, with the reasons of my uncertainty in the greatest difficulties, which I know will fall under the sharp censure of many. But truth is more valuable than such men's praises. I fitted the whole, by plainness, to the use of ordinary families.

"After many times deliverance from the sentence of death, on November 20, 1684, in the very entrance of the seventieth year of my age, God was pleased so greatly to increase my painful diseases, as to pass on me the sentence of a painful death. But God turns it to my good, and gives me a greater willingness to die

than I once thought I should ever have attained. The Lord teach me more fully to love his will and rest therein, as much better than my own, that often strives against it.

“A little before this, while I lay in pain and languishing, the justices of sessions sent warrants to apprehend me, about a thousand more being also on the list, to be all bound to good behavior. I thought they would send me six months to prison for not taking the Oxford oath, and dwelling in London, and so I refused to open my chamber door to them, their warrant not being to break it open. But they set six officers at my study door, who watched all night, and kept me from my bed and food; so that the next day I yielded to them, who carried me, scarce able to stand, to their sessions, and bound me, in a four hundred pounds' bond, to good behavior. I desired to know what my crime was, and who were my accusers; but they told me it was for no fault, but to secure the government in evil times; and that they had a list of many suspected persons, who must do the like as well as I. I desired to know for what I was numbered with the suspected, and by whose accusation; but they gave me good words, and would not tell me. I told them I would rather they would send me to jail than put me in circumstances to wrong others by being bound with me in bonds that I was like to break to-morrow; for if there did but five persons come in when I was praying, they would take it for a breach of good behavior. They told me not, if they came on other business unexpectedly, and not to a set meeting; nor yet if we did nothing contrary to law, or the practice of the church. I told them our innocency was not now any security to us. If two beggar-women did but stand in the street

and swear that I spake contrary to the law, though they heard me not, my bonds and liberty were at their will; for I myself, lying on my bed, heard Mr. I. R. preach in a chapel on the other side of my chamber, and yet one Sibil Dash and Elizabeth Cappell swore to the justices that it was another that preached; two miserable poor women that made a trade of it, and had thus sworn against very many worthy persons in Hackney and elsewhere, on which their goods were seized for fines. But to all this I received no answer. I must give bond.

“But all this is so small a part of my suffering, in comparison of what I bear in my flesh, that I could scarce regard it; and it is small in comparison of what others suffer. Many excellent persons die in common jails: thousands are ruined. That holy humble man, Mr. Rosewell, is now under a verdict for death as a traitor for preaching some words, on the witness and oath of Hilton’s wife, and one or two more women, whose husbands live professedly on the trade, for which he claims many hundred or thousand pounds. And not only the man declares, but many of his hearers witness, that no such words were spoken, nor any that did not become a loyal, prudent man.

“December 11, I was forced, in all my pain and weakness, to be carried to the sessions-house, or else my bond of four hundred pounds would have been judged forfeited. And the more moderate justices, that promised my discharge, would none of them be there, but left the work to Sir William Smith and the rest, who openly declared that they had nothing against me, and took me for innocent, but yet I must continue bound, lest others should expect to be discharged also, which I openly refused. But my sureties would be

bound, lest I should die in jail, against my declared will, and so I must continue."

"January 17, I was forced again to be carried to the sessions, and after divers days good words, which put me in expectation of freedom, when I was gone, one justice, Sir ——— Deerham, said it was probable that these persons solicited for my liberty that they might come to hear me in conventicles; and on that they bound me again in a four hundred pounds' bond for above a quarter of a year, and so it is likely to be till I die, or worse; though no one ever accused me for any conventicle or preaching since they took all my books and goods above two years ago, and I, for the most part, keep my bed."

His greatest trial was now hastening. His "Paraphrase on the New Testament" gave great offence in certain quarters, and was made the ground of a trial for sedition.

The following account of this extraordinary trial and its issue are given by Calamy, and in a letter from a person who was present on the occasion:

"On the 28th of February Baxter was committed to the King's-Bench prison, by warrant of Lord Chief Justice Jefferies, for his 'Paraphrase on the New Testament,' which had been printed a little before, and which was described as a scandalous and seditious book against the government. On his commitment by the chief justice's warrant, he applied for a habeas corpus, and having obtained it, he absconded into the country to avoid imprisonment, till the term approached. He was induced to do this from the constant pain he endured, and an apprehension that he could not bear the confinement of a prison.

"On the 6th of May, which was the first day of the

term, he appeared in Westminster-Hall, and an information was then drawn up against him. On the 14th of May he pleaded not guilty to the information. On the 18th of the same month, being much indisposed, it was moved that he might have further time given him before his trial, but this was denied him. He moved for it by his counsel; but Jefferies cried out, in a passion, 'I will not give him a minute's time more, to save his life. We have had to do,' said he, 'with other sorts of persons, but now we have a saint to deal with; and I know how to deal with saints as well as sinners. Yonder,' said he, 'stands Oates in the pillory,' (as he actually did at that very time in the new Palace Yard,) 'and he says he suffers for the truth, and so says Baxter; but if Baxter did but stand on the other side of the pillory with him, I would say, two of the greatest rogues and rascals in the kingdom stood there.'

"On May 30, in the afternoon, Baxter was brought to trial before the lord chief justice at Guild-hall. Sir Henry Ashurst, who would not forsake his own and his father's friend, stood by him all the while. Baxter came first into court, and with all the marks of sincerity and composure, waited for the coming of the lord chief justice, who appeared quickly after, with great indignation in his face.

"'When I saw,' says an eye witness, 'the meek man stand before the flaming eyes and fierce looks of this bigot, I thought of Paul standing before Nero. The barbarous usage which he received drew plenty of tears from my eyes, as well as from others of the auditors and spectators.'

"Jefferies no sooner sat down than a short cause was called and tried; after which the clerk began to read the title of another cause. 'You blockhead,' said

Jefferies, 'the next cause is between Richard Baxter and the king:' upon which Baxter's cause was called.

"On the jury being sworn, Baxter objected to them, as incompetent to his trial, owing to its peculiar nature. The jurymen being tradesmen, and not scholars, he alledged they were incapable of pronouncing whether his 'Paraphrase' was or was not according to the original text. He therefore prayed that he might have a jury of learned men, though the one-half of them should be papists. This objection, as might have been expected, was overruled by the court.

"The king's counsel opened the information at large, with its aggravations. Mr. Pollexfen, Mr. Wallop, Mr. Williams, Mr. Rotherham, Mr. Atwood, and Mr. Phipps, were Baxter's counsel, and had been engaged by Sir Henry Ashurst.

"Pollexfen then rose and addressed the court and the jury. He stated that he was counsel for the prisoner, and felt that he had a very unusual plea to manage. He had been obliged, he said, by the nature of the cause, to consult all our learned commentators, many of whom, learned, pious, and belonging to the church of England too, concurred with Mr. Baxter in his paraphrase of those passages of Scripture which were objected to in the indictment, and by whose help he would be enabled to manage his client's cause. 'I shall begin,' said he, 'with Dr. Hammond: and, gentlemen, though Mr. Baxter made an objection against you, as not fit judges of Greek, which has been overruled, I hope you understand English common sense, and can read.' To which the foreman of the jury made a profound bow, and said, 'Yes, sir.'

"On this the chief justice burst upon Pollexfen like a fury, and told him he should not sit there to hear

him preach. 'No, my lord,' said Pollexfen, 'I am counsel for Mr. Baxter, and shall offer nothing but what is to the point.' 'Why, this is not,' said Jefferies, 'that you cant to the jury beforehand.' 'I beg your lordship's pardon,' said the counsel, 'and shall then proceed to business.' 'Come then,' said Jefferies, 'what do you say to this count? read it, clerk:' referring to the paraphrase on Mark, 12: 38-40. 'Is he not, now, an old knave, to interpret this as belonging to liturgies?' 'So do others,' replied Pollexfen, 'of the church of England, who would be loth so to wrong the cause of liturgies as to make them a novel invention, or not to be able to date them as early as the scribes and pharisees.' 'No, no, Mr. Pollexfen,' said the judge: 'they were long-winded, extempore prayers, such as they used to say when they appropriated God to themselves. "Lord, we are thy people, thy peculiar people, thy dear people." And then he clenched his hands and lifted up his eyes, mimicking their manner, and running on furiously, as he said they used to pray. 'Pollexfen,' said Jefferies, 'this is an old rogue, who has poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine. Don't we know how he preached formerly, "Curse ye Meroz; curse them bitterly that come not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." He encouraged all the women and maids to bring their bodkins and thimbles to carry on their war against the king, of ever blessed memory. An old schismatical knave, a hypocritical villain!'

"Mr. Wallop said that he conceived the matter depending being a point of doctrine, it ought to be referred to the bishop, his ordinary: but if not, he humbly conceived the doctrine was innocent and justifiable, setting aside the inuendos, for which there was no

color, there being no antecedent to refer them to, (*i. e.* no bishop or clergy of the church of England named;) he said the book accused contained many eternal truths: but they who drew the information were the libellers, in applying to the prelates of the church of England those severe things which were written concerning some prelates who deserved the characters which he gave. 'My lord,' said he, 'I humbly conceive the bishops Mr. Baxter speaks of, as your lordship, if you have read church history, must confess, were the plagues of the church and of the world.'

"Mr. Rotherham urged 'that if Mr. Baxter's book had sharp reflections upon the church of Rome by name, but spake well of the prelates of the church of England, it was to be presumed that the sharp reflections were intended only against the prelates of the church of Rome.' The lord chief justice said, 'Baxter was an enemy to the name and thing, the office and persons of bishops.' Rotherham added, that Baxter frequently attended divine service, went to the sacrament, and persuaded others to do so too, as was certainly and publicly known; and had, in the very book so charged, spoken very moderately and honorably of the bishops of the church of England.'

"Baxter added, 'My lord, I have been so moderate with respect to the church of England, that I have incurred the censure of many of the dissenters upon that account.' 'Baxter for bishops!' exclaimed Jefferies, 'that is a merry conceit indeed: turn to it, turn to it. Upon this Rotherham turned to a place where it is said 'that great respect is due to those truly called to be bishops among us; or to that purpose. 'Ay,' said Jefferies, 'this is your Presbyterian cant; *truly called to be bishops*: that is himself, and such rascals, called

to be bishops of Kidderminster, and other such places. Bishops set apart by such factious Presbyterians as himself: a Kidderminster bishop he means.'

"Baxter beginning to speak again, Jefferies reviled him; 'Richard, Richard, dost thou think we'll hear thee poison the court? Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave; thou hast written books enough to load a cart, every one as full of sedition, I might say treason, as an egg is of meat. Hadst thou been whipped out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou pretendest to be a preacher of the Gospel of peace, and thou hast one foot in the grave: it is time for thee to begin to think what account thou intendest to give. But, leave thee to thyself, and I see thou'lt go on as thou hast begun; but, by the grace of God, I'll look after thee. I know thou hast a mighty party, and I see a great many of the brotherhood in corners, waiting to see what will become of their mighty don; and a doctor of the party (looking at Dr. Bates) at your elbow; but, by the grace of Almighty God, I'll crush you all. Come, what do you say for yourself, you old knave? come, speak up! What doth he say? I am not afraid of you, for all the snivelling calves you have about you:' alluding to some persons who were in tears about Mr. Baxter. 'Your lordship need not be,' said the holy man; 'for I'll not hurt you. But these things will surely be understood one day - what fools one sort of protestants are made to persecute the other!' And, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, 'I am not concerned to answer such stuff; but am ready to produce my writings for the confutation of all this; and my life and conversation are known to many in this nation.'

"Mr. Rotherham sitting down, Mr. Atwood began

to show that not one of the passages mentioned in the information ought to be strained to the sense which was put upon them by the innendos; they being more natural when taken in a milder sense: nor could any one of them be applied to the prelates of the church of England, without a very forced construction. 'To prove this, he would have read some of the text: but Jefferies cried out, 'You shan't draw me into a conventicle with your annotations, nor your snivelling parson neither.' 'My lord,' said Mr. Atwood, 'that I may use the best authority, permit me to repeat your lordship's own words in that case.' 'No, you shan't,' said he: 'you need not speak, for you are an author already; though you speak and write impertinently.' Atwood replied, 'I can't help that, my lord, if my talent be no better; but it is my duty to do my best for my client.'

"Jefferies then went on inveighing against what Atwood had published; and Atwood justified it as in defence of the English constitution, declaring that he never disowned any thing that he had written. Jefferies several times ordered him to sit down; but he still went on. 'My lord,' said he, 'I have matter of law to urge for my client.' He then proceeded to cite several cases wherein it had been adjudged that words ought to be taken in the milder sense, and not to be strained by innendos. 'Well,' said Jefferies, when he had done, 'you have had your say.'

"Mr. Williams and Mr. Phipps said nothing, for they saw it was to no purpose. At last Baxter himself said, 'My lord, I think I can clearly answer all that is laid to my charge, and I shall do it briefly. The sum is contained in these few papers, to which I shall add a little by testimony.' But he would not bear a word.

At length the chief justice summed up the matter in a long and fulsome harangue. 'It was notoriously known,' he said, 'there had been a design to ruin the king and the nation. The old game had been renewed; and this person had been the main incendiary. He is as modest now as can be; but time was, when no man was so ready at, "Bind your kings in chains, and your nobles in fetters of iron;" and, "To your tents, O Israel." Gentlemen, (with an oath,) don't let us be gulled twice in an age.' And when he concluded, he told the jury 'that if they in their consciences believed he meant the bishops and clergy of the church of England in the passages which the information referred to, and he could mean nothing else, they must find him guilty. If not, they must find him not guilty.' When he had done, Baxter said to him, 'Does your lordship think any jury will pretend to pass a verdict upon me upon such a trial?' 'I'll warrant you, Mr. Baxter,' said he, 'don't you trouble yourself about that.'

"The jury immediately laid their heads together at the bar, and found him guilty. As he was going from the bar, Baxter told the lord chief justice, who had so loaded him with reproaches, and still continued them, that a predecessor of his had had other thoughts of him; upon which he replied, 'that there was not an honest man in England but what took him for a great knave.' Baxter had subpœnaed several clergymen, who appeared in court, but were of no use to him, through the violence of the chief justice. The trial being over, Sir Henry Ashurst led him through the crowd, and conveyed him away in his coach."

This is a faithful portrait of Jefferies, who furnished Bunyan with the features of his chief justice, the Lord Hategood. Can we be insensible to the mercies

we enjoy in the very different administration of justice in our own times?

“On the 29th of June Baxter had judgment given against him. He was fined five hundred marks, condemned to lie in prison till he paid it, and bound to his good behavior for seven years. It is said that Jeffries proposed a corporal punishment, namely, whipping through the city; but his brethren would not accede to it. In consequence of which the fine and imprisonment were agreed to.

“Baxter being unable to pay the fine, and aware that, though he did, he might soon be prosecuted again, on some equally unjust pretence, went to prison. Here he was visited by his friends, and even by some of the respectable clergy of the church, who sympathised with his sufferings and deplored the injustice he received. He continued in this imprisonment nearly two years, during which he enjoyed more quietness than he had done for many years before.

“An imprisonment of two years would have been found very trying and irksome to most men; to Baxter, however, it does not appear to have proved so painful, though he had now lost his beloved wife, who had frequently before been his companion in solitude and suffering. His friends do not appear to have neglected or forgotten him. The following extract of a letter from the well known Matthew Henry, presents a pleasing view of the manner in which he endured bonds and afflictions for Christ's sake. It is addressed to his father, and dated the 17th of November, 1685, when Baxter had been several months confined. Mr. Williams justly remarks, ‘It is one of those pictures of days which are past, which, if rightly viewed, may produce lasting and beneficial effects; emotions of sa-

cred sorrow for the iniquity of persecution, and animating praise that the demon in these happy days of tranquillity is restrained, though not destroyed.'

" ' I went into Southwark, to Mr. Baxter. I was to wait upon him once before, and then he was busy. I found him in pretty comfortable circumstances, though a prisoner, in a private house near the prison, attended by his own man and maid. My good friend Mr. Samuel Lawrence went with me. He is in as good health as one can expect; and, methinks, looks better, and speaks heartier, than when I saw him last. The token you sent he would by no means be persuaded to accept (and was almost angry when I pressed it) from one ejected as well as himself. He said he did not use to receive; and I understand since, his need is not great.

" We sat with him about an hour. He gave us some good counsel to prepare for trials, and said the best preparation for them was a life of faith and a constant course of self-denial. He thought it harder constantly to deny temptations to sensual appetites and pleasures, than to resist one single temptation to deny Christ for fear of suffering; the former requiring such constant watchfulness; however, after the former, the latter will be the easier. He said, we who are young are apt to count upon great things, but we must not look for them; and much more to this purpose. He said he thought dying by sickness usually much more painful and dreadful than dying a violent death, especially considering the extraordinary supports which those have who suffer for righteousness' sake."

Various efforts were made by his friends to have his fine remitted, which, after considerable delay, was accomplished.

" On the 24th of November, 1686, Sir Samuel Astrey

sent his warrant to the keeper of the King's Bench prison to discharge Baxter. He gave sureties, however, for his good behavior, his majesty declaring, for his satisfaction, that it should not be interpreted a breach of good behavior for him to reside in London, which was not inconsistent with the Oxford act. After this release he continued to live some time within the rules of the Bench ; till, on the 28th of February, 1687, he removed to his house in the Charterhouse-yard ; and again, as far as his health would permit, assisted Mr. Sylvester in his public labors."

"After his injurious confinement," says his friend Sylvester, in the funeral sermon which he preached for Baxter, "he settled in Charterhouse-yard, in Rutlandhouse, and bestowed his ministerial assistance gratis upon me. Thereupon he attended every Lord's day in the morning, and every other Thursday morning at a weekly lecture. Thus were we yoked together in our ministerial work and trust, to our great mutual satisfaction ; and because his respects to me, living and dying, were very great, I cannot but the more feel the loss. I had the benefit and pleasure of always free access to him, and instant conversation with him ; and by whom could I profit more than by himself? So ready was he to communicate his thoughts to me, and so clearly would he represent them, as that I may truly say, it was greatly my own fault if he left me not wiser than he found me, at all times.

"After he had continued with me about four years and a half he was disabled from going forth to his ministerial work ; so that what he did he performed for the residue of his life in his own hired house, where he opened his doors, morning and evening, every day, to all that would come to join in family worship with

him; to whom he read the Holy Scriptures, from whence he 'preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him,' Acts, 28 : 30, 31, even as one greater than himself had done before him. But, alas, his growing diseases and infirmities soon forbade this also, confining him first to his chamber, and after to his bed. There, through pain and sickness, his body wasted; but his soul abode rational, strong in faith and hope, preserving itself in that patience, hope, and joy, through grace, which gave him great support, and kept out doubts and fears concerning his eternal welfare."

He still labored with his pen. Even on the very borders of eternity he was desirous to improve the fleeting moments. "He continued to preach," Dr. Bates observes, in his funeral discourse, "so long, notwithstanding his wasted, languishing body, that the last time he almost died in the pulpit. Not long after, he felt the approaches of death, and was confined to his sick-bed. Death reveals the secrets of the heart; then words are spoken with most feeling and least affectation. This excellent man was the same in his life and death; his last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to appear before God. He said to his friends that visited him, 'You come hither to learn to die; I am not the only person that must go this way. I can assure you that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this vain, deceitful world, and the lusts of the flesh; be sure you choose God for your portion, heaven for your home, God's glory for your end, his word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we shall meet with comfort.'

“Never was penitent sinner more humble, never was a sincere believer more calm and comfortable. He acknowledged himself to be the vilest dunghill worm (it was his usual expression) that ever went to heaven. He admired the divine condescension to us, often saying, ‘Lord, what is man; what am I, vile worm, to the great God!’ Many times he prayed, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner,’ and blessed God that this was left upon record in the Gospel as an effectual prayer. He said, ‘God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did; all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ.’ which he often prayed for.

“After a slumber, he waked, and said, ‘I shall rest from my labor.’ A minister then present said, ‘And your works will follow you.’ To whom he replied, ‘No works; I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other.’ When a friend was comforting him with the remembrance of the good many had receive’ by his preaching and writings, he said, ‘I was but a pen in God’s hands, and what praise is due to a pen?’

“His resignation to the will of God in his sharp sickness was eminent. When extremity of pain constrained him earnestly to pray to God for his release by death, he would check himself: ‘It is not fit for me to prescribe—when Thou wilt, what Thou wilt, how Thou wilt.’

“Being in great anguish, he said, ‘O, how unsearchable are His ways, and his paths past finding out; the depths of his providence we cannot fathom!’ And to his friends, ‘Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer.’

“Being often asked by his friends, how it was with his inward man, he replied, ‘I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great

peace and comfort within.' But it was his regret that he could not triumphantly express it, by reason of his extreme pains. He said, 'Flesh must perish, and we must feel the perishing of it; and that though his judgment submitted, yet sense would still make him groan.'

"Being asked whether he had not great joy from his believing apprehensions of the invisible state, he replied, 'What else, think you, Christianity serves for?' He said, the consideration of the Deity in his glory and greatness was too high for our thought; but the consideration of the Son of God in our nature, and of the saints in heaven, whom he knew and loved, did much sweeten and familiarize heaven to him. 'The description of it, in Heb. 12:22-24, was most animating to him; 'that he was going to the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.' 'That scripture, he said, deserved a thousand thousand thoughts. O, how comfortable is that promise; 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' At another time he said that he found great comfort and sweetness in repeating the words of the Lord's prayer, and was sorry some good people were prejudiced against the use of it, for there were all necessary petitions for soul and body contained in it. At other times he gave excellent counsel to young ministers that visited him; earnestly prayed God to bless their labors, and make them very successful in converting souls to Christ; expressed great joy in the

hope that God would do a great deal of good by them; and that they were of moderate, peaceful spirits.

“He often prayed that God would be merciful to this miserable, distracted world; and that he would preserve his church and interest in it. He advised his friends to beware of self-conceit, as a sin that was likely to ruin this nation; and said, ‘I have written a book against it, which I am afraid has done little good.’ Being asked whether he had altered his mind on controversial points, he said, those that pleased might know his mind in his writings; and that what he had done was not for his own reputation, but for the glory of God.

“I went to him, with a very worthy friend, Mr. Mather, of New-England, the day before he died; and speaking some comforting words to him, he replied, ‘I have pain; there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace, I have peace.’ I said, you are now approaching your long-desired home; he answered, ‘I believe, I believe.’ He said to Mr. Mather, ‘I bless God that you have accomplished your business; the Lord prolong your life.’ He expressed his great willingness to die; and during his sickness, when the question was asked, ‘How he did?’ his reply was, ‘Almost well.’ His joy was most remarkable, when, in his own apprehension, death was nearest; and his spiritual joy was at length consummated in eternal joy.”

“As to himself, even to the last,” says Mr. Sylvester, “I never could perceive his peace and heavenly hopes assaulted or disturbed. I have often heard him greatly lament that he felt no greater liveliness in what appeared so great and clear to him, and so very much desired by him. As to the influence thereof upon his spirit, in order to the sensible refreshment of it, he

clearly saw what ground he had to rejoice in God ; he doubted not of his title to heaven, through the merits of Christ. He told me he knew it would be well with him when he was gone. He wondered to hear others speak of their so passionately strong desires to die, and of their transports of spirit when sensible of their approaching death, as he did not so vividly feel their strong consolations. But when I asked him whether much of this was not to be resolved into bodily constitution, he said it might be so. The heavenly state was the object of his severe and daily thoughts and solemn contemplations ; for he set some time apart every day for that weighty work. He knew that neither grace nor duty could be duly exercised without serious meditation. And as he was a scribe instructed into the kingdom of heaven, so he both could and did draw forth out of his treasures things new and old, to his own satisfaction and advantage, as well as to the benefit of others."

" He had frequently, before his death, owned to me his continuance in the same sentiments that he had exhibited to the world in his polemic discourses, especially about justification, and the covenants of works and grace, &c. And being asked, at my request, whether he had changed his former thoughts about those things, his answer was, that he had told the world sufficiently his judgment concerning them by words and writing, and thither he referred men. And then lifting up his eyes to heaven, he uttered these words, ' Lord, pity, pity, pity the ignorance of this poor city.'

" On Monday, the day before his death, a great trembling and coldness awakened nature, and extorted strong cries for pity from Heaven ; which cries and agony continued for some time, till at length he ceas-

ed those cries, and so lay in a patient expectation of his change. And being once asked by his faithful friend and constant attendant upon him in his weakness, worthy and faithful Mrs. Bushel, his housekeeper, whether he knew her or no, requesting some signification of it if he did, he softly said, 'Death, death!' And now he felt the benefit of his former preparations for such a trying hour. And, indeed, the last words that he spake to me, being informed that I was come to see him, were these, 'O, I thank him, I thank him;' and turning his eyes to me, he said, 'The Lord teach you to die.'"

"On Tuesday morning, about four o'clock, December 8th, 1691, he expired; though he expected and desired his dissolution to have been on the Lord's day before, which, with joy, to me he called a high day, because of his desired change expected then by him."

A report was quickly spread abroad after his death, that he was exercised on his dying bed with doubts respecting the truths of religion, and his own personal safety, which report Mr. Sylvester thus refutes:

"Of what absurdity will not degenerate man be guilty! We know nothing here that could, in the least, minister to such a report as this. I that was with him all along, have ever heard him triumphing in his heavenly expectation, and ever speaking like one that could never have thought it worth a man's while to be, were it not for the great interest and ends of godliness. He told me that he doubted not but it would be best for him, when he had left this life and was translated to the heavenly regions.

"He owned what he had written, with reference to the things of God, to the very last. He advised those that came near him, carefully to mind their soul's con-

cerns. The shortness of time, the importance of eternity, the worth of souls, the greatness of God, the riches of the grace of Christ, the excellency and import of an heavenly mind and life, and the great usefulness of the word and means of grace pursuant to eternal purposes, ever lay pressingly upon his own heart, and extorted from him very useful directions and encouragements to all that came near him, even to the last; insomuch that if a polemical or casuistical point, or any speculation on philosophy or divinity, had been but offered to him for his resolution, after the clearest and briefest representation of his mind which the proposer's satisfaction called for, he presently and most delightfully fell into conversation about what related to our Christian hope and work."

"Baxter was buried in Christ-church, London, where the ashes of his wife and her mother had been deposited. His funeral was attended by a great number of persons of different ranks, especially of ministers, conformists as well as nonconformists, who were eager to testify their respect for one of whom it might have been said with equal truth, as of the intrepid reformer of the north, 'There lies the man who never feared the face of man.'"

In his last will, made two years before his death, he says, "I, Richard Baxter, of London, clerk, an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, drawing to the end of this transitory life, having, through God's great mercy, the free use of my understanding, do make this my last will and testament, revoking all other wills formerly made by me. My spirit I commit, with trust and hope of the heavenly felicity, into the hands of Jesus, my glorified Redeemer and Intercessor; and, by his mediation, into the hands of God my reconcil-

ed Father, the infinite eternal Spirit, Light, Life, and Love, most great, and wise, and good, the God of nature, grace, and glory ; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things ; my absolute Owner, Ruler, Benefactor, whose I am, and whom I, though imperfectly, serve, seek, and trust ; to whom be glory for ever, amen. To him I render the most humble thanks, that he hath filled up my life with abundant mercy, and pardoned my sins by the merits of Christ, and vouchsafed, by his Spirit, to renew me and seal me as his own ; and to moderate and bless to me my long sufferings in the flesh, and at last to sweeten them by his own interest and comforting approbation." He bequeathed his books to "poor scholars," and the residue of his property to the poor.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS PERSON—VIEWS OF HIMSELF, AND GENERAL CHARACTER.

Having proceeded to the grave, and committed his "remains to their long and final resting-place, it will be proper to present the views which were formed of his character, both by himself and friends.

"His person," Mr. Sylvester states, "was tall and slender, and stooped much ; his countenance composed and grave, somewhat inclining to smile. He had a piercing eye, a very articulate speech, and his deportment rather plain than complimentary. He had a great

command over his thoughts. His character answered the description given of him by a learned man dissenting from him, after discourse with him; that 'he could say what he would, and he could prove what he said.'"

Some few years before his death, Baxter took a minute and extensive survey of his own character, and committed it to paper. From this paper the following extracts are taken:—

"As it is soul-experiments which those that urge me to this kind of writing expect I should especially communicate to others, and I have said little of God's dealing with my soul since the time of my younger years, I shall only give the reader what is necessary to acquaint him truly what change God has made upon my mind and heart since those earlier times, and wherein I now differ in judgment and disposition from my former self. And, for any more particular account of heart-occurrences, and God's operations on me, I think it somewhat unsuitable to recite them; seeing God's dealings are much the same with all his servants in the main, and the points wherein he varieth are usually so small, that I think such not proper to be repeated. Nor have I any thing extraordinary to glory in, which is not common to the rest of my brethren, who have the same Spirit, and are servants of the same Lord. And the true reason why I do adventure so far upon the censure of the world as to tell them wherein the case is altered with me, is, that I may prevent young inexperienced Christians from being over-confident in their first apprehensions, or overvaluing their first degrees of grace, or too much applauding and following unfurnished inexperienced men, and that they may be in some measure directed what mind and course of life to

prefer, by the judgment of one that has tried both before them.

“The temper of my mind has somewhat altered with the temper of my body. When I was young, I was more vigorous, affectionate, and fervent in preaching, conference, and prayer, than ordinarily I can be now; my style was more extemporaneous and lax, but by the advantage of affection, and a very familiar moving voice and utterance, my preaching then did more affect the auditory than many of the last years before I gave over preaching; but yet what I delivered was much more raw, and had more passages that would not bear the trial of accurate judgments, and my discourses had both less substance and less judgment than of late.

“In my younger years my trouble for sin was most about my actual failings, in thought, word, or action; now I am much more troubled for inward defects, and omission or want of the vital duties or graces in the soul. My daily trouble is so much for my ignorance of God, and weakness of belief, and want of greater love to God, and strangeness to him and to the life to come, and want of a greater willingness to die, and of a longing to be with God in heaven,—that I take not some immoralities, though very great, to be in themselves so great and odious sins, if they could be found separate from these. Had I all the riches of the world, how gladly should I give them for a fuller knowledge, belief, and love of God and everlasting glory! These wants are the greatest burdens of my life, which often make my life itself a burden. And I cannot find any hope of reaching so high in these while I am in the flesh, as I once hoped before this time to have attained; which makes me the more weary of this sinful

world, which is honored with so little of the knowledge of God.

“Heretofore I placed much of my religion in tenderness of heart, and grieving for sin, and penitential tears; and less of it in the love of God, and studying his love and goodness, and in his joyful praises, than I now do. Then I was little sensible of the greatness and excellency of love and praise, though I coldly spake the same words in its commendation as I now do. And now I am less troubled for want of grief and tears, though I more value humility, and refuse not needful humiliation; but my conscience now looks at love and delight in God, and praising him, as the height of all my religious duties, for which it is that I value and use the rest.

“My judgment is much more for frequent and serious meditation on the heavenly blessedness, than it was in my younger days. I then thought that sermons on the attributes of God and the joys of heaven were not the most excellent; and was wont to say, ‘Every body knows this, that God is great and good, and that heaven is a blessed place; I had rather hear how I may attain it.’ And nothing pleased me so well as the doctrine of regeneration, and the marks of sincerity, because these subjects were suitable to me in that state; but now I had rather read, hear, or meditate on God and heaven, than on any other subject; for I perceive that it is the object that changes and elevates the mind, which will be like what it most frequently feeds upon; and that it is not only useful to our comfort to be much in heaven in our believing thoughts, but that it must animate all our other duties, and fortify us against every temptation and sin; and that a

man is no more a Christian indeed, than as he is heavenly.

“I was once wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell all at home, and look little higher. I was still poring either on my sins or wants, or examining my sincerity; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart-acquaintance and employment, yet I see more need of a higher work; and that I should look oftener upon Christ, and God, and heaven, than upon my own heart. At home I can find distempers to trouble me, and some evidences of my peace; but it is above that I must find matter of delight and joy, and love and peace itself. Therefore I would have one thought at home, upon myself and sins, and many thoughts above, upon the high, and amiable, and beatifying objects.

“Heretofore I knew much less than now, and yet was not half so much acquainted with my ignorance. I had a great delight in the daily new discoveries which I made, and in the light which shined upon me, like a man that comes into a country where he never was before; but I little knew either how imperfectly I understood those very points, whose discovery so much delighted me, nor how much might be said against them, nor how many things I was yet a stranger to; but now I find far greater darkness upon all things, and perceive how very little it is that we know in comparison of that which we are ignorant of, and I have far meaner thoughts of my own understanding, though I must needs know that it is better furnished than it was then.

“I now see more good and more evil in all men than heretofore I did. I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, but have more im-

perfections; and that nearer approach, and fuller trial, doth make the best appear more weak and faulty than their admirers at a distance think. And I find that few are so bad as either their malicious enemies, or censorious separating professors do imagine.

“I less admire gifts of utterance and bare profession of religion than I once did; and have much more charity for many, who, by the want of gifts, do make an obscurer profession than they. I once thought that almost all that could pray movingly and fluently, and talk well of religion, were saints. But more observation has opened to me what odious crimes may consist with high profession; and I have met with divers obscure persons, not noted for any extraordinary profession or forwardness in religion, but only to live a quiet, blameless life, whom I have after found to have long lived, as far as I could discern, a truly godly and sanctified life; only their prayers and duties were, by accident, kept secret from other men’s observation. Yet he that, upon this pretence, would confound the godly and the ungodly, may as well go about to lay heaven and hell together.

“I am not so narrow in my special love as heretofore. Being less censorious, and talking more than I did for saints, it must needs follow that I love more as saints than I did before.

“I am much more sensible how prone many young professors are to spiritual pride and self-conceitedness, and unruliness and division, and so to prove the grief of their teachers, and firebrands in the church; and how much of a minister’s work lies in preventing this, and humbling and confirming such young inexperienced professors, and keeping them in order in their progress in religion.

“I am more deeply afflicted for the disagreements of Christians, than I was when I was a younger Christian. Except the case of the infidel world, nothing is so sad and grievous to my thoughts as the case of the divided churches; and therefore I am more deeply sensible of the sinfulness of those prelates and pastors of the churches who are the principal cause of these divisions. O how many millions of souls are kept by them in ignorance and ungodliness, and deluded by faction, as if it were true religion! How is the conversion of infidels hindered by them, and Christ and religion heinously dishonored!

“I am much less regardful of the approbation of man, and set much lighter by contempt or applause, than I did long ago. I am often suspicious that this is not only from the increase of self-denial and humility, but partly from my being glutted and surfeited with human applause; and all worldly things appear most vain and unsatisfactory when we have tried them most. But as far as I can perceive, the knowledge of man’s nothingness, and God’s transcendent greatness, with whom it is that I have most to do, and the sense of the brevity of human things, and the nearness of eternity, are the principal causes of this effect, which some have imputed to self-conceitedness and moroseness.

“I am more and more pleased with a solitary life; and though, in a way of self-denial, I could submit to the most public life, for the service of God, when he requires it, and would not be unprofitable that I might be private; yet, I must confess, it is much more pleasing to myself to be retired from the world, and to have very little to do with men, and to converse with God and conscience, and good books.

“Though I was never much tempted to the sin of covetousness, yet my fear of dying was wont to tell me that I was not sufficiently loosened from the world. But I find that it is comparatively very easy to me to be loose from this world, but hard to live by faith above. To despise earth is easy to me; but not so easy to be acquainted and conversant with heaven. I have nothing in this world which I could not easily let go; but, to get satisfying apprehensions of the other world is the great and grievous difficulty.

“I am much more apprehensive than long ago of the odiousness and danger of the sin of pride: scarce any sin appears more odious to me. Having daily more acquaintance with the lamentable naughtiness and frailty of man, and of the mischiefs of that sin, and especially in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, I think, so far as any man is proud, he is kin to the devil, and a stranger to God and to himself. It is a wonder that it should be a possible sin, to men that still carry about with them, in soul and body, such humbling matter of remedy as we all do.

“I more than ever lament the unhappiness of the nobility, gentry, and great ones of the world, who live in such temptation to sensuality, curiosity, and wasting of their time about a multitude of little things; and whose lives are too often the transcript of the sins of Sodom—pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness, and want of compassion to the poor. And I more value the life of the poor laboring man, but especially of him that hath neither poverty nor riches.

“I am much more sensible than heretofore, of the breadth, and length, and depth of the radical, universal, and odious sin of selfishness, and therefore have written so much against it; and of the excellency and

necessity of self-denial, and of a public mind, and of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

“I am more and more sensible that most controversies have more need of right stating than of debating; and if my skill be increased in any thing, it is in narrowing controversies by explication, and separating the real from the verbal, and proving to many contenders that they in fact differ less than they think they do.

“I am more solicitous than I have been about my duty to God, and less solicitous about his dealings with me, as being assured that he will do all things well, acknowledging the goodness of all the declarations of his holiness, even in the punishment of man, and knowing that there is no rest but in the will and goodness of God.

“Though my habitual judgment, and resolution, and scope of life be still the same, yet I find a great mutability as to actual apprehensions and degrees of grace; and consequently find that so mutable a thing as the mind of man would never keep itself, if God were not its keeper.

“Thus much of the alterations of my soul, since my younger years, I thought best to give the reader, instead of all those experiences and actual motions and affections which I suppose him rather to have expected an account of. And having transcribed thus much of a life which God has read, and conscience has read, and must further read, I humbly lament it, and beg pardon of it, as sinful, and too unequal and unprofitable. And I warn the reader to amend that in his own, which he finds to have been amiss in mine; confessing, also, that much has been amiss which I have not here particularly mentioned, and that I have not

lived according to the abundant mercies of the Lord. But what I have recorded, has been especially to perform my vows, and to declare his praise to all generations, who has filled my days with his invaluable favors, and bound me to bless his name for ever.

“But having mentioned the changes which I think were for the better, I must add, that as I confessed many of my sins before, so, I have been since guilty of many, which, because materially they seemed small have had the less resistance, and yet, on the review, do trouble me more than if they had been greater, done in ignorance. It can be no small sin which is committed against knowledge, and conscience, and deliberation, whatever excuse it have. To have sinned whilst I preached and wrote against sin, and had such abundant and great obligations from God, and made so many promises against it, lays me very low; not so much in fear of hell, as in great displeasure against myself, and such self-abhorrence as would cause revenge against myself, were it not forbidden. When God forgives me, I cannot forgive myself; especially for any rash words or deeds, by which I have seemed injurious, and less tender and kind than I should have been to my near and dear relations, whose love abundantly obliged me; when such are dead, though we never differed in point of interest, or any great matter, every sour or cross provoking word which I gave them makes me almost irreconcilable to myself.

“I mention all these faults that they may be a warning to others to take heed, as they call on myself for repentance and watchfulness. O Lord, for the merits, and sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, be merciful to me a sinner, and forgive my known and unknown sins!”

Dr Bates has drawn a full-length portrait of the character of his venerable friend in his funeral sermon, from which some extracts will now be given.

“He had not the advantage of academical education; but, by the Divine blessing upon his rare dexterity and diligence, his eminence in sacred knowledge was such as few in the university ever arrive to.”

“Conversion is the excellent work of Divine grace: the efficacy of the means is from the Supreme Mover. But God usually makes those ministers successful in that blessed work, whose principal design and delight is to glorify him in the saving of souls. This was the reigning affection in his heart; and he was extraordinarily qualified to obtain his end.

“His prayers were an effusion of the most lively melting expressions, growing out of his intimate ardent affections to God: from the abundance of his heart, his lips spake. His soul took wing for heaven, and wrapped up the souls of others with him. Never did I see or hear a holy minister address himself to God with more reverence and humility, with respect to his glorious greatness; never with more zeal and fervency, correspondent to the infinite moment of his requests; nor with more filial affiance in the Divine mercy.”

As a specimen of his prayers, two quotations from his published writings may be given. Addressing the Divine Spirit, he says, “As thou art the Agent and Advocate of Jesus my Lord, O plead his cause effectually in my soul against the suggestions of Satan and my unbelief; and finish his healing, saving work, and let not the flesh or world prevail. Be in me the resident witness of my Lord, the Author of my prayers, the Spirit of adoption, the seal of God, and the earnest

of mine inheritance. Let not my nights be so long, and my days so short, nor sin eclipse those beams which have often illuminated my soul. Without these, books are senseless scrawls, studies are dreams, learning is a glow-worm, and wit is but wantonness, impertinence and folly. Transcribe those sacred precepts on my heart, which by thy dictates and inspirations are recorded in thy holy word. I refuse not thy help for tears and groans; but O shed abroad that love upon my heart, which may keep it in a continual life of love. Teach me the work which I must do in heaven; refresh my soul with the delights of holiness, and the joys which arise from the believing hopes of the everlasting joys. Exercise my heart and tongue in the holy praises of my Lord. Strengthen me in sufferings; and conquer the terrors of death and hell. Make me the more heavenly, by how much the faster I am hastening to heaven; and let my last thoughts, words, and works on earth, be most like to those which shall be my first in the state of glorious immortality; where the kingdom is delivered up to the Father, and God will for ever be all, and in all; of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Another specimen may be given from Baxter's conclusion of his work on the "Saints' Rest."

"O Thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attractive of love, and ocean of delight! draw up these drossy hearts unto thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined! Second thy servant's weak endeavors, and persuade those that read these lines to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O! suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he describes to

others ; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathing after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee. And, when thou comest, let me be found so doing ; not serving my flesh, nor asleep with my lamp unfurnished, but waiting and longing for my Lord's return. Let those who shall read these pages, not merely read the fruit of my studies, but the breathing of my active hope and love ; that if my heart were open to their view, they might there read thy love most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God ; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, where the words of life appear without ; that so these lines may not witness against me ; but proceeding from the heart of the writer, may they be effectual, through thy grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savior of life to both."

Dr. Bates says : "In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart. All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and Divine revelation. He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style ; for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words : he despised flashy oratory, but his expressions were clear and powerful ; so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders who were not charmed by so wise a charmer. He was animated by the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs. Methinks I still hear him speak those powerful words : 'A wretch that is condemned to die

to-morrow cannot forget it: and yet poor sinners, that continually are uncertain to live an hour, and certain speedily to see the majesty of the Lord, to their inconceivable joy or terror, as sure as they now live on earth, can forget these things, for which they have their memory; and which one would think, should drown the matters of this world, as the report of a cannon does a whisper, or as the sun obscures the poorest glow-worm. O wonderful stupidity of the unrenewed soul! O wonderful folly and madness of the ungodly! That ever men can forget—I say again, that they can forget eternal joy, eternal wo, and the eternal God, and the place of their eternal unchangeable abodes, when they stand even at the door; and there is but that thin veil of flesh between them and that amazing sight, that eternal gulf, and they are daily dying and stepping in.”

To this may be added a quotation from a sermon preached before the judges at the assizes: “Honorable, worshipful, and well-beloved, it is a weighty employment that occasions your meeting here to-day. The estates and lives of men are in your hands. But it is another kind of judgment which you are all hastening towards; when judges and juries, the accusers and the accused, must all appear upon equal terms, for the final decision of a far greater cause. The case that is then and there to be determined, is not whether you shall have lands or no lands, life or no life, in our natural sense; but whether you shall have heaven or hell, salvation or damnation, and endless life of glory with God and the Redeemer, and the angels of heaven, or an endless life of torment with devils and ungodly men. As sure as you now sit on those seats, you shall shortly all appear before the Judge of

all the world, and there receive an irreversible sentence to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery. This is the great business that should presently call up your most serious thoughts, and set all the powers of your souls on work for the most effectual preparation; that, if you are men, you may acquit yourselves like men, for the preventing of that dreadful doom which unprepared souls must there expect. The greatest of your secular affairs are but dreams and toys to this. Were you at every assize to determine causes of no lower value than the crowns and kingdoms of the monarchs of the earth, it were but as children's games to this. If any man of you believe not this, he is worse than the devil that tempteth him to unbelief; and let him know that unbelief is no prevention, nor will put off the day, or hinder his appearance; but will render certain his condemnation at that appearance.

“He that knows the law and the fact, may know before your assize what will become of every prisoner, if the proceedings be all just, as in our case they will certainly be. Christ will judge according to his laws; know, therefore, whom the law condemns or justifies, and you may know whom Christ will condemn or justify. And seeing all this is so, does it not concern us all to make a speedy trial of ourselves in preparation for this final trial? I shall, for your own sakes, therefore, take the boldness, as the officer of Christ, to summon you to appear before yourselves, and keep an assize this day in your own souls, and answer at the bar of conscience to what shall be charged upon you. Fear not the trial; for it is not conclusive, final, or a peremptory irreversible sentence that must now pass. Yet slight it not; for it is a necessary preparative to that which is final and irreversible.”

After describing the vanities of the world, he bursts forth: "What! shall we prefer a mole-hill before a kingdom? A shadow before the substance? An hour before eternity? Nothing before all things? Vanity and vexation before felicity? The cross of Christ hath set up such a sun as quite darkeneth the light of worldly glory. Though earth were something, if there were no better to be had, it is nothing when heaven standeth by."

Dr. Bates further remarks: "Besides, his wonderful diligence in catechising the particular families under his charge was exceeding useful to plant religion in them. Personal instruction, and application of divine truths, has an excellent advantage and efficacy to insinuate and infuse religion into the minds and hearts of men, and, by the conversion of parents and masters to reform whole families that are under their immediate direction and government. His unwearied industry to do good to his flock, was answered by correspondent love and thankfulness. He was an angel in their esteem. He would often speak with great complacency of their dear affections; and, a little before his death, said, 'He believed they were more expressive of kindness to him, than the Christian converts were to the apostle Paul, by what appears in his writings.'"

"His books, for their number and the variety of matter in them, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, positive, and practical divinity. Of them I shall relate the words of one whose exact judgment, joined with his moderation, will give a great value to his testimony; they are those of Dr. Wilkins, afterwards bishop of Chester. He said that Mr. Baxter had 'cultivated every subject he handled;'

and 'if he had lived in the primitive times, he had been one of the fathers of the church,' and 'that it was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr. Baxter.' Indeed, he had such an amplitude in his thoughts, such a vivacity of imagination, and such solidity and depth of judgment as rarely meet in one man. His inquiring mind was freed from the servile dejection and bondage of an implicit faith. He adhered to the Scriptures as the perfect rule of faith, and searched whether the doctrines received and taught were consonant to it. This is the duty of every Christian according to his capacity, especially of ministers, and the necessary means to open the mind for Divine knowledge, and for the advancement of the truth."

"His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God than any printed in our time; and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them that keeps the reader awake and attentive. His book of the 'Saints' Everlasting Rest,' was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death, but has the signatures of his holy and vigorous mind. To allure our desires, he unveils the sanctuary above, and discovers the glory and joys of the blessed in the Divine presence, by a light so strong and lively, that all the glittering vanities of this world vanish in that comparison, and a sincere believer will despise them, as one of mature age does the toys and baubles of children. To excite our fear he removes the skreen, and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in those dreadful colors, that, if duly considered, would check and

control the unbridled licentious appetites of the most sensual.”

Baxter's practical writings alone occupy four ponderous folio, or twenty-two octavo volumes. If a complete collection of his controversial and practical writings were made, they would occupy fully sixty volumes of the same size. “His industry was almost incredible in his studies. He had a sensitive nature, desirous of ease, as others have, and faculties like others, liable to tire; yet such was the continual application of himself to his great work, as if the labor of one day had supplied strength for another, and the willingness of the spirit had supported the weakness of the flesh.” His painful and incessant afflictions would have prevented an ordinary man from attempting any thing; but he persevered with unwearied industry to the close of his days. His life was occupied, too, in active labors. In camps and at court, in his parish and in prison, at home and abroad, his efforts were unremitting and often successful.

Some idea of his sufferings may be formed from the summary of his diseases given by his late biographer.

“His constitution was naturally sound, but he was always very thin and weak, and early affected with nervous debility. At fourteen years of age he was seized with the small-pox, and soon after, by improper exposure to the cold, he was affected with a violent catarrh and cough. This continued for about two years, and was followed by spitting of blood and other phthical symptoms. He became, from that time, the sport of medical treatment and experiment. One physician prescribed one mode of cure, and another a different one; till, from first to last, he had the advice of no less than thirty-six professors of the healing art. By their

orders he took drugs without number, till, from experiencing how little they could do for him, he forsook them entirely, except some particular symptom urged him to seek present relief. He was diseased literally from head to foot; his stomach flatulent and acidulous; violent rheumatic head-aches; prodigious bleeding at the nose; his legs swelled and dropsical, &c. His physicians called it *hypochondria*, he himself considered it *præmatura senectus*, premature old age; so that at twenty he had the symptoms, in addition to disease, of fourscore! To be more particular would be disagreeable; and to detail the innumerable remedies to which he was directed, or which he employed himself, would add little to the stock of medical knowledge. He was certainly one of the most diseased and afflicted men that ever reached the full ordinary limits of human life. How, in such circumstances, he was capable of the exertions he almost incessantly made, appears not a little mysterious. His behavior under them is a poignant reproof to many, who either sink entirely under common afflictions, or give way to indolence and trifling. For the acerbity of his temper we are now prepared with an ample apology. That he should have been occasionally fretful, and impatient of contradiction, is not surprising, considering the state of the earthen vessel in which his noble and active spirit was deposited. No man was more sensible of his obliquities of disposition than himself; and no man, perhaps, ever did more to maintain the ascendancy of Christian principle over the strength and waywardness of passion."

The conviction that his time would be short, urged him to prosecute his labors with unwearied assiduity. Love to immortal souls, too, exerted its powerful in-

fluence. This "love to the souls of men," says Dr Bates, "was the peculiar character of his spirit. In this he imitated and honored our Savior, who prayed, died, and lives for the salvation of souls. All his natural and supernatural endowments were subservient to that blessed end. It was his meat and drink, the life and joy of his life to do good to souls."

Disinterestedness formed no unimportant feature of his character, and was strikingly marked in his refusal of ecclesiastical preferment; his self-denying engagements respecting his stipend at Kidderminster; his gratuitous labors; abundant alms-giving; and the wide distribution of his works among the poor and destitute. So long as he had a bare maintenance he was content. He rejoiced in being able to benefit others by his property or his labors.

Fidelity to his Divine Master, and to his cause, was conspicuous in all his engagements. He tendered his advice, or administered his reproofs with equal faithfulness, whether in court or camp; to the king or to the protector; before parliament or his parishioners; in his conversation or his correspondence. He could not suffer sin upon his neighbor; and whatever he conceived would be for the benefit of those concerned, that he faithfully, and without compromise, administered. In his preaching he "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God."

Dr. Bates remarks: "He that was so solicitous for the salvation of others, was not negligent of his own. In him the virtues of the contemplative and active life were eminently united. His time was spent in communion with God, and in charity to men. He lived above the world, and in solitude and silence conversed with God. The frequent and serious meditation of

eternal things was the powerful means to make his heart holy and heavenly, and from thence his conversation. His life was a practical sermon, a drawing example. There was an air of humility and sanctity in his mortified countenance; and his deportment was becoming a stranger upon earth and a citizen of heaven."

The following passage from his interesting important work, entitled "The Divine Life," may be considered as a portrait of his own spiritual character.

"To walk with God," he says, "is a phrase so high, that I should have feared the guilt of arrogance in using it, if I had not found it in the Holy Scriptures. It is a phrase that imports so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresses such high and holy actions, that the naming of it strikes my heart with reverence, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' Methinks he that shall say to me, Come, see a man that walks with God, doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel or glorified soul. It is a far more reverend object in mine eye than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their earthly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumph. O, happy man that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him! What blessed sights does he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasant melody does he daily hear! What delectable food does he daily taste! He sees, by faith, the God, the glory which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest intuition! He sees that in a glass, and darkly, which they behold with open face! He sees the glorious majesty of his Creator, the

eternal King, the Cause of causes, the Composer, Upholder, Preserver, and Governor of all worlds! He beholds the wonderful methods of his providence; and what he cannot fully see he admires, and waits for the time when that also shall be open to his view! He sees, by faith, the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotedness to God; their ardent love, their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceed that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias, when they appeared on the holy mount and talked with Christ! He hears by faith the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise, the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of Him that redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests unto God. Herein he has sometimes a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures which, though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the clusters brought from Canaan into the wilderness; yet is more excellent than all the delights of sinners."

His character may be summed up in the words of Mr. Orme: "Among his contemporaries there were men of equal talents, of more amiable dispositions, and of greater learning. But there was no man in whom there appears to have been so little of earth, and so much of heaven; so small a portion of the alloy of humanity, and so large a portion of all that is celestial. He felt scarcely any of the attractions of this world, but felt and manifested the most powerful affinity for the world to come."



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