

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL

OF THE

REVEREND & EXCELLENT DIVINE

MR. RICHARD BAXTER.

WHO DIED DECEMBER 8. 1691.

TO THE
RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

AND HIS MUCH HONOURED FRIEND,

SIR HENRY ASHURST, BARONET.



SIR,

YOUR noble and constant kindness to Mr. Baxter living, and your honourable respect to him dead, have induced me to inscribe the following memorial of him to your name. He was most worthy of your highest esteem and love, for the first impressions of heaven upon your soul, were in reading his invaluable book, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. This kindled a mutual affection in your breasts : his love was directing, counselling, and exciting you to secure your future happiness : your love was observant, grateful, and beneficent to him. The sincerity and generosity of your friendship, was very evident, in your appearing and stand-

ing by him, when he was so roughly and unrighteously handled, by one, who was the dishonour of this age's law; whose deportment in a high place of judicature, was so contrary to wisdom, humanity, and justice, that there need no foul words to make his name odious. * Of this and your other favours Mr. Baxter retained a dear and lasting sense; and in his dying hours declared, that you had been the best friend he ever had. He has "finished his course, and received his crown:" his name will shine longer than his enemies shall bark.

I cannot omit the mentioning, that Mr. Boyle and Mr. Baxter, those incomparable persons in their several studies, and dear friends, died within a short space of one another. Mr. Boyle was engaged in the contemplation of the design and architecture of the visible world, and made rare discoveries in the system of nature: not for curiosity and barren speculation, but to admire and adore the perfections of the Deity in the variety, order, beauty, and marvellous artifice of the creatures that compose this great universe. Mr. Baxter was conversant in the invisible world: his mind was constantly applied to understand the harmonious agreement of the divine attributes

* Judge Jefferies: see *Memoirs* prefixed to these volumes—page 13. *Ed.*

in the economy of our salvation, and to restore men to the favour and image of God. They are now admitted into the enlightened and purified society above: where the immense volumes of the divine wisdom are laid open, and by one glance of an eye, they discover more perfectly the glorious and wonderful works of God in heaven and earth, than the most diligent inquirers can do here, in a thousand years' study, though they had the sagacity of Solomon. By the light of glory, "they see the face of God, and are satisfied with his likeness for ever."

It is a high honour to you, that Mr. Boyle and Mr. Baxter should by their last will nominate you amongst their executors. It was the saying of a wise Roman, *Malo divi Augusti judicium, quam beneficium*. I had rather have the esteem of the Emperor Augustus than his gifts: for he was an understanding prince, and his esteem was very honourable to a person. That two who so excelled in wisdom and goodness, should commit to your trust the disposal of their estates for the uses of piety and charity, is a more noble testimony of their esteem of your prudence and inviolable integrity, than if they had bequeathed to you rich legacies.

It is a satisfaction to me, that I have complied with Mr. Baxter's desire in preaching his Funeral Sermon, and with yours in publishing it. I shall unfeignedly recommend yourself, your excellent lady, and virtuous children, to the divine mercies: and remain, with great respect,

SIR,

Your humble and faithful Servant,

WILLIAM BATES.

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S E R M O N, &c.

LUKE XXIII. 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands
I commend my Spirit.

THE words are the prayer of our blessed Saviour in the extremity of his passion. His unrighteous and implacable enemies had nailed his body to the cross, but they had no power over his spirit, that was ready to take its flight to the sanctuary of life and immortality. This dying prayer of Christ is a pattern for sincere christians: he has invested them with the relation of children of God; and authorizes them by his example, to commend their departing spirits to his powerful love. The observation I shall unfold and apply, is this:

It is the privilege of dying saints, to commend their spirits into the hands of their heavenly Father.

In discoursing of this, I shall,

Consider the foundation of this privilege;—Show what a blessed privilege this is;—and then apply it.

I. The foundation of this privilege is to be considered. This is built upon two things :

1. The relation of God to the saints.
2. His perfections joined with that relation.

1. The relation of God to the saints. The title of Father is upon several accounts attributed to God.

(1.) He is a Father by creation: "O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, thou art the potter, we are the work of thine hands." Isa. 64. 8. He formed man's body into a majestic figure, becoming his original state, being Lord of the lower world. But in a peculiar manner he is styled "the Father of spirits:" they have a near alliance, and resemblance of the Father of lights, in their intellectual powers, and their immortal nature. From hence it is, the angels are called "the sons of God:" Job 2. 1. they are the eldest offspring of his power. Adam has the title of the "Son of God." Luke 3. 38. And since the fall, men are called "God's offspring." There is an indelible character of dignity engraven in the reasonable nature by the hand of God. But since man turned rebel to his Creator and Father, this endearing obliging relation aggravates his rebellion, but gives him no interest in the paternal love of God, of which he has made a deadly forfeiture. It is threatened against ignorant perverse sinners, "He that made them, will not have mercy on them."

(2.) Upon the account of external calling and profession, there is an intercurrent relation of Father and sons between God and his people. Thus the posterity of Seth are called "the sons of God:" Gen. 6. 2. and the entire nation of the Jews are so styled; "When Israel was young, I called my Son out of Egypt." Hosea 11. 1. And all that have received baptism, the seal of the holy covenant, and profess christianity, in this general sense may be called the children of God. But it is not the outward dedication that entitles men to a saving interest in God, unless they live according to that dedication. There are baptized infidels, as well as unbaptized. How many every day fall as deep as hell, whose hopes were high, on the account of their external christianity.

(3.) God is our Father upon a more excellent account, by renovation and adoption. The natural man is what St. Paul saith of the voluptuous widow, "dead while he lives." There

is only a cessation of spiritual acts, but an utter incapacity to perform them: he cannot obey nor enjoy God. Now the renewing of man is called a regeneration. Our Saviour tells Nicodemus, "Verily I say unto you, unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." John 3. 3. The reason of the expression is, because there is a new nature, spiritual, holy and heavenly, communicated, different from the carnal, polluted and earthly nature, derived from the first Adam. And as the relation of a Father results from the communicating a vital active principle to another, in that kind of life like his own: so God by making us partakers of "a divine nature, of his life and image," Jam. 1. 18. is styled our Father: "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth." And we are said, "to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. 1. 23. By the divine influence, the word of God implants in them such qualities and dispositions whereby they resemble God, "are holy, as he is holy, in all manner of conversation." They are called godly, as they are like him in their minds, affections and actions. And to such God has the heart and eye of a father, to regard and relieve them in all their exigencies. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that serve him." Psal. 103. 13.

We are also the children of God by adoption. This heavenly privilege is obtained for us by the meritorious sufferings of Christ, and is founded in our union with him. "God sent his Son, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4. 4, 5. For his sake we are not only pardoned, but preferred to this heavenly dignity. It is worthy of observation, that the degrees of our redemption mentioned in scripture, have annexed to them parallel degrees of our adoption. Thus when it is said, "We are redeemed from the curse of the law," it is added, "That we might receive the adoption of sons." When it is said, "We are freed from the servile spirit of the law," it follows, "We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Rom. 8. 15. And the apostle tells us, that the redemption of our bodies from "the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, is our adoption," that is the manifestation of it before all the world.

Our adoption is founded in our union with Christ. A member of Christ, and a son of God are the same: it is therefore said, "As many as received him, to them gave he power," or privilege, "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1. 12. And "ye are all the sons of God, by faith in Jesus Christ." Gal. 3. 6. This is the vital band of our union with Christ, and invests us with his relation to God. When he was to leave the world, he sends this comfortable message to his disciples; "Go tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." John 20. 17. His relation has the precedence in order, dignity and causality. He is God's own Son, Rom. 8. 3. in a sense infinitely high and proper to himself: "To which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee?" Heb. 1. 5. The sublimest prophet breaks forth with wonder, "Who shall declare his generation?" Isa. 53. 8. It is above our capacity and conception. It becomes us to acquiesce in what the scripture reveals. He is the eternal word and wisdom of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory." Heb. 1. 3. This is the most fit comparison: for as light is productive of light without any diminution; so the eternal Father communicated his essence to the Son. In short, God is Christ's Father by nature, and God by dispensation; he is our God as the author of nature, and our Father by adoption.

Before I proceed, it is fit to observe the excellence of the evangelical adoption above the civil adoption among men.

(1.) Adoption is a legal act in imitation of nature, for the comfort of those who are without children. But God had a Son, the heir of his love and glory. His adopting love heightened by considering our meanness and vileness: we are but a little breathing dust, worthless rebels. The apostle cries out in a rapture of admiration and joy, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" If we consider the natural distance between God and us, as he is the Creator, and we are the works of his hands, it is truly infinite; but the moral distance between the holy righteous God and the guilty polluted creature, is, if it were possible, more than infinite: love inconceivable! That releases us from bondage, and adopts us into the line of heaven. If we admire any thing of this world in comparison of it, it is a sign we have no share in this privilege.

(2.) Civil adoption conveys no praiseworthy qualities into the person that is adopted. A king may adopt one to be his son, and the heir of his kingdom, but cannot endow him with a royalty of spirit, with ruling wisdom, with justice and equity, clemency and bounty, with magnanimity and fortitude, that may qualify him to manage the sceptre. The adopted prince may be of a low sordid disposition, a slave to his vile lusts, and designing to enslave others. But all the adopted sons of God are divinely renewed; they are purified from defiling and debasing lusts, and are adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, that God "is not ashamed to be called their God and Father, nor Christ ashamed to call them brethren." Now from this special relation and interest of God in the saints, there is a sure foundation of their trust in his saving mercy. David addresses himself to God for his preservation from imminent danger, "I am thine, save me:" as if his miscarrying would be a loss to God, who had so dear a propriety in him.

2. I come now to the second thing that encourages the praying faith of the saints when they leave the world, to commend their souls to him, His perfections joined with his relation: His love inclines, His truth engages, and His power enables him to bring them safely to heaven.

(1.) His love. This is the brightest ray of the Deity, the first and clearest notion we have of God. St. John tells us, "God is love." His love cannot be fully expressed by the dearest relations and affections in nature. The relation of parents, as it is most deeply implanted in nature, so it implies the most cordial, strong and tender affection. But as God is infinitely greater and better than earthly parents; so he equally excels them, as in his abilities, so in his good will to his children. Our Saviour directs us, "Call no man father upon earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven:" the title and love of a father is peculiar to him. Our Saviour argues, "If you that are evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father to those that ask him?" The inference is strong, not only from the divine authority of the speaker, but from the native perspicuity of the things: for the love of an earthly father is but an infusion into his breast from the heavenly Father, and but a faint resemblance of his love.

The love of a mother is more tender and endearing than of a father: even a fearful hen will fly upon death, to preserve its tender brood from the devourer: yet the love of God to his children far excels it. "Can a woman forget a sucking child?" What heart, what marble is in her breast so incompassionate and unrelenting, as to neglect her helpless infant? "She may, but," saith God, "I will never forget thee." The seraphims, those bright and unperishing flames, are but faint and cold, in comparison of God's love to his children.

It is observable how the love of God to them expresses itself in all the notions of propriety and preciousness, to make it more sensible to us. They are styled "his treasure, his jewels," *Exod.* 19. the most precious part of his treasure, the "jewels of his crown," *Mal.* 3. that are the richest jewels. Now "will he throw away" *Zech.* 9. 16. his treasure, or suffer the cruel enemy to rob him of his jewels? Will he not take them into his safe custody? It is to be observed, that the esteem and affection of God principally respects the souls of his children: their souls have an original affinity with him in their substance as spirits: and being "born again of the Spirit," they are spirit in their divine qualities and endowments, and more endeared to him than by their first alliance. His tender care to preserve them, will be correspondent to his valuation and love.

Moreover, the condition of departing souls affords another argument of reliance upon his love; for they leave this visible world, with all their supports and comforts; they are stripped of all sensible securities: and will he leave them fatherless in such a forlorn and desolate state? His love is expressed by mercy, compassion, pity, melting affections, that are most tenderly moved when the beloved object is in distress. Our Saviour propounds an argument for dependance upon the delivering love of God, from the exigence of his people; "Shall not God deliver his own elect," the designation of love, "who cry day and night to him? He will do it speedily." Love is never more ardent and active than in times of distress. Therefore when his dying children are deprived of all their hopes and dependance upon creatures, and fly to him for protection and relief, will he not hear their mournful requests, and grant their fainting desires? When their earthly tabernacles are so ruinous, that they

are forced to dislodge, will the love of a heavenly Father suffer their naked souls to wander in the vast regions of "the other world, seeking rest, and finding none?" Certainly he will bring them into his reviving presence. If divine love be so condescending, that "the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, dwells with the humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble," Isa. 57. when they are confined to our lowly earth, we may be assured, when that spirit shall be divested of flesh, he will bring it to heaven, the temple of his glory, to be with him for ever. It is greater love for a king to lay aside his state, and dwell in a mean cottage with his favourite, than to receive him into his palace, and communicate to him of his rich abundance. It is another most comfortable consideration, that the love of God is invariable towards his children: his love is the sole moving cause of our filial relation to him: "Of his own will he begat us by the word of truth." His sovereign free love was the principle of his electing any to the dignity of being his children: this love is as unchangeable as free; and election that proceeds from it, is as unchangeable as his love. What can induce him to alter his affections towards them? For such is the perfection of his knowledge, that he can never be surprised by a sudden new event, that may cause a change in his mind and will. He foresaw all the sins of his people, with their provoking aggravations. Now if the foresight of them did not hinder his electing love in its rise, can they frustrate its end, the bringing of them to glory?

Besides, we may argue from what his love has done for his children, to what he will do: he has given his Son and Spirit to them, the surest signs of his love, if we consider the invaluable excellence of the gifts, and the design of the Giver.

The Son of God is the most excellent gift of his love, as undeserved, as he was undesired: and from hence the apostle argues, "He that gave his Son for us all, how much more will he with him give us all things?" Blessed God! What richer evidence, and more convincing demonstration can there be of thy love? "Will he not with him give us all things? The inference is direct and conclusive, with respect to temporal and eternal things. He will give to his children in the present world, whatever his wisdom, in conjunction with his love, sees good for them. To illustrate this by a low and familiar in-

stance; if a mother bestows upon her daughter rich jewels for her marriage ornaments, will she deny her pins to dress her? And we may as strongly argue, that with his Son he will give us eternal blessings. Will he give us the tree of life, and not permit us to eat of the fruit of it? What was the design of his counsel and compassion, in giving his Son to be a sacrifice for us, but to restore us to his favour? The apostle reasons strongly, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." He has paid our ransom, and reversed the sentence of condemnation against us; and it invincibly follows, he can more easily accomplish our happiness in heaven. If love justify a sinner, it will glorify a saint.

And as the gift of the Son, so the most precious gift of the Spirit to God's children, to make them holy and heavenly, is the most certain sign of his love to them. The apostle in the fullest expression speaks of it; "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he has loved us, even when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ: by grace we are saved." Sanctification is the effect of "rich mercy, great love, and saving grace." The children of God are sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day of redemption: that seal distinguishes them from the obstinate and polluted world, and ratifies the conveyance of eternal life to them. The Spirit is styled the "earnest of the inheritance." His dwelling in the saints by his sanctifying and comforting operations is an earnest of their dwelling with God in his sanctuary above. From hence the apostle propounds a strong argument to assure the saints, upon their leaving this world, of their reception into heaven; "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God;" and the Almighty always obtains his end: "who hath also given us the earnest of his Spirit." Holiness is the morning-star of the great day; grace is the preparative and assurance of glory: for although the saints are in themselves mutable, and while there remain corruption within, and a tempting world without, are liable to falling away, yet the free and powerful love of God that revived them when dead, will preserve them living; that which raised them from the grave, will prevent their relapsing into it. "The gifts of God are without repentance." How triumphantly does the apostle express his confidence, "Who shall separate us

from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" These are the most powerful terrors that the perverse world, in combination with the devil, can make use of to constrain us to desert the service of God; but they are vain. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us: for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This blessed assurance of the apostle, is not raised from his extraordinary privileges, nor from the apparition of angels to him, nor his rapture to paradise, nor special revelations, but from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, that everlastingly embraces all his children. Briefly, in that God has given his Son to die for us, and his Spirit to live in us, his Son to purchase and prepare heaven for us, his Spirit to prepare us for heaven, a dying saint may with blessed tranquillity commend his soul into God's hands.

I have more particularly considered the fatherly love of God, what a strong security it affords to his children, that he will never leave them, in that no point requires and deserves more confirmation, and weight of argument to press it down into our distrustful hearts.

(2.) The divine truth affords a strong security to the children of God, to commend their souls to him at last. Truth is an attribute as essential and dear to God as any of his perfections. And in the accomplishment of our salvation, he ordered all things becoming of his wisdom, that is for the illustration of all his principal attributes, and accordingly designed the glory of his truth equally with the honour of his mercy. Thus he declares to his chosen people, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy, with them that love him, and keep his commandments." Deut. 7. 9. The attribute that is set next to the Deity, as most sacred, is the "faithful God;" and that further expressed, "keeping covenant and mercy;" for he delights in fulfilling his promises, as in the freest acts of mercy. The psalmist breaks forth with the affectionate praises of these attributes, "I will

worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Psal. 138. 2. His word here immediately signifies his promise, that has its rise from his loving-kindness, and its performance from his truth. This he magnifies both with respect to the matter of his promises that are exceeding great and precious, and the fulfilling them above all that we can ask or think. God cannot "repent or lie;" his counsels are un retractable, from the immutability of his nature; his promises are infallible, from his fidelity: they are as unchangeable as the sun and stars in their appointed courses; Jer. 31. 35. nay, more stable than the centre: "for heaven and earth shall pass away," but not a tittle of promises, and our hopes be unfulfilled. If the frame of nature were dissolved, it would be no loss to God, who is glorious and blessed in his own perfections: but if promises fail, the honour of his truth would be impaired and blemished. The psalmist saith, "Those that know thy name, will trust in thee:" those who know the creature, its levity, mutability and mortality, will be discouraged from trusting in it; but those who know the eternal constancy of God in his nature and promises, will securely rely upon him.

Now the promises, the declaration of God's love, without which we cannot have any solid and sustaining hope in our death, assure us of God's receiving the separate spirits of his children. There was a constant clearness, though not in that degree of light as since the appearance of Christ, of the happiness of the departed saints. Dying Jacob breaks forth with a lively hope, "O Lord, I have waited for thy salvation." Gen. 49. 18. Job says, "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him;" that is, for his almighty mercy in the next state. The psalmist expresses his confidence, "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and receive me into thy glory." Psal. 73. 24. After the safe conducting him through a world of troubles and temptations, he would bring him to heaven, a place of equal purity and glory. David when he was in pressing peril, addresses to God, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," Psal. 31. 5. to be preserved as a precious depositum; "thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." His assurance is built on God's right and title to him, "Thou hast redeemed me," and his everlasting

fidelity. The apostle speaks with full assurance, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. And, "we are confident, I say, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." St. Peter encourages christians when surrounded with death, "to commit their souls to him: wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." 1 Pet. 4. 1. He encourageth them to encounter death in its most formidable pomp, by considering their souls shall be safe for ever, upon the account of God's right and interest in them, and his fidelity: he has an original right in them by the first creation, as they are intellectual immortal spirits in their nature, but a nearer and more special right by a new and nobler creation, as they are renewed spirits, made like to him in his holiness, the most divine perfection. The relation of Creator implies his omnipotent love, and the attribute of faithful, his eternal love declared in his promises. There can never be the least cause to charge him with insincerity or inconstancy. "The favour of God is round about the righteous as a shield:" Psal. 5. "And his faithfulness is round about him," Psal. 89. that he is always ready to perform his promise to them. They may safely trust the worth of their souls, and the weight of eternity with him, who has said, "he will never leave them, nor forsake them."

Besides, the promise of a reward to the obedient children of God, is secured not only by his fidelity, but the declared equity of his proceedings in his final judgment. It is a regality invested in the crown of heaven to dispense rewards: "Whoever comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11. 6. His being and rewarding bounty are the foundations of religion. It is true, such is the distance between God and the creature, and the eternal obligations of it to God, that it can challenge nothing from God, as due to its merit. Justice unqualified with bounty and clemency, owes nothing to the most excellent obedience of the creature; though innocent. But since the fall, our best works are defective and defiled, and want pardon; and our heaviest sufferings are but light in the balance, against the exceeding weight of glory. But the apostle tells the Thessalonians, "It is

a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble you : and to you who are troubled, rest with us." Consider them in the comparison ; it is becoming his governing justice to punish the unrighteous persecutors, and reward his faithful servants who suffer for his glory. Now the present life, is the day for our work, as our Saviour saith, " I must do the work of him that sent me, while it is called to-day : " and at death, the " spirit returns to God that gave it, " in order to judgment, either fatal or favourable, according to the tenour of men's good works, and the desert of their bad. The promise is " to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, they shall obtain eternal life." Rom. 2. 7. Our Saviour encourages his suffering servants, " Be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life." The complete reward is reserved to the great day of universal recompences, when the sons of God by a regeneration, shall be the sons of a glorious resurrection. Luke 20. 35. But the Righteous Judge will give a present reward at the end of the day, to all that with unfainting perseverance have performed his work. Our Saviour tells us, Mat. 20. 9. that all who wrought in the vineyard, received their rewards " in the last hour of the day : " the parallel is instructive, that when the night of death comes, the reward will be dispensed. There is a law recorded concerning the paying wages to those who were hired, that it should be in the end of the day ; that it should not be detained " all night with thee until the morning." Deut. 24. 15. The allusion is very congruous, that God will fulfil his own law to his sons that serve him. The reward shall not abide with him the long dark interval, the night, wherein their bodies sleep in the grave, till the morning of the resurrection. Our Saviour promised the dying penitent, " To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The end of our faith is immediately attended with the salvation of the soul : the labour of faith being finished, is productive of the beatific vision in the state of light and glory. The sum is, that the children of God who have by constant conversation sincerely endeavoured to please and glorify him, may with an entire resignation commit their souls to his hands, as if an angel were sent from heaven to them in their dying agonies, with the comfortable message, that they should presently be with God.

(3.) The divine power, in conjunction with love and truth, is the foundation of our secure dependance upon God in our last hours. This consideration is absolutely necessary for our sure trust: for love without power is ineffectual, and power without love of no comfortable advantage to us. The apostle gives this reason of his cheerful and courageous sufferings in the service of God, "For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him, till that day." 2 Tim. 1. 12. His faith respected the promises of God concerning his salvation, which are infinitely sure, the divine power being all-sufficient to fulfil them. The precious depositum that is committed to his dear care, he can and will preserve inviolate. The Father of sincere believers, is "the Lord of heaven and earth," who by his word, without the least strain of his power, made the world, and preserves it from falling into confusion. It is the essence of faith, to assure us of God's almighty mercy to all that have the true characters of his children, that are qualified for his salvation. Our Redeemer joins the two relations of "our Father and our God;" the gracious and the glorious relations are inseparable. Now the love of our heavenly Father engages the power of our God, that we shall want nothing to secure our happiness, that is within the object of omnipo-tence.

I shall insist no further upon the consideration of the divine power, because it will return under some of the following heads of discourse.

II. The blessedness of this privilege is to be unfolded. This will appear by considering,

1. What is the depositum, the thing that is intrusted in God's hands.

2. What is implied in his receiving of it.

1. The depositum. It is the soul, the more excellent and immortal part of man, that is commended to God's keeping.

(1.) It is our more excellent part in its nature and capacity. Man is a compounded creature, of a body and a soul: the body in its original and resolution is earth; the soul is of a divine descent, a spiritual substance, and in the nobility and perfections of its nature, but "a little lower than the angels: it is the vile body, but the precious soul."

In its capacity it incomparably exceeds the body; for the body lives and moves in the low region of the senses, that are common with the worms of the earth; but the soul in its understanding and desires, is capable of communion with the blessed God, of grace and glory. From hence it is, that the whole world cannot make one man happy; for the ingredients of true and complete happiness are the perfection and satisfaction of the soul. The apostle tells us, "The less is blessed of the greater." Can the world bring perfection to man, that is so incomparably short of his imperfection? Our Saviour assures us, "the gain of the whole world cannot recompense the loss of one soul." There is a vast circuit in our desires, and all the lines terminate in the centre of blessedness. Can the world give sincere satisfaction to them? Solomon who was as rich and high as the world could make him, has left an everlasting testimony of the vanity of transient things, from his experimental observation, and the direction of the Holy Spirit: so he begins and ends his sermon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" Eccles. 1. 1. & 12. 8. so vain and vexing, that we shall not only be weary of them, but of this life, wherein we use them. Eccles. 1. 17. Can the creatures make us happy, when their emptiness, and anguish annexed to it, make our lives miserable? The world cannot satisfy our narrow senses: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," much less the infinite desires of our supreme faculties. Those who are now enchanted with its allurements, within a little while will see through its false colours. As when one awakes, all the pleasant scenes of fancy in his dream vanish; so when the soul is awakened in the end of life, "the world and the lusts thereof pass away," and the remembrance of them.

I shall add further; what clearer evidence can we have of the worth of the soul, than from God's esteem, the creator of it? Now when God foresaw the revolture of our first parent, that brought him under a double death in one sentence, temporal and eternal, and that all mankind was desperately lost in him, then his compassionate counsels were concerning his recovery: his love and wisdom accorded to contrive the means to accomplish our redemption, by the death of his incarnate Son: "we are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious

blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot and blemish." 1 Pet. 1. Of what value is a soul in God's account, that he bought with his own Son's blood, the most sacred treasure of heaven? * We may say for the honour of our Redeemer and our own, that which the angels cannot, we were so valued by God himself, that his Son became man, and died on the cross for the salvation of our souls. I shall only mention another evidence and effect of God's valuation of our souls, "the eternal weight of glory," which exceeds all the thoughts of our minds, and desires of our hearts. What are all the kingdoms and pleasures of the world, in comparison of that blessedness God has prepared "for those who love him?" Now the soul that is inestimably precious, and should be most dear to us, is secured from danger, when received by God's hands.

(2.) 'The soul is our immortal part. The body is compounded of jarring principles, frail and mortal: a casualty or sickness dissolves the vital union, and it falls to the dust. But the soul is a spirit by nature, and immortal by its inherent property. Its spiritual operations performed without the ministry of the senses, (the eye of the mind contemplates its objects, when the eyes of the body are closed) demonstrate its spiritual nature: for the being is the root of its working, and consequently that it exists independently upon the body: but of this we have the clearest assurance in the scripture. This is another demonstration that present things cannot make us happy, for they forsake us the first step we take into the next world, and then the soul enters into happiness or misery equally eternal. The immortality of the soul, and the immutability of its state, are inseparable then; for the present life is the time of our work, the next is of recompences according to our works. "If we die in the Lord," the consequence is infallible, we shall live with him for ever: if we die in our sins, we shall not be received by his merciful hands, but fall into his bottomless displeasure. And of what concernment is it to have our souls with God in that infinite and incomprehensible duration? All the measures of time, days and weeks, months and years, and ages, are swallowed up in that invisible depth, as the rivers that pour into the sea, are swallowed up without any overflowing of its waters. The dove

* O anima! erige te, tanti vales. *Aug. in Psal.* 103. †

that Noah let out of the ark, as a spy to discover whether the deluge was abated, found not a place to rest on; but after many circuits in the air, it returned to the ark. If our thoughts take wing, and multiply millions of millions of ages, we cannot rest in any computation, for there remains after all an entire innumerable eternity.

2. I will consider more particularly what is contained in this blessed privilege. The reception of the soul into God's hands, implies three things;—entire safety;—heavenly felicity;—it is a certain pledge of the reviving of the body, and its reunion with the soul in the state of glory.

(1.) Entire safety. After death the separate soul of a true believer immediately passes through the airy and ethereal regions to the highest heaven, the temple of God, the native seat and element of blessed spirits. The air is possessed by satan with his confederate army, who are rebels to God, and enemies to the souls of men: he is styled "the prince of the power of the air:" Ephes. 2. 2. he often raises storms and tempests, discharges thunder and lightning, the woful effects of which are felt in the lower world. The numbers, the strength, and the malice of the evil angels to the souls of men, render them very terrible; we may conjecture at their number, from what is related in the gospel, that "a legion possessed one man." Mark 5. 9. They are superior spirits to man, and though stripped of their moral excellencies, holiness, goodness and truth, yet retain their natural power at least in great degrees. Their malice is unquenchable. It is said of the devil, "He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." All the joy those malignant spirits are capable of, is the involving the souls of men in their desperate calamity. And though they know their opposing God will increase their guilt and torment, yet their diligence is equal to their malice, to seduce, pervert, and ruin souls for ever. Now when the saints die, all the powers of darkness would, if possible, hinder the ascension of their souls to God. What David complains of his cruel enemies, is applicable in this case, "their souls are among lions;" and if destitute of divine preservation, the danger would be the same; as if a little flock of lambs were to encounter with a great number of fierce lions, or fiery dragons. Anger sets an edge upon power, and makes a combatant but of equal strength to over-

come. How dangerous then would the condition be of naked souls, opposed by over-matching enemies, armed with rage against them? How easily would they hurry them to the abyss, the den of dragons, the prison where lost souls are secured to the day of judgment?

But all the potentates of hell are infinitely inferior to God: they are restrained and tortured by the chains of his powerful justice: a legion of them could not enter into the swine without his permission, much less can they touch "the apple of his eye." That black prince with all his infernal host cannot intercept one naked soul from arriving at the kingdom of glory. Our Saviour assures us, "none is able to pluck them out of his Father's hands." John 10. 29. The Lord Christ our head and leader, having vanquished in his last battle on the cross, principalities and powers, made his triumphant ascension to glory: thus his members having overcome their spiritual enemies, shall by the same almighty power be carried through the dominions of satan, "in the sight of their enemies," (tormented with the remembrance of their lost happiness, and envy that human souls should partake of it) to the place of God's glorious residence.

I shall also observe, that as the Lord is a God of power, so he is a God of order, and uses subordinate means for the accomplishment of his will. Our Saviour has revealed, that the angels transport the separate souls of the righteous to heaven: those glorious spirits, who always behold the face of God, such is their exact obedience to him, and perfect love to his children, that they disdain not to protect his little ones in this open state. They "rejoice at the conversion of sinners," Matt. 18. 10. at their first entrance into the way of life, and with tender watchfulness encompass them here, never withdrawing their protecting presence, till they bring them to their celestial country, and resign their charge to the Lord of life. How safe are the departed saints, when conveyed through satan's territories by the royal guard of angels "that excel in strength?"

(2.) Heavenly felicity, The receiving of holy souls into God's hands, is introductive into his presence, which is both a sanctuary to secure us from all evil, and a storehouse to furnish us with all that is good. "The Lord is a sun and a shield:" he is to intellectual beings, what the sun is to sensitive, com-

municates light and life, and joy to them. "In his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand are rivers of pleasure for ever." Psal. 16. 11. All that is evil and afflicting, is abolished: all that is desirable, is conferred upon his children. A glimpse or reflected ray of his reconciled and favourable countenance, even in this lower world, infuses into the hearts of his children a "joy unspeakable and glorious:" a taste of the divine goodness here, causes a disrelish of all the carnal sweets, the dreggy delights which natural men so greedily desire. And if the faint dawn be so reviving and comfortable, what is the brightness of the full day? None can understand the happiness that results from the full and eternal sight of God's face, and the fruition of his love, but those who enjoy the presence of God in perfection. His goodness is truly infinite; the more the saints above know it, and enjoy it, the more they esteem it, and delight in it. His complete and communicative love satisfies the immense desires of that innumerable company of blessed spirits that are before his throne: there is no envy, no avarice, no ambition in that kingdom, where "God is all in all."

The divine presence is an ever-flowing fountain of felicity. The continual reflection upon this, makes heaven to be heaven to the blessed: their security is as valuable as their felicity: they are above all danger of losing it. Methinks the belief of this should cause us, as it were with wings of fire, with most ardent desires to fly to the bosom of God, the alone centre of our souls, where we shall rest for ever.

(3.) The reception of the soul into heaven is a certain pledge of the resurrection of the body, and its re-union with the soul in the state of glory. The covenant of God was made with the entire persons of believers: therefore under the law the sacred seal of it was in their flesh. To be the God of promise to them, implies his being a blessed rewarder to them. Our Saviour silences the sadducees, who disbelieved the resurrection, from the tenour of God's covenant, "I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," which title he was pleased to retain after their death; "now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The immediate inference from thence is, that their souls did actually live in blessedness, and that their bodies, though dead to nature, were alive to God with respect to his promise and power. If we consider that the divine law binds

the outward man as well as the inward, and that during the time of our work and trial here, our service and sufferings for the glory of God are from the concurrence of the soul and body, it will appear that the promise of the reward belongs to both, and that the receiving of the soul into heaven, is an earnest of our full redemption, even that of the body. It is true, there is no visible difference between the bodies of the saints and of the wicked here; they are sick with the same diseases, and die in the same manner. As it is with trees in deep winter, when they are covered with snow, we cannot distinguish which are absolutely dead and destined to the axe and fire, and which retain their sap, and will be fruitful and flourishing in the returning year: so the dead bodies of the godly and ungodly, to external appearance, are alike: but what a vast difference will be between them in the next world! The bodies of the ungodly, in conjunction with their souls, shall be cast into the lake of fire; the bodies of the godly resumed by their souls, shall enjoy a full and flourishing happiness for ever.

THE APPLICATION.

1. This may inform us of the contrary states into which dying persons immediately pass: the children of God resign their spirits to the hands of their gracious heavenly Father, but rebels and strangers to God, fall "into the hands of" a revenging Judge. Could we see the attending spirits that surround sick persons in their last hours, what a wonderful impression would it make upon us? A guard of glorious angels convey the departed saints to the bosom of God's love, and the kingdom of his glory. But when the wicked die, a legion of furies seize upon their expected prey, and hurry them to the infernal prison, from whence there is no redemption.

How many rebels and open enemies to God are in the pale of the christian church? They will loudly repeat, "Our Father which art in heaven," notwithstanding the impudent and palpable atheism of their lives: they live as if they were independent, and not accountable to him "who will judge the world without respect of persons." The more strict his commands are, the contempt of them is more visible. Our Saviour's prohibition is peremptory, "I say unto you, swear not at all:"

but how many make no more conscience of swearing than they do of speaking, and pour forth oaths of all fashions and sizes. We are severely forbid all degrees of impurity, in the look, in words, or in wish; yet how many without reflection or remorse, continue in the deepest pollutions! We are commanded to "live soberly in this present world;" yet how many indulge their swinish appetites, and debase themselves even below the beasts that perish. And as the sensual appetites are notoriously predominant in some, so the angry appetite is tyrannous in others, pride, wrath, revenge, possess the breasts of many: how often for a slight, or but reputed injury, they are so fired with passion, that their hot blood cannot be satisfied without the cold blood of their enemies. In short, many live in such open defiance of the divine law, as if there were no God to see and punish their sins, or as if they would make a trial whether he will be true to his threatening, and revenge their bold impieties: they are partly worse than brutes; for having an understanding faculty, a principle of reason, they submit it to sense: and partly worse than devils; for, as the devils, they rebel against God, and yet not, as they, tremble in their rebellion. Now when death is ready with its cold hands to close their eyes, and conscience awakes out of its slumber, what horrors seize upon them! They are stripped of their carnal securities, the creature cannot help them, and the Creator will not. They have been enemies to that love that made them and preserved them, and, notwithstanding their violent provocations, has spared them so long. They have rejected that infinitely condescending and compassionate love, that so tenderly beseeched them to be reconciled to God, as if it were his interest to save them. Whither will they fly from their Judge? What can rescue them from instant and irrevocable misery? Can they hope that mercy will be their advocate? Their condemnation is so righteous, that mercy cannot dispense with it. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," who lives for ever, and can punish for ever. Who "knows the power of his wrath?" It is boundless beyond all our thoughts and time. O take notice of this with terror, "all ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!" Psal. 50. 22.

Others are not so visibly disobedient as notorious sinners, but are as really. You may see their picture in the disobedient son,

mentioned by our Saviour in the gospel, who "when his father commanded him to go work in the vineyard, answered, I go, Sir, and went not." Matt. 21. 28, 30. It is true, they perform the external part of some duties, and abstain from the gross acts of some sins, but it is with an exception and a reserve. A duty that is contrary to their carnal appetites and interest, they will not perform; a sin that bribes them with profit or pleasure, a temperamental sin, they will not part with. Now any indulged habitual lust "is not the spot of God's children," but denominates the sinner a child of the devil: for though the saints till they are divested of frail flesh, have their allays, and cannot be exempt from the relics of sin; yet the divine nature communicated to them, is opposite to every sin, and is an active principle to subdue sin.

And from hence St. John tells us, "He that is born of God, cannot sin," that is, deliberately and habitually: such sinners, though in the hour of death they may address with all the applying titles, "our Father, and our God," shall ever be excluded from his sacred and saving protection.

2. Let us seriously consider whether we are of this spiritual progeny, the children of God, not only in title, but in reality. The inquiry is of infinite moment; for all the promises and privileges of the gospel are annexed to this sonship: this secures us from "the wrath to come," and entitles us to the eternal inheritance; "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12. 32. This inquiry is very useful to calm and quiet the troubled saints, and to awaken unregenerate persons out of their confident dream of their good state. Many sincere christians are infinitely concerned whether they are the children of God; of this their tears and fears give abundant evidence. The reasons of their doubts are partly the jealousy of their own hearts, which are naturally "deceitful above all things," and most deceitful to a man's self; and partly from the consequence of the deceit: for knowing the inestimable value of this privilege, "to be the sons of God," and that if they are deceived in it, they are undone for ever, they are anxiously thoughtful about it. But carnal persons who are not acquainted with the hypocrisy of their hearts, nor duly understand the excellence of the privilege, easily believe what they coldly desire. And the great deceiver of souls is equally

subtile to varnish what is evil with the false colours of good, and to conceal what is good under the appearance of evil. From hence it is, that many tender spirited christians are timorous, and full of unquiet agitations all their lives : and many who have but a show and fair pretence of religion, are undisturbed and hopeful, till at last they fall from their supposed heaven and high hopes, into the abyss of misery.

This trial will be most clear and convincing, by representing from scripture the inseparable properties and characters of the children of God, that distinguish them from all that are in the state of unrenewed nature. The apostle tells sincere christians, "The Spirit itself witnesses with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Here is a consent and agreement of those witnesses, in whom are all that are requisite to give value to their testimony. For the Spirit of God, such is his unerring knowledge, "who searches the deep things of God," and such is the absolute sanctity of his nature, that he can neither deceive nor be deceived, so that his testimony is infinitely sure, and of more worth than the concurrent testimony of heaven and earth, of angels and men. The other witness is the renewed conscience, that is acquainted with the aims and affections of the heart, as the apostle saith, "Who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man?" This faculty reflects upon our actions, and the principles of them : to this faculty is referred the decision of our spiritual state : "If our hearts condemn us not" of any allowed sin, "then have we peace towards God." 1 John 3. 20. From the consent and agreement of these witnesses, there is a blessed assurance of our evangelical sonship, that overcomes all our fears. Now this testimony is rational and argumentative, from the discovery of those graces that constitute a person the child of God. I will make the inquiry concerning the grace of faith and of love, which are the vital bands of our union with Christ, the principal fruits of the sanctifying Spirit, and the symptoms of salvation.

(1.) The grace of faith is expressed in scripture by "receiving of Christ;" John 1. 12. this answers to God's offer of him to our acceptance in the gospel. It receives him entirely in his person and natures, as the incarnate Son of God : and in his office, as "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." Acts 5. 13. This receiving Christ implies an

act of the understanding and the will ; the understanding assents to the truth of the divine revelation, that Christ crucified is an all-sufficient Saviour ; and the will closes with the terms of it, " That he will save to the uttermost all that obey him : " from hence it follows, that reliance upon him, and a sincere resolution to obey him, are necessarily included in saving faith. This scripture-account distinguishes between that substantial faith that is proper to the elect children of God, and the shadow of it in the unregenerate ; the one is the intimate and active principle of obedience, the other is a dead assent without efficacy, a mere carcass and counterfeit of faith. A sincere believer as fervently desires to be saved from the dominion and pollution of his sins, as from the guilt and deadly malignity : a carnal man desires an interest in Christ as a Saviour, that he may securely enjoy his lusts.

The crafty and cursed serpent deceives men to their ruin, by citing scripture, and misapplying it. The promise is sure, " Whoever believes, shall be saved ; " and he easily persuades them they are believers. It is strange to astonishment, that men who have reason and understanding, should presume in a high degree of the present favour of God, and their future happiness, as if they were his dear children, when their enmity against his holy name and will is evident in their actions.

We can never have too firm a dependance on God's promise, when we are qualified for that dependance. " Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18. Faith that purifies the heart and conversation, invests us with this blessed privilege, and all the saving mercies annexed to it.

(2.) From the spiritual relation between God and believers, there naturally and necessarily results a sincere, dutiful, child-like love to him, correspondent to his beneficent and fatherly love to them : this God indispensably requires, and specially delights in ; " Thou lovest truth in the inward parts." Psal. 51. Filial obedience is inseparable from filial love in its reality : " For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." 1 John 5. 3. Our Saviour distinguishes between sincere lovers of him, and pretended, that " they who love him, keep his

commandments ; but they who love him not, keep not his commandments." John 14. 23, 24.

The obedience that springs from love to God is uniform, respects all his commands : for the two filial affections, an ardent desire to please God in all things, and an ingenuous fear of displeasing him in any thing, are inseparably joined with our love to him.

The obedience that proceeds from love, is free and voluntary, from inclination as well as duty. How passionately does the holy psalmist express his affection, " O how I love thy law ! " In the covenant of grace, God promises to " write his law in the hearts of his children : " not only in their minds and memories, but to endear it to their affections. There is much difference between servile and constrained obedience, and filial chosen obedience, as between the motion of a living man from the soul, the inward spring of life, and the motion of an image or statue from forcible weights and wheels.

From filial love proceeds godly sorrow, if at any time by carelessness and surprise, or an overpowering temptation, his children do what is offensive and odious in his sight. When they consider their unkind and unthankful returns for his mercies, they look to their heavenly Father with grief and shame, and down upon themselves with abhorrence and indignation. They are wounded with the sting of that expostulation, " Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ? Is he not thy Father who bought thee ? " Deut. 32. 6.

From filial love proceeds a zeal for his glory ; " If I be a father, where is my honour ? " A child of God is dearly concerned that his name be revered and magnified, his laws be observed, his worship maintained, that his interest be advanced in the world. He has a burning zeal against sin and presumptuous sinners. The prophet Elijah says, " I have been jealous for the Lord of hosts : for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, and thrown down thine altars." Those who with an indifferent eye see the cause, the truth, the interest of God depressed in the world, do renounce the title of his children.

From the relation to God as his sons, proceeds a sincere fervent love to all the saints. St. John infers, " Every one that

loveth him that beget, loveth him that is begotten." 1 John 5. 1. Grace is not less powerful in producing cordial mutual affections between the children of the same heavenly Father, than the subordinate endearments of nature. Notwithstanding the civil distinction between them, some high and rich, others mean and poor, yet there is a spiritual equality; the lowest saints are princes of the blood-royal of heaven. "To him that has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests to God, be glory for ever." Rev. 1. 5.

The filial relation to God inclines and encourages all sincere christians to resign themselves, even in their most afflicted condition, to the wisdom and will of God. Our Saviour meekly yielded up himself to his cruel enemies, upon this consideration, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" John 18. 11. The saints in imitation of Christ, and upon the same ground, entirely resign themselves to the divine disposal; for their heavenly Father loves them better than they can love themselves.

Finally. The filial relation to God is productive, as of lively hopes, so of ardent desires to be with him. Love makes them to esteem communion with him here in his holy ordinances, as the joy of their lives. The psalmist when banished from the tabernacle, breaks forth in his impatient desires, "When shall I come and appear before God?" that is, in the place where he communicates his grace to those that worship him. But our Father is in heaven as his throne, and most gloriously exhibits himself to his saints there. The earth is the element and residence of carnal men, of their souls as well as their bodies: they desire their "inheritance may be on this side Jordan," and are content to leave the heavenly Canaan to those who like it. But those who "are born from above," desire "to be dissolved," that they may be in their Father's house, and his reviving presence for ever.

3. Let us be persuaded to prepare for the reception of our souls in the next world. The present life is a passage to eternity, and it is so short and fading, so uncertain and hazardous, that it is our principal wisdom without delay to secure our souls in the future state. Our Saviour says, "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of

salvation." John 9. 4. It is our indispensable duty, and main interest now, "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." In the state of death there is an incapacity to do any thing in order to salvation: "there is no work nor wisdom in the grave:" and all the offers of salvation cease for ever. The sufferings of the Son of God are not a ransom for sinners in that state: "He reconciled things in earth and in heaven," but not things in hell. The golden sceptre is extended to none there, the Holy Spirit strives with none, they are without the reserves of mercy. The guilt of sin remains in its full obligation, the pollution of sin in its deepest dye, and the punishment of sin in its extremity for ever.

O what folly is it, or rather frenzy, not to provide for our souls in their greatest exigence! Common reason instructs us, knowing our own weakness, to commit our treasure to the custody of our friends, which we cannot otherwise keep from our enemies; especially to such a friend as can and will preserve it for our use and advantage. The soul is our jewel above all price, it is our wisdom to secure it out of all danger: let us therefore commit it to the safe and sure hands of our heavenly Father, otherwise we cannot preserve it from the infernal spirits, the robbers and murderers of souls.

The wise preacher denounces a fearful evil, "Woe be to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." Eccles. 4. 10. In all the senses of falling, death is the greatest fall: the high, the honourable, the rich, fall from all their state; and men of all degrees are forsaken of all their carnal comforts and supports. If then the solitary soul has not a God to receive, support and comfort it, how woful is its condition! Methinks the apprehension of this should strike a terror so deep into the hearts of men, that they should be restless till they have secured a retreat for their departing souls.

For this end let us, according to the earnest advice of St. Peter, "be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Pet. 3.

The Lord Jesus is the only peace-maker of the righteous and holy God to sinners. The Judge of this world is flaming with wrath, and terrible in vengeance to sinners that appear before his tribunal out of Christ. We shall for ever be excluded from his blessed communion, without the Mediator restore us to his

favour. Our reconciliation only is by "redemption in his blood." Col. 1. 20. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." He is "the Lord our righteousness," by whom alone we can stand in judgment. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." There is now an act of oblivion offered in the gospel to all that come "to God by him." We have sure salvation in his name: but we must with consenting wills, close with him as our Lord and life. The first gospel preached by the angel after his coming into the world, declares, "There was born in the city of David a Saviour, Christ the Lord." We must not separate between Christ the Saviour, and Christ the Lord; between his salvation and his dominion. God indispensably requires we should resign ourselves to his Son as our king, and rely upon him as our priest to atone his displeasure. If we thus receive him, he will restore us to the favour and peace of God, established in an everlasting covenant.

How tenderly and compassionately does the great God invite sinners to re-enter into his favour, "to acquaint ourselves with him, and to be at peace! His ambassadors in his name, and in Christ's stead beseech them to be reconciled to God." But their perverse spirits would "have God reconciled to them," that they might be exempt from punishment; but are "unwilling to be reconciled to him," to part with their lusts. In short, reconciliation with God necessarily infers defiance with sin. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." If men do not cease their rebellion, there is no shadow of hope to obtain the divine favour.

"Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy, are you stronger than he?" Jealousy is the most sensible and severe affection. As it is with a town taken by storm, all that are found in arms are without mercy cut off; so all that at death are found with the "weapons of unrighteousness," their unrepented unforsaken sins about them, must expect "judgment without mercy."

Lastly. Let the children of God be encouraged with peace and joy to commend their souls to him. Let rebellious sinners tremble with deadly fear upon the brink of eternity; but let the saints, with a lively hope, enter into the divine world.

If men possess their treasure with joy and jealousy, and guard it with vigilant care, will not God preserve his dearest treasure, the souls of his children committed to his trust?

Can love forsake, can truth deceive, can almighty power fail? Will a father, a heavenly Father, be without bowels to his own offspring? No, he cannot deny himself: he is readiest to relieve, when they are in distress.

Old Simeon is a leading example to believers: after he had embraced Christ in his arms, how earnestly did he desire his dissolution? "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." St. Stephen in the midst of a shower of stones, with a blessed tranquillity, makes his dying prayer, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." If the fears of humble souls arise in that hour, because they have not the conspicuous marks of God's children, the grace of the Spirit in that degree of eminency, as some saints have had: let them consider, there are different ages among the children of God: some are in a state of infancy and infirmity; others are more confirmed: but the relation is the same in all, and gives an interest in his promised mercy. The weakness of their faith cannot frustrate God's faithfulness. It is the sincerity, not the strength of grace, that is requisite to salvation. If faith be shaking "as a bruised reed," and but kindling as the "smoking flax," it shall be victorious. O that these powerful comforts may encourage dying christians to commend their souls with ardency and assurance to God, their father, and felicity.

I have now finished my discourse upon the text, and shall apply myself to speak of the other subject, the Reverend Mr. Richard Baxter, that excellent instrument of divine grace, to recover and restore so many revolted souls to God, out of the empire of his enemy: or in the apostle's language, "to translate them from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. 1. 13. I am sensible, that in speaking of him I shall be under a double disadvantage: for those who perfectly knew him, will be apt to think my account of him to be short and defective, an imperfect shadow of his resplendent virtues: others who were unacquainted with his extraordinary worth, will from ignorance or envy be inclined to think his just praises to be undue and excessive. Indeed if love could make me eloquent, I should use all the most lively and graceful colours of language to adorn his memory: but this consideration relieves me in the consciousness of my disability, that a plain narrative

of what Mr. Baxter was, and did, will be a most noble elogy: and that his substantial piety no more needs artificial oratory to set it off, than refined gold wants paint to add lustre and value to it.

I shall not speak of his parentage, and his first years: but I must not omit a testimony I received concerning his early piety. His father said with tears of joy to a friend, my son Richard I hope was sanctified from the womb: for when he was a little boy in coats, if he heard other children in play speak profane words, he would reprove them to the wonder of those that heard him.

He had not the advantage of academical education: but by the divine blessing upon his rare dexterity and diligence, his sacred knowledge was in that degree of eminence, as few in the University ever arrive to. Not long after his entrance into the ministry the civil war began, and the times rained blood so long, till the languishing state of the kingdom, was almost desperate and incurable. How far he was concerned as a chaplain in the parliament's army, he has published an account, and the reasons of it.

After the war, he was fixed at Kidderminster. There his ministry by the divine influence, was of admirable efficacy. The harvest answered the seed that was sowed. Before his coming, the place was like a piece of dry and barren earth, only ignorance and profaneness as natives of the soil were rife among them; but by the blessing of heaven upon his labour and cultivating, the face of paradise appeared there in all the fruits of righteousness. Many were translated from the state of polluted nature, to the state of grace; and many were advanced to higher degrees of holiness. The bad were changed to good, and the good to better. 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, and his intimate ardent affections to God; from the "abundance of the heart his lips spake." His soul took wing for heaven, and rapt 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.

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 with 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 an unrenewed soul! O wonderful folly and distractedness of the ungodly! That ever men can forget, I say again, that they can forget, eternal joy, eternal woe, and the eternal God, and the place of their eternal unchangeable abodes, when they stand even at the door; and there is but a thin veil of flesh between them and that amazing sight, that eternal gulf, and they are daily dying and stepping in."

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,

* His sermon before the House of Commons, 1660.

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. While he was at Kidderminster, he wrote and published that accomplished model of an evangelical minister, styled *Gildas Salvianus*, or the Reformed Pastor: in that book he clears beyond all cavil, that the duty of ministers is not confined to their study and the pulpit, but that they should make use of opportunities to instruct families within their care, as it is said by the apostle, that he had kept back nothing from his hearers "that was profitable, but had taught them publicly, and from house to house." The idea of a faithful minister delineated in that book, was a copy taken from the life, from his own zealous example. 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.

While he remained at Kidderminster, his illustrious worth was not shaded in a corner, but dispersed its beams and influence round the country. By his counsel and excitation, the ministers in Worcestershire, episcopal, presbyterian and congregational were united, that by their studies, labours, and advice, the doctrine and practice of religion, the truths and holiness of the gospel might be preserved in all the churches committed to their charge. This association was of excellent use, the ends of church-government were obtained by it: and it was a leading example to the ministers of other counties. Mr. Baxter was not above his brethren ministers, by a superior title, or any secular advantage, but by his divine endowments and separate excellencies, his extraordinary wisdom, zeal, and fidelity: he was the soul of that happy society.

He continued among his beloved people, till the year 1660; then he came to London. A while after the king's restoration, there were many endeavours used in order to an agreement between the episcopal and presbyterian ministers. For this end several of the bishops elect, and of the ministers, were called to

attend the king at Worcester-house : there was read to them a declaration, drawn up with great wisdom and moderation, by the lord chancellor the earl of Clarendon. I shall only observe that in reading the several parts of the declaration, Dr. Morley was the principal manager of the conference among the bishops, and Mr. Baxter among the ministers : and one particular I cannot forget ; it was desired by the ministers, that the bishops should exercise their church power with the counsel and consent of presbyters. This limiting of their authority was so displeasing, that Dr. Cosins, then elect of Durham, said, If your majesty grants this you will unbishop your bishops. Dr. Reynolds upon this produced the book, entitled, ' The portraiture of his sacred majesty in his solitude and sufferings,' and read the following passage : ' Not that I am against the managing of this presidency and authority in one man by the joint counsel and consent of many presbyters : I have offered to restore that, as a fit means to avoid those errors, corruptions and partialities, which are incident to any one man : also to avoid tyranny, which becomes no christians, least of all church-men. Besides, it will be a means to take away that burden and odium of affairs, which may lie too heavy on one man's shoulders, as indeed I think it did formerly on the bishops here.' The good doctor thought, that the judgment of the king's afflicted and inquiring father would have been of great moment to incline him to that temperament : but the king presently replied, ' All that is in that book is not gospel.' My lord chancellor prudently moderated in that matter, that the bishops, in weighty causes, should have the assistance of the presbyters.

Mr. Baxter considering the state of our affairs in that time, was well pleased with that declaration : he was of Calvin's mind, who judiciously observes, upon our Saviour's words, that " the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend ;" *Qui ad extirpandum quicquid displicet præpostere festinant, antevertant christi judicium, & ereptum angelis officium sibi temere usurpant.* ' They that make too much haste to redress at once all things that are amiss, anticipate the judgment of Christ, and rashly usurp the office of the angels.' Besides, that declaration granted such a freedom to conscientious ministers, that were unsatisfied as to the old conformity, that if it had been observed, it

had prevented the dreadful division succeeded afterward. But when there was a motion made in the house of commons, that the declaration might pass into an act, it was opposed by one of the secretaries of state, which was a sufficient indication of the king's averseness to it.

After the declaration there were many conferences at the Savoy between the bishops and some doctors of their party, with Mr. Baxter and some other ministers, for an agreement, wherein his zeal for peace was most conspicuous: but all was in vain. Of the particulars that were debated, he has given an account in print.

Mr. Baxter, after his coming to London, during the time of liberty, did not neglect that which was the principal exercise of his life, the preaching the gospel, being always sensible of his duty of saving souls. He preached at St. Dunstan's on the Lord's-days in the afternoon. I remember one instance of his firm faith in the divine providence, and his fortitude when he was engaged in his ministry there. The church was old, and the people were apprehensive of some danger in meeting in it: and while Mr. Baxter was preaching, something in the steeple fell down, and the noise struck such a terror into the people, they presently, in a wild disorder, ran out of the church: their eagerness to haste away, put all into a tumult: Mr. Baxter, without visible disturbance, sat down in the pulpit: after the hurry was over, he resumed his discourse, and said, to compose their minds; 'We are in the service of God to prepare ourselves, that we may be fearless at the great noise of the dissolving world, when the heavens shall pass away, and the elements melt in fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein shall be burnt up.'

After the church of St. Dunstan's was pulled down in order to its re-building, he removed to Black-Friars, and continued his preaching there to a vast concourse of hearers, till the fatal Bartholomew.

In the year 1661, a parliament was called, wherein was passed the act of uniformity, that expelled from their public places about two thousand ministers. I will only take notice concerning the causes of that proceeding, that the old clergy from wrath and revenge, and the young gentry from their servile compliance with the court, and their distaste of serious religion,

were very active to carry on and complete that act. That this is no rash imputation upon the ruling clergy then is evident, not only from their concurrence in passing that law, for actions have a language as convincing as that of words, but from Dr. Sheldon then bishop of London their great leader; who when the lord chamberlain Manchester told the king, while the act of uniformity was under debate, 'that he was afraid the terms of it were so rigid, that many of the ministers would not comply with it;' he replied, 'I am afraid they will.' This act was passed after the king had engaged his faith and honour in his declaration from Breda, 'to preserve the liberty of conscience inviolate,' which promise opened the way for his restoration; and after the royalists here, had given public assurance, that all former animosities should be buried, 'as rubbish under the foundation of a universal concord.' Mr. Baxter was involved with so many ministers in this calamity, who was their brightest ornament, and the best defence of their righteous, though oppressed cause: two observations he made upon that act and our ejection.

The one was, that the ministers were turned and kept out from the public exercise of their office, in that time of their lives, that was most fit to be dedicated and employed for the service and glory of God, that is between thirty and sixty years, when their intellectual and instrumental faculties were in their vigour. The other was in a letter to me after the death of several bishops who were concurrent in passing that act, and expressed no sorrow for it: his words were, 'for ought I see, the bishops will own the turning of us out, at the tribunal of Christ, and thither we appeal.'

After the act of uniformity had taken its effect, in the ejection of so many ministers, there was sometimes a connivance at the private exercise of their ministry, sometimes public indulgence granted, and often a severe prosecution of them, as the popish and politic interest of the court varied. When there was liberty, Mr. Baxter applied himself to his delightful work, to the great advantage of those who enjoyed his ministry. But the church-party opposed vehemently the liberty that was granted. Indeed such was their fierceness, that if the dissenting ministers 'had been as wise as serpents, and as innocent as doves,' they could not escape their deep censures. The pulpit

represented them as seditiously disaffected to the state, as obstinate schismatics, and often the 'Name of God was not only taken in vain, but in violence,' to authorize their hard speeches, and harder actions against them. Some drops of that storm fell upon Mr. Baxter, who calmly submitted to their injurious dealings. I shall speak of that afterward.

In the interval, between his deprivation and his death, he wrote and published the most of his books, of which I shall give some account.

His books, for their number and 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 of the very Reverend 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.' I shall add what he said with admiration of him another time, '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 vivacity of imagination, and such solidity and depth of judgment, as rarely meet together. 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. He published several books against the papists with that clearness and strength, as will confound, if not convince them. He said, 'he only desired armies and antiquity against the papists:' armies, because of their bloody religion so often exemplified in England, Ireland, France and other countries. However they may appear on the stage, they are always the same persons in the tiring-room: their religion binds them to extirpate heretics, and often overrules the milder inclinations of their nature: antiquity, because they are inveigled with a fond pretence to it, as if it were favourable to their cause: but it has been demonstrated by many

learned protestants, that the argument of antiquity is directly against the principal doctrines of popery, as that of the supremacy, of transubstantiation, of image-worship, and others.

He has wrote several excellent books * against the impudent atheism of this loose age. In them he establishes the fundamental principle, upon which the whole fabric of christianity is built; that after this short uncertain life, there is a future state of happiness or misery equally eternal, and that death is the last irrevocable step into that unchangeable state. From hence it follows by infallible consequence, that the reasonable creature should prefer the interest of the soul before that of the body, and secure eternal life. This being laid, he proves the christian religion to be the only way of fallen man's being restored to the favour of God, and obtaining a blessed immortality. This great argument he manages with that clearness and strength, that none can refuse assent unto it, without denying the infallible principles of faith, and the evident principles of nature.

He also published some warm discourses, to apologize for the preaching of dissenting ministers, and to excite them to do their duty. He did not think that the act of uniformity could disoblige them from the exercise of their office. It is true, magistrates are titular-gods by their deputation and viceroyalty, but subordinate and accountable to God above. Their laws have no binding force upon the conscience, but from his command; and if contrary to his law, are to be disobeyed. The ministers consecrated to the service of God are under a moral perpetual obligation of preaching the saving truths of the gospel, as they have opportunity. There needs no miraculous testimony of their commission from heaven, to authorize the doing their ordinary duty.

In some points of modern controversy he judiciously chose the middle way, and advised young divines to follow it. His reverence of the divine purity, made him very shy and jealous of any doctrine that seemed to reflect a blemish and stain upon it. He was a clear asserter of the sovereign freeness, and infallible efficacy of divine grace in the conversion of souls. In a sermon

* His books of the reasonableness of the christian religion.

reaching the words of the covenant of grace; "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me;" he observed the tenour of it was, "I will, and you shall." Divine grace makes the rebellious will obedient, but does not make the will to be no will. By the illumination of the mind, the will is inclined to obedience, according to the words of our Saviour, "All that have heard and learned of the Father come to me." He preached that the death of Christ was certainly effectual for all the elect to make them partakers of grace and glory; and that it was so far beneficial to all men, that they are not left in the same desperate state with the fallen angels, but are made capable of salvation by the grace of the gospel: not capable as efficient to convert themselves, but as subjects to receive saving grace. He did so honour the sincerity of God, as entirely to believe his will declared in his word: he would not interpret the promises of the gospel in a less gracious sense than God intended them: therefore if men finally perish, it is not for want of mercy in God, nor merits in Christ, but for their wilfully refusing salvation.

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 screen, and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in those dreadful colours, that if duly considered, would check and control the unbridled licentious appetites of the most sensual wretches.

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 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.

He that was so solicitous for the salvation of others, was not negligent of his own; but as regular love requires, his first care was to prepare himself for heaven. 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 sensible 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.

Though all divine graces, the "fruit of the Spirit," were visible in his conversation, yet some were more eminent.

Humility is to other graces, as the morning-star is to the sun; that goes before it, and follows it in the evening: humility prepares us for the receiving of grace, "God gives grace to the humble:" and it follows the exercise of grace; "Not I," says the apostle, "but the grace of God in me." In Mr. Baxter there was a rare union of sublime knowledge, and other spiritual excellencies, with the lowest opinion of himself. He wrote to one that sent a letter to him full of expressions of honour and esteem, 'You do admire one you do not know; knowledge will cure your error. The more we know God, the more reason we see to admire him;' but our knowledge of the creature discovers its imperfections, and lessens our esteem. To the same person expressing his veneration of him for his excellent gifts and graces, he replied with heat, 'I have the remainders of pride in me, how dare you blow up the sparks of it?' He desired some ministers, his chosen friends, to meet at his house, and spend a day in prayer for his direction in a matter of moment: before the duty was begun, he said, 'I have desired your assistance at this time, because I believe God will sooner hear your prayers than

wide.' He imitated St. Austin both in his penitential confessions, and retractions. In conjunction with humility, he had great candour for others. He could willingly bear with persons of differing sentiments: 'he would not prostitute his own judgment, nor ravish anothers.' He did not over-estimate himself; nor under-value others. He would give liberal encomiums of many conforming divines. He was severe to himself, but candid in excusing the faults of others. Whereas, the busy inquirer and censurer of the faults of others, is usually the easy neglecter of his own.

Self-denial and contempt of the world were shining graces in him. I never knew any person less indulgent to himself, and more indifferent to his temporal interest. The offer of a bishopric was no temptation to him: for his exalted soul despised the pleasures and profits which others so earnestly desire; he valued not an empty title upon his tomb.

His patience was truly christian. God does often try his children by afflictions, to exercise their graces, to occasion their victory, and to entitle them to a triumphant felicity.

This saint was tried by many afflictions. We are very tender of our reputation: his name was obscured under a cloud of detraction. Many slanderous darts were thrown at him. He was charged with schism and sedition. He was accused for his paraphrase upon the New Testament, as guilty of disloyal aspersions upon the government, and condemned, unheard, to a prison, where he remained for some years. But he was so far from being moved at the unrighteous prosecution, that he joyfully said to a constant friend, 'What could I desire more of God, than after having served him to my power, I should now be called to suffer for him.' One who had been a fierce dissenter, was afterward rankled with an opposite heat, and very contumeliously in his writings reflected upon Mr. Baxter, who calmly endured his contempt: and when the same person published a learned discourse in defence of christianity, Mr. Baxter said, 'I forgive him all for his writing that book.' Indeed he was so much the more truly honourable, as he was thought worthy of the hatred of those persons.

It is true, the censures and reproaches of others whom he esteemed and loved, touched him in the tender part. But he,

with the great apostle, counted it a "small thing to be judged by man's judgment." He was entire to his conscience, and independent upon the opinion of others. But his patience was more eminently tried by his continual pains and languishing. Martyrdom is a more easy way of dying, when the combat and the victory are finished at once, than to die by degrees every day. His complaints were frequent, but who ever heard an unsubmitive word drop from his lips? He was not put out of his patience, nor out of the possession of himself. In his sharp pains, he said, 'I have a rational patience, and a believing patience, though sense would recoil.'

His pacific spirit was a clear character of his being a child of God. How sedently he endeavoured to cement the breaches among us, which others widen and keep open, is publicly known. He said to a friend, 'I can as willingly be a martyr for love, as for any article of the creed.' It is strange to astonishment, that those who agree in the substantial and great points of the reformed religion, and are of differing sentiments only in things not so clear, nor of that moment as those wherein they consent, should still be opposite parties. Methinks the remembrance how our divisions lately exposed us to our watchful adversary, and were almost fatal to the interest of religion, should conciliate our affections. Our common danger and common deliverance, should prepare our spirits for a sincere and firm union. When our sky was so dark without a glimmering horizon, then by a new dawning of God's wonderful providence, a deliverer appeared, our gracious sovereign, who has the honour of establishing our religion at home, and gives us hopes of restoring it abroad, in places from whence it has been so unrighteously and cruelly expelled. May the union of his protestant subjects in religious things so desired by wise and good men, be accomplished by his princely counsel and authority. Integrity with charity would remove those things that have so long disunited us. I return from this digression.

Love to the souls of men was the peculiar character of Mr. Baxter's spirit. In this he imitated and honoured our Saviour, who prayed, died, and lives for the salvation of souls. All his natural and supernatural endowments were subservient to this blessed end. It was 'his meat and drink,' the life and joy of

his life to do good to souls. His industry was almost incredible in his studies: he had a sensitive nature desirous of ease as others have, and faint faculties, yet such was the continual application of himself to his great work, as if the labour of one day had supplied strength for another, 'and the willingness of the spirit had supported the weakness of the flesh.' In his usual conversation, his serious, frequent and delightful discourse was of divine things, to inflame his friends with the love of heaven. He received with tender compassion and condescending kindness, the meanest that came to him for counsel and consolation. He gave in one year a hundred pounds to buy bibles for the poor. He has in his will disposed of all that remains of his estate after the legacies to his kindred, for the benefit of the souls and bodies of the poor. He continued to preach so long notwithstanding his wasted languishing body, that the last time, he almost died in the pulpit. It would have been his joy to have been 'transfigured in the mount.'

Not long after his last sermon, 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 saint 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 never 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 and debasing himself, never was a sincere believer more calm and comfortable. He acknowledged himself to be the vilest dunghilworm (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 that 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, and 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 labour:' a minister then present said, 'And your works 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 received by his preaching and writings, he said, 'I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen.'

His resigned submission 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, and said, 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 reaches 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 trouble 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 by a person of quality, 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 thoughts; but the consideration of the Son of God in our nature, and of the saints in heaven, whom we knew and loved, did much sweeten and familiarize heaven to him.' The description of heaven in the 12. to the Hebrews and the 22. was most comfortable 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 speaks better things than the blood of Abel." That scripture, he said, 'deserved a thousand thousand thoughts:' he said, 'O how comfortable is that promise,' "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things God hath laid up for those who 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 that 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, 'and earnestly prayed to God to bless their labours, and make them very successful in converting many souls to Christ:' and expressed great joy in the hopes that God would do a great deal of good by them; and that they were of moderate peaceful spirits.

He did often pray 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-conceitedness, 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 in controversial points, he said, 'Those that please may know my mind in my writings: and what he had done was not for his own reputation, but 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 told him you are now approaching to your long-desired home, he answered, 'I believe, I believe.' He said to Mr. Mather, 'I bless God that you accomplished your business, the Lord prolong your life.'

He expressed a 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

apprehensions death was nearest: and his spiritual joy at length was consummate in eternal joy.

Thus lived and died that blessed saint. I have without any artificial fiction of words, given a sincere short account of him. All our tears are below the just grief for such an invaluable loss. It is the comfort of his friends, that he enjoys a blessed reward in heaven, and has left a precious remembrance on the earth.

Now blessed be the gracious God, that he was pleased to prolong the life of his servant, so useful and beneficial to the world to a full age: that he has brought him slowly and safely to heaven. I shall conclude this account with my own deliberate wish: may I live the short remainder of my life, as entirely to the glory of God, as he lived; and when I shall come to the period of my life, may I die in the same blessed peace wherein he died; may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love for ever.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Shall annex two passages declaratory, the one of his humility, the other of his excellent abilities. He had such an abhorrence of himself for his sins, that he said to a minister, 'I can more easily believe, that God will forgive me, than I can forgive myself.' The other was, being in the pulpit to preach, he found that he had forgot to put his notes into his bible: he prayed to God for his assistance, and took the first text that occurred to his view in opening the bible: and preached an excellent sermon for the matter and order of it upon the priesthood of Christ. After he was come down, he inquired of a minister present, whether he had not tired him, who replied, 'No;' but with several others declared they were exceedingly satisfied with his discourse; he said, 'It was necessary to have a body of divinity in one's head.'