

OF

REDEMPTION OF TIME.

‘THE usual vice of human nature, to be weary of good things, when they grow old and common, and to call for novelties, is especially discernible in men’s esteem and use of books. Abundance of old ones are left neglected to the worms and dust, whilst new ones of a far less worth are most of the book-sellers’ trade and gain. It is not easy to give a reason of it, but it is not to be denied, that this age hath few such writers as the last, either controversial or practical. Even among the Papists, there are now few such as Suarez, Vasquez, Valentia, Victoria, Penottus, Ruiz, Alvarez, Bellarmine, &c. And among us, too few such as Jewel, Whittaker, Reignolds, Field, Usher, White, Challoner, Chillingworth, &c. which the Papists understanding, would fain have the monuments of these worthies forgotten; and are calling for new answers to the schisms that have been so long ago confuted; to keep those old unanswerable writings, from the people’s hands. And thus doth the envious enemy of holiness, by the practical writings of those holy men who are now with God. The solid, grave and pious labours of Richard Rogers, Perkins, Greenham, Deering, Dent, Smith, Dod, Hildersham, Downname, Samuel Ward, Hall, Bolton, Dike, Stocke, Elton, Taylor, Harris, Preston Sibbs, Ball, and many more such, are by the most neglected, as if we were quite above their parts; but it were well if more injudicious or undigested writings possessed not their room. Though I may hereby censure myself as much as others, I must needs say, that the reprinting of many of our fathers’ writings, might have saved the labour of writing many later books, to the greater commodity of the church.

‘ Among the rest, I well remember that even in my youth (and since much more) the writings of Mr. Whately were very savoury to me; especially his “ Sermon of Redeeming Time.”

‘ I must so far venture on the displeasure of the guilty, as to say, that the doleful condition of two sorts of persons, the SENSUAL GENTRY, and the idle beggars, is it that hath compelled me to this service; but especially of the former sort, who though slothful, may possibly be drawn to read so small a book. What man that believeth a life hereafter, and considereth the importance of our business upon earth, and observeth how most persons, but especially our sensual gentry, live, can choose but wonder that ever reason can be so far lost, and even self-love and the care of their own everlasting state, so laid asleep, as men’s great contempt of time declareth! Ladies and Gentlewomen, it is you whom I most deeply pity and lament: think not that I am too bold with you, God, who employeth us on such service, will be bolder with you than this comes to. And Christ was bold with such as you, when he spake the histories or parables of the two rich men in Luke xii. and xvi. And when he told men how hardly the rich should enter into the kingdom of heaven. And James was bold with such when he wrote, chap. v. “ Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you: your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire, &c.—Ye have lived in pleasure on earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.”—And he was neither ignoble nor unlearned, but of honourable birth, and the orator of an university who was so bold with the English gentry (when they say, they were much wiser and better than they are now) as to bespeak them thus:—(Herbert’s “ Church-porch.”)

“ Fly idleness! which yet thou canst not fly
By dressing, mistressing and compliment;
If those take up the day, the sun will cry
Against thee; for his light was only lent:
God gave thy soul brave wings; put not those feathers
Into a bed to sleep out all ill weathers.

O England! full of sin, but most of sloth!
 Spit out thy phlegm, and fill thy breast with glory.
 Thy gentry bleats as if thy native cloth
 Transfused a sleepiness into thy story.
 Not that they all are so, but that the most
 Are gone to grass, and in the pasture lost.
 This loss springs chiefly from our education,
 Some till their ground, but let weeds choke their son:
 Some mark a partridge; never their child's fashion:
 Some ship them over, and the thing is done.
 Study this art: make it thy great design:
 And if God's image move thee not, let thine.
 Some great estates provide; but do not breed
 A mast'ring mind; so both are lost thereby.
 Or else they breed them tender; make them need
 All that they leave: this is flat poverty.
 For he that needs five hundred pounds to live,
 Is full as poor as that needs but five."

' When I peruse the map of Sodom, in Ezek. xvi. 49, 50, methinks I am in an infected city, where instead of 'LORD HAVE MERCY ON US,' it is written on the GENTRY's doors 'PRIDE, FULNESS OF BREAD, ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS, UNMERCIFULNESS AND ABOMINATION.' "Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy: and they were haughty, and committed abomination before me." The title over the leaves of these verses might be 'THE CHARACTER OF THE SENSUAL GENTRY.'

' Mistake me not, I am so far from accusing all the rich and honourable, that I must say it is as a testimony against the rest, that I know many such who spend their time as fruitfully and diligently as the poor (though in another sort of service): And such might the rest have been if their bodies had not got the mastery of their souls. It is not your PRIDE or FULNESS of BREAD that I am now to speak of, but your IDLENESS. Many of the old philosophers thought that when sickness or age had made one un-serviceable to the commonwealth, it was a shame to live, and a duty to make away themselves; as being but unprofitable

burdens to the world. Christians are not of their mind, because it is a mercy even under pain to have time of preparation for another world, and because we may serve God in patience, and heavenly desires, and hope, when we cannot serve him by an active life: But Christians and heathens will proclaim those persons to be the shame of nature, who wilfully make themselves unprofitable, and live in their health, as if they were disabled by sickness; and are condemned by their sensuality to a prison or a grave: So that their epitaph may be written on their doors, 'HERE LIETH SUCH A ONE,' rather than it can be said 'Here he liveth.' O what a rock is a hardened heart! How can you choose but tremble when you think how you spend your days? And how all this time must be accounted for? That those that have a death and judgment to prepare for, a heaven to get, a hell to escape, and souls to save, can waste the day in careless idleness, as if they had no business in the world, and yet their consciences never tell them what they do, and how all this must be reviewed!

'Compare together the life of a Christian and of a fleshly brute, and you will see the difference. Suppose then both Ladies or Gentlewomen of the same rank: The one riseth as is consistent with her health; with thoughts of thankfulness and love, her heart also awaketh, and riseth up to Him that night and day preserveth her: She quickly dispatcheth the dressing of the body, as intending no more but serviceable warmth, and modest decency: and then she betaketh herself to her closet, where she poureth out her soul in confession, supplication, thanksgiving and praise to God, her Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: And as one that delighteth in the law of the Lord, she reverently openeth the sacred Scripture, and readeth over some part of it with some approved commentary at hand, in which she may see the sense of that, which of her self she could not understand: What is plain she taketh in, digesteth and layeth up for practice; and that which is too hard for her, as a humble learner she waiteth in patience, till by her teacher's help in time she can come to understand it. As she hath leisure, she readeth such holy books as interpret and apply the Scriptures, to enlighten her mind, and resolve her will, and quicken her affections, and direct her practice. And as she liveth in an outward calling or course of labour, in which her body as well as her mind, may have

employment, she next addresseth herself to that; she looketh with prudence and carefulness to her family! She taketh care of her servants' labours, and their manners; neither suffering any to live in idleness, nor yet so overlabouring them, as to deny them some time to read the Scriptures, and call upon God, and mind their souls: She endureth no profane despisers of piety, or vicious persons in her house: She taketh fit seasons to speak to her servants such sober words of holy counsel, as tend to instruct and save their souls. She causeth them to learn the principles of religion in some catechism, and to read such good books as are most suitable to their capacity. In her affairs, she avoideth both sordid parsimony, and wasteful prodigality; and is thrifty and sparing, not in covetousness, but that she may do the more good to them that want. She indulgeth no excess or riotousness in her house, though the vices of the times should make it seem needful to her honour. If she want recreation, or have leisure for more work, she steps out to her poor tenants' and neighbours' houses, and seeth how they live, and what they want, and speaketh to them some sober words of counsel about the state of their immortal souls, and stirreth them up to a holy life: She causeth the souls of the poor to bless her, and is an example of piety to all about her. But her special care and labour is in the education of her children (if she have any:) she watcheth over them, lest the company, and example, and language of ungodly persons should infect them: she causeth them to read the Scriptures, and other holy books, and to learn the principles of religion, and teacheth them how to call upon God, and give him thanks for all his mercies; she acquainteth them with the sins of their depraved natures, and laboureth to humble them in the sense thereof: she openeth to them the doctrine of man's salvation by Christ, and the necessity of a new birth, and of a heavenly nature: she disgraceth all sin to them, especially the radical and master-sins; even ignorance, unbelief, selfishness, pride, sensuality and voluptuousness, the love of this world, and unholiness of heart and life. She sweetly and seriously insinuateth into them the love and liking of faith and holiness; and frequently enlargeth her speech to them of the greatness, wisdom and goodness of God, and what he is to man, and how absolutely we owe him all the service, obedience and love

that our faculties can possibly perform: she sweeteneth their thoughts of God and godliness, by telling them what God hath done for man, and what he will be to his own for ever: and by acquainting them with the reasons of a holy life, and the folly of ungodly men, and what a beastly thing it is to be sensual, and to pamper and please this flesh, which must shortly turn to dust, and to neglect a soul which must live for ever. She remembereth them oft that they must die, and telleth them how great a change death makes, and how the change of regeneration must prepare us for it: she openeth to them the blessedness of holy souls, that shall be for ever with the Lord, and the misery of the damned, who cast away themselves, by the wilful neglect of the time of their visitation. In a word, it is her daily care and calling, to prepare her children for the service of God, and to be blessings to the world in their generation, and to be happy themselves for evermore: and to destroy and prevent that sin and wickedness, which would make them a plague and curse in their generation. Her meals are not luxurious nor long, nor her feastings unnecessary, to the wasting of estate or precious time; but seasonable, frugal, charitable and pious, intended to promote some greater good. She keepeth up the constant performance of religious duties in her family; not mocking God with formal compliment; but worshipping him in reverence and serious devotion, reading the holy Scriptures, and seriously calling upon God, and singing to him psalms of praise. If her mind need recreation, she hath some profitable history, or other fruitful books to read, and variety of good works, and a seasonable diversion to the affairs of her family, instead of cards and dice, and the abused fooleries of the sensual world: When she is alone, her thoughts are fruitful to herself; either examining her heart and life, or looking seriously into eternity, or rejoicing her soul in the remembrance of God's mercies, or in the foresight of endless blessedness with him, or in stirring up some of his graces in her soul. When she is with others, her words are savoury, sober, seasonable; as the oracles of God for piety and truth, tending to edification, and to administer instruction and grace to the hearers, and rebuking the idle talk, or filthy scurrility, or backbiting of any that would corrupt the company and discourse. At evening she again returneth to the more solemn worshipping of God, and

goeth to rest, as one that still waiteth when she is called to rest with Christ, and is never totally unready for that call. Thus doth she spend her days, and accordingly doth she end them, being conveyed by angels into the presence of her Lord, and leaving a precious memorial to the living; the poor lamenting the loss of her charity, and all about lamenting the removal of a pattern of piety and righteousness, and loving holiness the better, for the perfume of such a heavenly and amiable an example.

‘ On the other side, how different is the life of the sensual ladies and gentlewomen to whom I am now writing. When they have indulged their sloth in unnecessary sleep, till the precious morning hours are past, they arise with thoughts as fruitless as their dreams: their talk and time, till almost half the day is gone, is taken up only about their childish trifling ornaments; so long are they dressing themselves, that by that time they can but say over, or join in a few formal words, which go for prayer, it is dinner-time (for an image of religion some of them must have, lest conscience should torment them before the time). And when they have sat out an hour or two at dinner, in gratifying their appetites, and in idle talk, they must spend the next hour in talk, which is as idle. A savoury word of the life to come, must not trouble them, nor interrupt their fleshly converse: perhaps they must next go to cards or dice, and it may be to a playhouse, or at least, on some unprofitable visitation, or some worthless visitors that come to them, must take up the rest of the afternoon in frothy talk, which all set together comes to nothing, but vanisheth as smoke: and they choose such company, and such a course of life, as shall make all this seem unavoidable and unnecessary, and that it would run them into contempt and great inconveniences if they did otherwise. If they look after their affairs, it is merely through covetousness: but more usually they leave that care to others, that they may do nothing that is good for soul or body. They use their servants as they do their beasts, for their service only; and converse with them as if they had no souls to save or lose: they teach them by their example to speak vainly, and live sensually, and to forget the life to come. Their children they love but as the brutes do their young; they teach them how to bow and dance, and carry themselves decently in the sight of men; but never labour to

heal their souls of ignorance, unbelief and pride; nor open to them the matters of everlasting consequence: but rather persuade them that serious holiness is but hypocrisy, and the obedience of God's laws is a needless thing. They teach them by their example to curse, and swear, and lie, and rail, and to deride religion, or at least to neglect God, and life eternal, and mind only the transitory vanities of this life: they leave them to Satan, to wicked company and counsel, and to their fleshly lusts and pride, and when they have done, take care only to get them sufficient maintenance, to feed this sensual fire while they live. They train them up for the service of sin and Satan, that at age they may have ignorance and vice sufficient to make them the plagues and misery of their country, and to engage them in enmity against that Gospel and ministry which is against their lusts; that rebelling against Christ, they may have at last the reward of rebels, instead of salvation. In a word, they do more against their poor children's souls, than all their enemies in the world; if more than the devil himself could do, at least, they most effectually serve him, for their children's damnation. Thus do they spend their days, and at night conclude them as carelessly as they begun them: and at death (without a true conversion) shall end them as miserably as they spent them sinfully: And while they are pampering their flesh and saying, 'I have enough, I will eat, drink, and be merry,' they suddenly hear, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required, and then whose shall all this be which thou possessest?" (Luke xii. 19, 20.) And when they have a while been clothed in purple and silks, and "fared sumptuously every day," they must hear at last, "Remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." And when the time which they now despise is gone; O what would they give for one other year or hour of such time, to do the work which they now neglected! (Luke xvi. 24—26; Matt. xxv. 8—12.)

'Is there not a great difference now between these two sorts of persons, in the expense of time? And is it any wonder if there be a difference in their rewards? In Matt. xxv. 30, it is not only 'cast the whoremonger, the drunkard, the perjured, the persecutor;' but, "cast the unprofitable ser-

vant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

'Compare, I beseech you, the time which you spend, 1. In idleness. 2. In excessive sleep. 3. In adorning you. 4. In feasting and long meals. 5. In curiosity and pomp, employing most of your servants' time in impertinencies, as well as your own. 6. In excessive worldly cares. 7. In vain company and idle talk. 8. In vain thoughts. 9. In sensual recreations, in cards, dice, huntings, hawkings, plays, romances, fruitless books, &c. I say, compare this time, with the time which you spend in examining your hearts and lives, and trying your title to eternal life, in bewailing sin, and begging mercy of God, and returning thanks and praise to your great Benefactor, in instructing your children and servants, in visiting the sick, relieving the poor, exhorting one another, in meditating on eternity, and the way thereto, in learning the word and will of God, and in the sanctified labours of your outward calling. And let your consciences tell you, which of these hath the larger share? And whether those things which should have none, and those which should have little, have not almost all? And whether God hath not only the leavings of your flesh?

'Gentlemen and Ladies, I envy not your pleasures: I have myself a body with its proper appetites, which would be gratified, as well as you? And I have not wanted opportunity to gratify it. If I thought that this were the most manly life, and agreeable to reason, and that we had no greater things to mind, I could thus play away my time as you do. But it amazeth me to see the world's stupidity, that people who are posting away into eternity, and have so much to do in a little time, and of such inconceivable importance, can yet waste their days in sleeping, and dressing, and feasting, and complimenting; in pastime and plays, and idle talk, as if they were all but a dream, and their wits were not so far awakened as to know what it is to be a man. And to increase our pity, when they have done, they ask, 'What harm is there in cards and dice, in stage-plays and romances? Is it not lawful to use such and such recreations?' Suppose they were all unquestionably lawful, have you no greater matter that while to do? Have you no more useful recreations, that will exercise your bodies and minds more profi-

tably, or at least with less expense of time? To a sedentary person, recreation must be such as stirs the body: to a labouring person, variety of good books and pious exercises are fitter recreations than cards or dice. Is your recreation but as the mower's whetting of his scythe? no oftener, nor longer than is necessary to fit you for those labours and duties, which must be the great and daily business of your lives? If this be so, I am not reprehending you: but I beseech you consider, have you not souls to regard, as well as others? Have you not a God to serve? and his word and will to learn and do? Have you not servants and children to instruct and educate? (And O what a deal of labour doth their ignorance and obstinacy require!) Have you not death and judgment to prepare for? Have you not an outward calling to follow? (Though I say not that you must do the same labours as the poor, I say that you must labour and be profitable to the commonwealth.) Have you not many good works of charity to do? And will you leave the most of this undone, and waste your time in plays, and cards, and feasts, and idleness, and then say, 'What harm is in all this, and are they not lawful?' O that the Lord would open your eyes, and shew you where you must be ere long, and tell you what work you have here to do, that must be done, or you are lost for ever! And then you would easily tell yourselves whether playing and fooling away precious time be lawful for one in your condition! If your servants leave most of their work undone, and spend the day in cards and stage-plays, and feasting, and in merry chat, and then say, 'Madam, are not cards, and plays, and jesting lawful?' Will you take it for a satisfactory answer? And is it not worse that you deal with God?

'It is a most irrational and ungrateful error, to think that you may spend one hour's time the more in idleness, because that you are rich. The reason were good, if labour were for nothing but to supply your own bodily necessities. But do you not believe that God is your Lord and Master? and that he giveth you not an hour's time in vain, but appointeth you work for every hour? (except your necessary rest;) And that your time and wealth are but his talents? And bethink yourselves whether a servant may say, I will do less work than my fellow-servants, because I have more wages? And

whether you may do less for God, because he giveth you more than others? But of this I have said so much in my preface to my book called "The Crucifying of the World," that I shall now dismiss it.

'And what I have said especially to the rich, (who think their loss of time no sin,) I must say also to all others, O value time before it is gone! Use it before it is taken from you! Dispatch the work that you were made for. Repent and turn to God unfeignedly. Prepare for death without delay. Time will not stay; nor will it ever be recovered. Were it not lest I should write a treatise instead of a preface, I would especially press this on all these following sorts of people. 1. Those that are young, who have yet the flower of their time to use, that they cast it not away on childish vanity or lusts. 2. Those that have lost much time already, that they shew the sincerity of their repentance, by redeeming the rest, and lose no more. 3. Those that are yet ignorant, ungodly and unprepared for death, and the world to come, O what need have these to make haste, and quickly get into a safer state, before their time be at an end. 4. Those that in sickness resolved and promised, if God would recover them, to redeem their time. 5. The weak and aged, whom nature and sickness do call upon to make haste. 6. The poor and servants, whose opportunities for spiritual means are scant, and therefore have need to take them when they may; especially on the Lord's-day. 7. Those that live under excellent helps, and advantages for their souls; which if they neglect, they may never have again. 8. And those that by office or power have especial opportunity to do good. All these have a double obligation to value and redeem their time.

'But because in my book called "Now or Never," I have already urged these to diligence, I shall only add this one request, to sportful youth, to sensual brutes, to the idle sort of the gentry, to impenitent loiterers, to gamesters, and to all that have time to spare, that they will soberly use their reason in the answer of these following questions, before they proceed to waste the little time that is remaining, as vainly as they have done the rest. And I earnestly beseech them, and require them, as in the sight and hearing of their Judge, that they deny me not so friendly and reasonable a suit.

Quest. 1. Do you consider well the shortness and uncertainty of your time? You came but lately into the world, and it is but a very little while till you must leave it. The glass is turned upon you; and it is incessantly running. A certain number of motions your pulse must beat, and beyond that number it shall not be permitted to strike another stroke. Whatever you are thinking, or saying, or doing, you are posting on to your final state. And O how quickly will you be there! Suppose you had seventy years to live, how soon will they be gone! But you are not sure of another hour. Look back on all your time that is past, and tell me whether it made not haste? And that which is to come will be as hasty. Will not the tolling of the bell instruct you? Will not graves, and bones, and dust instruct you? While many are hourly crowding into another world, will conscience permit you to be idle? Doth it not tell you what you have to do, and call upon you to dispatch it? Can you play away your time, and idle it away, whilst the bell is tolling, whilst the sick are groaning, whilst every pulse and breath is telling you, that you are hastening to your end? Do you consider what a wonder of providence it is, that all your humours, parts and organs, that so many arteries, nerves and veins, should be kept in order one year to an end? If you have no pains of sickness to admonish you, do you not know what a fragile thing is flesh? which as the flower fadeth, doth hasten to corruption and to dust? How short is your abode in your present dwelling like to be, in comparison of your abode in dust and darkness? And can you have while now to waste so many hours in the adorning, the easing and the pampering of such a lump of rottenness, and forget the part that lives for ever? Must you stay on earth so short a time; and have you any of this little time to spare? Yea, so much of it as you daily waste in idleness, play, and vain curiosity?

Quest. 2. Do you soberly consider, what work you have for all your time? And on how important a business you come into the world? Believe it, O man and woman, it is to do all that ever must be done, to prepare for an everlasting life! Endless joy or misery is the certain reward, and consequent of the spending of your present time! And O that God would open your eyes, to see how much you have to do, in order to this eternal end! You have ignorant minds which must be instructed, and knowledge is not easily and

quickly got. Poor ministers of Christ can tell you that, who with many years' labour can scarce bring one half a parish to understand the very principles of the Christian religion. You have souls depraved by original sin, and turned from God, and enslaved to the world and flesh; and these must be renewed and regenerated. You must have a new and holy nature, that you may have a new and holy life. How many false opinions have you to be untaught! How many weighty lessons to learn! How many pernicious customs to be changed! How many powerful corruptions to be mortified! How many temptations to be overcome! How many graces to be obtained; and then to be exercised, and strengthened, and preserved! Is it easy to get a solid faith; a tender heart; a faithful conscience; a fervent desire and love to God; a quieting confidence and trust; a well-guided zeal, and preserving fear; an absolute resignation, self-denial and obedience; a hatred of all sin, a love to holiness; a fitness and ability for every duty; a love to our neighbour as ourselves; a true love to our enemies; a contentedness with our condition; a readiness and joyful willingness to die; a certainty of the pardon of all our sins, and of our title to eternal happiness; a longing after the coming of Christ; a public spirit, wholly devoted to the common good? Is it nothing to do all that which you have to do in meditation, in self-examination, in prayer, in educating children, in teaching and governing your families; in all duties of your other relations; to superiors, to inferiors, to equals, to neighbours, to enemies, to all? Is it nothing to order and govern your hearts, your thoughts, your passions, your tongues? Alas! sirs, have you all this to do; and yet can you have while to slug, and game, and play, and fool away your time? If a poor man had but sixpence in his purse to buy bread for himself and for his family, and would give a groat of it to see a puppet-play, and then dispute that puppet-plays are lawful, how would you judge of his understanding and his practice? O how much worse is it in you (as the case is more weighty), when you have but a little uncertain time, to do so much, so great, so necessary work in, to leave it almost all undone and throw away that time, on cards, and plays, and sensuality, and idleness? I tell you time is a most precious thing: more precious than gold, or

jewels, or fine clothes : and he is incomparably more foolish that throws away his time, than he that throws away his gold, or trampleth his clothes or ornaments in the dirt. This, this is the foolish, pernicious prodigality.

‘ *Quest. 3.* Have you deeply considered, that everlasting condition which all your time is given you to prepare for? Doth it not awaken and amaze thy soul, to think what it is to be for ever ; I say, *for ever*, in joy or misery? in heaven or hell? One of these will certainly and shortly be thy portion, whatever unbelief may say against it? O what a heart hath that stupified sinner, that can idle away that little time, which is allotted him to prepare for his everlasting state! That knoweth he shall have but this hasty life to win or lose eternal glory in, and can play it away as if he had nothing to do with it ; and heaven or hell were indifferent to him, or were but insignificant words!

‘ *Quest. 4.* What maketh you so loath to die, if time be no more worth than to cast away unprofitably? The worth of time is for the work that is to be done in time. To a man in a palsy, an apoplexy, a madness, that cannot make use of it, it is little worth ; if you were sick and like to die this night, would you not pray that you might live a little longer? I beseech you cheat not your souls by wilful self-deceit. Tell me, or tell your consciences, How would you form such a prayer to God for your recovery if you were now sick? Would you say, Lord, give me a little more time to play at cards and dice in? Let me see a few more masks and plays? Let me have a little time more to please my flesh, in idleness, feasting, and the pleasures of worldliness and pride? Did you ever find such a prayer in any prayer-book? Would you not rather say, Lord, vouchsafe me a little more time to repent of all my loss of time, and to redeem it in preparation for eternal life, and to make my calling and election sure? And will you yet live so contrary to your prayers, to your conscience, and to reason itself?

‘ *Quest. 5.* Is the work that you were made for, hitherto well done? Are you regenerated and renewed to the heavenly nature? Are you strong and established in grace? Have you made sure of pardon and salvation? Are your hearts in heaven? and is your daily conversation there? And are you ready with well-grounded hope and peace, to welcome death, and appear in judgment? If all this were

done, you had yet no excuse for idling away one day or hour, because there is still more work to do, as long as you have time to do it. (And if this were done, you would have that within you, which would not suffer you to cast away your time.) But for these men or women to be passing away time in sloth or vanity, who are utterly behindhand, and have lost the most of their lives already, and are yet unregenerated, and strangers to a new and heavenly life, and are unpardoned, and in the power and guilt of sin, and unready to die, and shall certainly be for ever lost, if they die before that grace renew them. I say again, for such as these to be sporting away their time, is a practice which fully justifieth the holy Scriptures, when they call such persons fools, and such as have no understanding, unless it be to do evil, and successfully destroy themselves.

‘ *Quest. 6.* Do you think if you neglect and lose your time, that ever you shall come again into this world, to spend it better? If you idle away this life, will God ever give you another here? If you do not your work well, shall you ever come again to mend it? O no, sirs, there is no hope of this. Act this part well, for as you do it, you must speed for ever; there is no coming back to correct your errors. I have elsewhere told you, that it must be *now* or *never*. And yet have you time to spare on vanity?

‘ *Quest. 7.* Do you mark what dying men say of time, and how they value it? (unless they be blocks that are past feeling.) How ordinarily, do good and bad then wish, that they had spent time better, and cry out, O that it were to spend again! Then they are promising, O if it were to do again, we would spend that time in heavenly lives, and fruitful obedience, which we spent in curiosity, idleness, and superfluous sensual delights! Then they cry, O that God would renew our time, and once more try us how we will spend it! Alas! sirs, why should wise men so much differ in health and sickness? Why should that time be vilified now, which will seem so precious then?

‘ *Quest. 8.* How think you the miserable souls in hell would value time, if they were again sent hither, and tried with it again on the terms as we are? Would they feast it away, and play it away, as you do now; and then say, Are not plays, and cards, and feastings lawful? Every fool will be wise too late. (Matt. xxv. 3. 8. 11.) Bethink you what

their experience teacheth them, and let warning make you wise more seasonably, and at a cheaper rate.

‘ *Quest. 9.* Do you believe that you must give an account of your time? and that you must look back from eternity on the time which you now spend? If you do, what account will then be most comfortable to you? Had you not rather then find upon your accounts that all your hours have been spent to the best advantage of your souls, than that abundance of them have been cast away on fruitless toys? Will you have more comfort than in the hours which you spent in heart-searching, and heart-reforming, and learning and practising the word of God, or in those which you spent upon needless sports, curiosity, or idleness? Do now as you would desire you had done.

‘ *Quest. 10.* How do you now wish that you had spent the time which is already past? Had you not rather that it had been spent in fruitful holiness, and good works, than in idleness, and fleshly pleasures? If not, you have not so much as a shadow of repentance; and therefore can have no just conceit that you are forgiven? If yea, then why will you do that for the time to come, which you wish for the time past that you had never done? And hereby shew that your repentance is hypocritical, and will not prove the pardon of your sin? For so far as any man truly repenteth, he is resolved not to do the like, if it were to do again, under the like temptations.

‘ *Quest. 11.* Do you know who attendeth you while you are loitering away your time? I have elsewhere told you, that the patience and mercy of God is waiting on you; that Christ is offering you his grace, and the Holy Spirit moving you to a wiser and a better course: that sun and moon, and all the creatures here on earth, are offering you their service; besides ministers and all other helpers of your salvation; and must all these wait upon you while you serve the flesh, and vilify your time, and live as for nothing?

‘ *Quest. 12.* Do you consider what you lose in the loss of time? That time which you are gaming or idling away, you might have spent in entertaining grace, in heavenly converse, in holy pleasures, in making your salvation sure. And all this you lose in your loss of time; which all your sports will never compensate.

‘ *Quest. 13.* Is the devil idle while you are idle? Night

and day he is seeking to devour you ; and will you, like the silly bird, sit chirping and singing in your wanton pleasures, when the devil's gun is ready to give fire at you ? If you saw but how busy he is about you, and for what, you would be busier yourselves for your own preservation, and less busy in doing nothing than you are.

Quest. 14. Do you really take Christ, and his apostles and saints, to be the fittest pattern for the spending of your time ? If you do not, why do you usurp the name of Christians ? Is he a Christian who would not live like a Christian ? or that taketh not Christ for his master and example ? But if you say, Yea ; I pray you then tell us how much time Christ or any of his apostles did spend at cards, or dice, or stage-plays ? how much in curiosity about dressing and superfluous ornaments ; about unnecessary pomp and courtship ? how much in sluggishness, idleness, and vain discourse ? or how much in furnishing their bodies, their attendants, their habitations with matter of splendour and vainglory ? Did they waste so much of the day in nothings and need-nots, as our slothful, sensual gentry do ? or did they not rather spend their time in holy living, and fervent praying, and in doing all the good they could to the souls and bodies of all about them ? and in the labours of a lawful bodily employment ? Write after this copy, rather than after that which is set by the sensual fools of the world, if you make any account of God's acceptance ! Do as the saints did, if you will speed as they : or else for shame never honour their names and memorials to your own condemnation ! If you will spend your time as the flesh and the world teach you, rather than as Christ hath taught you, you must look for your payment from the flesh and the world. And why then in baptism did you renounce them and vow to follow Christ ? " Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap ; for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) Bethink you what the reason was that the ancient fathers and churches, so much condemned the going to the spectacles of theatres ; and why the canons made it such a crime for a minister to play at dice. (Read Dr. Jo. Reignolds, his *Cloud of Witnesses* of all sorts against Stage-plays.)

‘Reader, if thou think this counsel or reprehension too precise or strict, grant me but this reasonable request, and I have my end. Live in the world but with a soul that is awake, that soberly considereth what haste time maketh; and how quickly thy glass will be run out; how fast death is coming, and how soon it will be with thee! What a work is it to get a carnal, unprepared soul to be renewed and made holy, and fitted for another world! What a terrible thing it will be to lie on a deathbed with a guilty conscience, unready to die, and utterly uncertain whither thou must next go, and where thou must abide for ever! Foresee but what use of thy present time will be most pleasing or displeasing to thy thoughts at last, and spend it now but as thou wilt wish thou hadst spent it; and value it, but as it is valued by all when it is gone; use it but as true reason telleth thee will make most to thy endless happiness, and as is most agreeable to the ends of thy creation and redemption; and as beseemeth that man who soberly and often thinketh what it is to be either in heaven or hell for ever, and to have no more but this present short, uncertain life, to decide that question, ‘which must be thy lot?’ and to make all the preparation that ever must be made for an endless life. I say, do but thus lay out thy time as reason should command a reasonable creature, and I desire no more. I have warned thee in the words of truth and faithfulness; the Lord give thee a heart to take this warning!

Thy compassionate Monitor,

R. BAXTER.

September 23, 1667.

THE END OF REDEMPTION OF TIME.