

deliverances,—to read diligently those books in which are greater and better news than any packets, than all gazettes or coffee-houses, can yet afford to you. When you have read these books, then long for 1696, or 1700; and hope, if you live to that day, to hear Mahometanism in the Turkish empire destroyed with that empire. Wish for 1735, or 1740; and remember, I do not pretend to prophesy, but I do dismiss with a conjecture that, between this time and that, you will see great deliverances to the churches of Christ, and as great distresses and judgments executed on the antichristian kingdom; it may be, the total ruin of that kingdom, which was to last but one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and, I think, will have outlasted that period before 1740.

SERMON XVII.

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WHEREIN MAY WE MORE HOPEFULLY ATTEMPT THE CONVERSION
OF YOUNGER PEOPLE, THAN OF OTHERS?

OMNIPOTENCE can suffer no difficulty, and that which is immense can admit no limits. Unto the Divine power all things are as perfectly easy, as they are certainly possible: and the heavenly grace is fruitful equally of all things consistent with its spotless purity. God-Creator did strain no harder to make this great world, than to make the smallest atom of it. And God-Redeemer saveth Mary-Magdalenes, as well as Virgin-Marys: very Samson, we are sure, is in heaven. (Heb. xi. 32.)

But, in respect of things themselves, and of their appearances unto us, all effects be [are] not of equal facility, nor all events to be alike hoped for. Much easier is the bending of a green twig, than of an old oak; more hopeful the cure of a green wound, than of an old putrefied sore. There is more to be done to convert a man of Belial, than a child of Belial; and to convert an old man, than any other man: and we may justly expect better success when we call unto God the boys and girls playing in the streets, than when we call old men and women that can scarcely walk in them.

This I am desired to show: and I shall endeavour it in the best way, unto the best end; to wit, the promoting of early piety. I have fair and full occasion given me, if I can take it, from the text; which I therefore commend to your observation:—

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth: or, as some read it, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy choice.—
Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

THE words are a stricture of an excellent sermon. It was preached (as mine is to be) unto childhood and youth. It begins at the ninth verse of the former chapter, and ends at the eighth verse of this. The Spirit of God preached it by the wisest of men, and not the least of kings; and hath thereby taught a pair of truths, that I must wish better learnt:—

1. *The God of heaven takes great care of our children; and sends the Holy Ghost unto young school-boys, as well as old church-members.*

We have him here, in his sacred oracles, preaching unto boys and girls. Yea, and blessed bishop Usher was neither the first nor the last that was converted by him at ten years of age, or earlier.

2. *The greatest doctors need not think scorn in Christ's school to be ushers, and to teach children the A B C of religion.*

Solomon thought not himself undervalued by it: and he that will look on it as a work below him,—he ought to prove that a greater than Solomon is he. Immortal Luther preferred his Catechism above all his works. But I return.

This sermon, fore-praised, consists of two parts:—

1. *A dehortation from sinful passions and pleasures.*—Which is edged with a most emphatic irony, or derision; pressed with a threat of God's damnatory judgment; and shut up with a cooling consideration of both the feathery lightness and the winged transitoriness of youthful enjoyments. (Eccles. xi. 9, 10.)

2. *An exhortation unto the choice and prosecution of saving religion.*—This is in my text: wherein it is guarded with an admirable *prolepsis*, preventive of all shifts and procrastinations; and in the next words and verses is re-inforced with numerous arguments; arguments as many as old age hath maladies, and as unprepared death hath terrors; and these all clothed with language hardly to be matched in all the sacred writings. But I must confine me to my text; wherein are obvious,

1. *The duty commanded to be done.*

2. *The parties commanded to do it.*

3. *The time wherein they are commanded to do it.*

1. *The duty* is conversion unto God; inchoative and progressive conversion; entrance into, continuance and progress in, the state of holiness; the state of reconciliation unto, and communion with, God; with God the Father, Son, and Spirit; all jointly, as one God; and each distinctly, as three Persons. Learned men do judge this latter to be here designed by the plural number of the Hebrew word. All interpreters acknowledge, that the required remembrance imports no less than the foresaid conversion: and it will be evident, if these things be considered:—

Words of knowledge, affection, and practice do ever connote one the other; because the faculties of our souls be like the links of a chain,—so united, that they go all together; draw one, all come. Wherefore, when the Holy Ghost summons all, he useth to name but one of them. He never commands us to know, remember, love, or serve God, but he commands us to do them all. Now, to do all

these, is to convert unto God : and to do less, is not to "remember our Creator," as he doth require.

Besides, the connexion of end and means is indispensable. Where any means are required, it is certain the end of these means is also required. And it is very plain that the mere historical remembrance of God, is but a mean : conversion foresaid is the end of it ; that end without which the remembrance of God could only make us the more like unto the devil ; who, indeed, doth never forget, but doth still hate, his Creator. And no mind can bear the thought of God's requiring such a remembrance. It must therefore be one efficacious unto its end, that is here meant.

Nor is it unworthy of our notice, that the word "Creator" here is big with argument ; and such as carries obligation unto the very utmost of the foresaid conversion : for it speaks God's interest in us. Were we made *by* him ? then were we also made *for* him, and are his and not our own. It expresseth also his speciality of interest in us ; being [seeing], as we are elsewhere told, he made us "in his own image : " (Gen. i. 27 :) if so, he made us unquestionably for his especial service. It no less setteth forth his preservation of us too : for who, but he who made us, should have power or will to maintain us ? Briefly, it manifests his power to destroy us ; and his very good reason so to do, if we do less, after our apostasy and his provision for our recovery, than thus convert unto him.

2. *The parties here commanded to convert*, are the same as are nominated in Eccles. xi. 9 ; possessors of "childhood and youth." Learned Mercer saith all in a word : "By 'childhood and youth' the Holy Ghost intends the whole flourishing age of life."* The same Hebrew word signifying "youth" and "choice," we take them all to be comprehended who are yet in the best and most desirable fore-part of their days ; all, from them whose morning doth but yet dawn, to those whose clock hath struck twelve and with whom it is noon :—*the little creatures*, whose twilight doth but just serve them to read the first principles of religion ; *the bigger children*, whose sun is risen higher, and who can see, and are set to learn secular arts and trades, and are capable of learning farther the art of living unto God ; *the youth*, eminently so called, whose day is come on, and their light, heat, and activity much exceed childhood. Nor exclude I them whose sun is at [the] highest, and who are (as men will speak) in their prime ; upon whom the afternoon begins to draw apace, though they yet retain morning-vigour, and preserve the name of "young." The original words of age are of so large signification. And as, on the other hand, all the periods of breaking, declining old age must be judged to come under the name of "evil days ;" no reason appears, why all the periods of the contrary age should not be put under the name of "youthful," or "choice," "days." All young gamesters are here called to God :—*Children*, from their playing for pins ; *boys*, from their playing for pence ; *young men*, from their playing for money and land : all from their several games of equal folly ; the

* *Totam aetatem florentem complectitur.*

games in which invaluable souls be lost, and the best that is got is but yellow dust. These sprightly, sportive people are all called to play wiser parts, and lay out their various degrees of strength for the good that in weak old age (in the last and worst childhood) they will be as unable, as now they are unwilling, to seek.

3. *The time wherein these tribes are all of them commanded to convert*, is the present. "Remember" hath its "now" expressly added; forbidding both your delay until the afternoon of your life-day, and your delay unto any other day, hour, or minute of your forenoon; requiring that God's tribute be paid, as the king's tax is, upon sight; and that not the least distance of time be admitted between your discerning, and your doing, your duty.

The doctrine thus offers now itself:—

DOCTRINE.

Present conversion is the duty of youths and children, even the very youngest that are come to understanding. Or thus:—

It is not for young men and maidens, for school-boys and girls, or very children in hanging-sleeves, to put off their conversion to God so much as a minute of an hour.

This I shall competently demonstrate, if I make good these two assertions; namely,

1. *That these young folk are really bound to convert presently.*

2. *That they are singularly engaged and encouraged by God so to do; and are advantaged more for it than older people are, and than they themselves can be when they are older.*

And this I essay by these following very intelligible and invincible reasons. Hear them as for your lives, O you young ones, to whom I direct them! If you hear aright, you live, and joy will be in heaven by-and-by for your new birth. If not, we despised preachers shall shortly hear you accursing your closed ears; exclaiming much like unto Joseph's brethren: "We are verily guilty concerning our ministers, in that we saw the anguish of their souls, when they besought us to convert presently, and we would not hear; therefore is distress (and, it may be, remediless damnation) come upon us." (Gen. xlii. 21.) However, in duty unto all, and in hope of gaining some, in God's fear I tell you:—

REASONS.

REASON I. *You are commanded, as truly as the oldest people living, to turn unto God presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. The king of Babylon would have young men stand before him: so would the King of heaven. He calls you, the youngest of you; and as expressly and frequently, and more frequently, than he calls old people. For he calls you conjunctly with them in most or all texts in the Bible; and he calls you apart, here and in other portions of scripture, by yourselves. "Turn ye, turn ye:" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11:) it is not, "Turn ye, O ye old, decrepit folk;" but, "Turn ye," indefinitely, that is, universally, "O ye of all ages that hear the word." In Psalm cxlviii.

12, 13, "young men, and maidens," and (as "old men") "children," are called to praise the Lord: נַגְרִים *nagnarim*, "little children." The word indeed is put for Joseph in Egypt, (Gen. xli. 12,) and Gideon's son. (Judges viii. 20.) But (as the etymology carries it) it is most frequently used to signify new-born children, just shaken out of the womb; and is very often put to signify children just able to speak, and run up and down. (2 Kings ii. 23.)

You, the children of believing parents, have a holiness of covenant-relation before you are born: (1 Cor. vii. 14 :) you have a holiness of solemn dedication, by-and-by after you are born, in holy baptism: (Col. ii. 11, 12 :) and God requires your parents and ministers to be dealing with you, as soon as you come to understanding, for holiness of inhesion and qualification. He saith, there is a way of holiness in which every נַעַר *nagnar*, "little child," should go; and commands us to "catechise and train you up in" it. (Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4.) Nor doth he allow you to delay the little that you can do for your souls, any more than he allows the oldest people to delay any thing that is in their power to do. "Now, now," is his word unto all sinners; (2 Cor. vi. 2;) and, "Now, now," is his word unto you. His command for duty, and for haste of duty, equally binds children of tender years and people of fourscore. Remember it, young people: if you be not commanded to come unto God and to abide with him, there is no sinner in the world commanded to convert, nor any saint in the church commanded to persevere.

Need I tell you what an authority *his* is, *who* doth so command? and how infinitely obliging? It is such an one as cannot be told you by man or angel. Should God command you to cut off your right hands, or to run into the fire, it would be infinitely your duty and interest presently to do it. For so supreme and absolute is his authority, that he cannot command beyond his right. And it is an authority so constantly governed by infinite goodness, that he cannot command us against our interest: so that it is as perfectly impossible for us to obey him, and not benefit ourselves; as to disobey him, and not hurt ourselves. In a word: could you see this Sovereign Commander but as Moses saw him, (Exod. xxxiv.,) or as Isaiah, (Isai. vi.,) or as Job, (Job xlii.,) or as St. Paul, (Acts ix.,) or as St. John, (Rev. i.,) it would be no question with you, whether he were to be obeyed, or no; or to be obeyed presently, or no. You would then think no obedience great enough, no haste swift enough, no grief for converting no sooner heavy enough. "O how late did I love thee!" St. Austin exclaimed. "Twenty years was I a bond-slave to the devil," cried Mr. John Machin, who was converted in his twentieth year. "Remember not the sins of my youth," saith the man who knew God's heart better than to imagine that youth was lawless. (Psalm xxv. 7.) But,

REASON II. *You are threatened just as old people be, if you turn not unto God presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. Sirs, as you are not lawless, so neither are you less under the menaces and threats of the Lawgiver than other folk be. "The wicked shall be turned into

hell." (Psalm ix. 17.) It is not said, "Old sinners shall into the place of devils:" no; it is unlimitedly "the wicked," all of them; wicked parents, and wicked children; wicked masters, and wicked scholars or apprentices; every thing wicked. Every minute that you delay your conversion, that threat stands ready charged against your breasts. And who knows but God will shoot it off this very moment, if you convert not this very moment? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sin." (Rom. i. 18.) It is not said, "against all old folks' sin:" no; but, without any restriction, "against all people's sin." And, alas for you! did you never with your own eyes see God's wrath cut off young sinners? Did you never hear that, in the flood of old, children and young people were drowned with the old? and in Sodom the young and old folk burned together? and that bears tore in pieces two-and-forty little bodies, for mocking a holy prophet? (2 Kings ii. 23, 24.) The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament saith expressly, that for all your (unrepented) follies "God will bring" you young ones "into judgment" of condemnation. (Eccles. xi. 9.) And, in the New Testament, he doth not tell you that, "except an old body be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" no; but that, "except a man," any man, "be born again, he cannot." (John iii. 3.) Now, in scripture-language, whatever is born of a woman is a man, though he be but a span long. Vengeance must be taken on all "that know not God, and that obey not the gospel;" all such must "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:" nor hath childhood or youth any exemption. (2 Thess. i. 8, 9.)

Come, read ye, then, the terrible handwritings of God against you: so shall your malapert countenances fall, your marble hearts break, the joints of your loins be loosed, your knees smite one against another; and your doubt be fully resolved, whether present conversion be your duty, or not.

The threat of a fiery furnace made by Nebuchadnezzar, made all the country, save three children of God, to bow to an idol. What would God's threat of such a furnace as hell is do, if it were but duly considered! A furnace of worse fire,—fire of extremity and eternity; a threat of it by a mightier power and more unchangeable resolution: were these in your eye, you would have much to do to hold your backs turned on God; your conversion must be hastened, or your unregeneracy embittered; you must be grievously tormented till changed; you would soon, for your ease, crave annihilation, or a contrary posture to that [which] your souls now stand in toward God. You are fain to wink hard, and make yourselves blind, to be so bold as to put off your conversion. Divine threats would bore through your hearts, if your lusts did not first bore out your eyes.

Rises now any thought within you, that God is very hard thus to press upon you; and to deny you the pleasures of sin, for such a moment as is your childhood, and youth itself? Beside what will follow to shame it, I tell you here right. I have heard of a devout soul, that used to thank God for hell: the thoughts of it had done

him so much good, so much good service against sin; it was to him a wall of fire against sin,—a worse evil than hell, the worst thing in hell. No sooner shall your eyes be opened,—to see what sin is, and what need you have of being by fear driven from sin, and what need of God's threats to make you fear it,—but you shall straightway think God infinitely kind in the earliness of his calls, and in the terribleness of his threats. Ay, and your hearts shall tell you, that the worst, and all, that God threatens, is vastly less than a minute's delay of conversion doth deserve from him.*

REASON III. *You have the promises of as good things as the oldest people have, if you do convert presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. The very command of God, without a threat, would have made it your duty: and so would his threats, if no one promise had been super-added. But what think you that *all* do make it? Consider ye here, God promises you spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings; and the very same that he promises to converts of the fullest age; and also with as well-confirmed promises; as well-confirmed by his oath, and by outward, visible signs and seals, or “holy sacraments,” as the church hath long called them:—a consideration enough to make the least intelligent babies sing Hosannas! With reverence to the Father of mercies I will say it: He hath no better or greater blessings to give, than he doth this morning offer to bestow on all that will convert this morning, and on the very least of you all; neither will he think eternity too long for your reward, if you will not think your life-time too long for his service. A single minute's aversion from it deserveth hell: but, such is his grace through our Redeemer, that in the very minute of your sincere conversion he gives you a title to heaven.

Young people, whatever is done by old adders, pray, do not you stop your ears! I would fain have this day to be your coronation-day; so it will be, if it be your conversion-day. In scripture-dialect, you are kings and queens the first minute that ye be converts; yea, and more glorious ones than any unsanctified heads that bear those names. If the greatest earthly kings and queens knew the vanity of their thrones, they would gladly part with them for one evidence of interest at the heavenly one. But wot it: if any convert upon the earthly globe did but know his interest in heaven, he must presently live by miracle, or die for joy: so weighty is the crown of grace itself; so overwhelming a glory unto us in the body.

You are ready to think, “This is too good to be true.” But hear ye, then, the most “sure word of prophecy.” “The promise is unto you, and to your children.” (Acts ii. 39.) The self-same promise is to fathers and children: the covenant of grace is but one for both; of the same promises to them, as of the same demands from them. And ask ye, “What in this covenant is promised?” I tell you, God promises to be the God of every convert; (2 Cor. vi. 16;) that “all things” desirable shall be theirs. (1 Cor. iii. 21.) It is his own word, and as large an one as infinite bounty itself can speak: “All that I

* *Omnis peccator citra condignum plectitur.*—SCH. “Every sinner receives less punishment than he deserves.”—EDIT.

have is thine." (Luke xv. 31.) Pardoning grace and purifying is promised; (Heb. viii. 10, 12;) "an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven," is promised; (1 Peter i. 4;) the necessaries of the life that now is are promised, enough to bear your charge to heaven; (1 Tim. iv. 8;) an entail of blessing on your dearest ones is promised. (Exod. xx. 6; Rom. xi. 28.)

The promises of all these are by God confirmed unto you in your baptism. You have them signed and sealed by God's hand, before you know your right hand from your left: so very early God encourages you to hope in him, and convert unto him. By signed, sealed promise, David says, God "did make him hope when he was upon his mother's breasts, and was his God from his mother's belly." (Psalm xxii. 9, 10.) I can understand him no otherwise. God forestalled the world and devil; bound David so to him before they could come at him to entice him away, laid-in that superabundant ground of hope and engagement unto all duty beforehand, that, as soon as he came to capacity of understanding, he should not want for attractives of his affection to convert and cleave to God. And no otherwise doth God deal with you: you that know what your baptism means, do know so much. Now, no sooner do you understand, consent unto, and profess the imports of your baptism, but God calls you to his holy table; there to confirm, again and again with great frequency, all the fore-said promises. O the height, length, breadth, and depth of the divine munificence and kindness! The blessing of Abraham, and every *iota* of it, comes on every sincere convert. (Gal. iii. 13, 14.)

Speak, sirs: is God so ill a Master, that no offer can persuade you to return unto him? Or what is there more than God has offered, that you desire? Or what further confirmation and ratification of his promises than he gives, do you crave? Or (which is that I listen after) will you now straightway turn unto him? And here right; take-on the spiritual robe, the ring, and the shoes; and make joy in heaven and in this congregation. (Luke xv. 10, 22.) I do hope, the sun shall not go down, before some of you are reconciled to God.

I have heard of a sinful boy, that offered to convert presently, if a friend of his could make it out to him, that he should fare the better for it in his body and things of this life: which being done, he did convert, and lived and died an eminent saint. I am aware, there is much of that boy's spirit in all young people; and it likes me to try whether I may so draw you with the considerations that drew him. Hear, then, what I say, to evince that conversion is a very friend unto good health, estate, mirth, and name; that the state of grace is, in respect of these, like the city Triocala,—one of water-springs sweetest, vineyards choicest, and rocks most impregnable; that when you once enter into covenant with God, your wants will be of nothing but things worse than nothing; and wherever you are lodged, the worst of your wounds will be but flea-bites; or however ye are wounded, ye can never be hurt.

Health is the salt and sweetest sauce of life. It is sin (people's own, or their ancestors', or both) that ordinarily is the working

cause, as well as deserving cause, of sickness. The Spirit and grace and service of God every way make for health. Particularly, temperance and good conscience are the most benign of all things unto your blood and spirits; and converting grace is not itself without them. Go, ask physicians; they will tell you, luxury and lechery do make them a hundred patients, for every one that is made them by fasting and prayer. No precept of Christ is for any duty (fasting itself) unto sickness; if his precepts were observed, they would prevent more than ever his miracles healed. If a good man be at any time so weak as to "hate his own flesh," he is not led to it by God's Spirit. He ought, indeed, to beat it down, and keep it in subjection to God's law, and from the usurpation of sinful lusts: but withal, it is those lusts [that] he is to mortify, and not his body. A convert's body is the Holy Ghost's temple: and if so, be sure, God will be kind unto it, and his servants ought to be duly careful of it.

An estate is a very useful hedge about you, to keep off those many proud that will be trampling upon all that is poor. And nothing raises or keeps up this hedge like the grace of God. For it spirits you with diligence, which gets riches; with humility, which hates superfluity, and saveth what is got; with charity, which puts out all to use, and unto that Lord who never pays less than a hundred-fold in this life itself. Sin is this hedge-breaker: rags are mostly sin's livery. When it is otherwise, and sin makes you a hedge, it will be full of snakes and snares. "In the fulness of" sinful "sufficiency you will be in straits:" (Job xx. 22:) and it is odds, but "the straits" will be long, and "the fulness" a very little while. On the other hand, when a convert's duty to God makes him poor, it makes him rather a martyr than a beggar. For he thereby testifies God's truth; and through the truth of God to his covenant, he abounds in the middle of his wants. For God doth but prune his vines; he burns up none but thorns. By poverty he may undo sinners, but he still enricheth saints. Do but convert; you can never want what is truly good for you, while God has it. The first minute that a great estate begins to be good for you, you shall have it: and if you never have a great one, you shall still have a good one. Whereas, unconverts can have but one of these two,—a vexing adversity, or (what is worse) a slaying prosperity; one made of thick clay and deeper carcasses.

Mirth and comfort are the honey and sweetness of your beings. Now, conversion makes "exchange," but "no robbery," of these. There is in Africa a honey lusciously sweet; but the bees gather it from poisonous weeds, and it affects with madness and frenzy all that eat of it. He were no thief that should take that sort of honey from you, and give the most wholesome to you. Conversion deals no otherwise by you. Only, what it gives, is more sweet, as more wholesome; and the quantity greater, as well as the quality better. For, observe ye, God forbids not any one kind or degree of pleasures, but what is injurious, and what your very nature, reason, and interest do forbid you. I deny it not, [that] converts have valleys of troubles; but then they have doors of hope. They are in wildernesses; but

God prepares them tables therein : driest rocks yield them water, and in darkest dungeons they have shining lights. They receive here their evil things, and have their hell upon earth ; but then it is a heaven upon earth, to think [that] this is all the hell they shall ever endure. And as for the ways he commandeth converts to walk in, they are all "of pleasantness." (Prov. iii. 17.) Mysteriously, yet most certainly, godly sorrow is made a sweet thing. Every week almost have I people crying for more of it than I think God allows them. O youth, *scies cum fies* ; "when thou art a convert, thou shalt feel what I tell thee!" No such manna falls in Calabria, none falls from heaven, like that which feasteth the camps of sincere converts. The convert-state hath of the joy, as well as of the purity, of heaven ; unthought-of delights ; such as do not die in the enjoyment ; no, but be stronger than death, as well as sweeter than life ; such as none of the busy-bodies of this world ever found in the mills of their business, or the circles of their pleasure. Gilboa's mountains had not rain or dew : unconvert youths have not joy or peace. Madness is theirs ; mirth they know not. The three Hebrew martyrs were merrier in the fiery furnace, than their persecutor was in his palace.

Good name and honour be your "precious ointments ;" (Eccles. vii. 1 ;) the things that make you cheerful in yourselves, grateful and useful unto others. True, I would rather my own heart should commend me, than all the world's mouth besides. Next to God's own praise of us, the praise of a well-informed conscience is the most desirable. Nevertheless, men's good esteem, good men's especially, is useful to the foresaid purposes. And your conversion is requisite thereto : for it is the King of heaven is the true fountain of honour ; and he maketh converts, and no others, "vessels of honour ;" honour both below and above. Hypocrites know this ; and therefore, for the praise of men, they make an outside conversion to God. Converts do know this ; and therefore, by all the reproaches of men, will not be beaten off from the way of God. Plato could say, a wicked man was the earth's vilest dunghill ; and a religious one, its most sacred temple. Under the law, we know that God would have those that touched a dead man to be held unclean seven times as long as those that touched a dead beast : so teaching, how debased and defiled a thing an ill man is, more than a brute creature. What need words ? Who be those that you see earthly potentates advance to honours, but their true, zealous, and active friends ? Turn you truly, zealously, actively to "the King immortal ;" he shall forthwith love you more than any of his angels can love him. And that love itself shall be a crown of honour enough to make all the devils in hell envy you, many of the world's hypocrites wish themselves in your state, and all the saints of God, with holy angels, to prize you beyond expression and without flattery. Every convert, whether he consider it or no, hath a name greater than of earls and dukes. God writeth them, that give up their names unto him, "princes in all" lands, and "kings and priests unto him" for ever. (Psalm xlv. 16 ; Rev. i. 6.) Indeed the world counts them and tramples on them as dirt ; but God calls

them and will make them up as jewels. See 1 Cor. iv. 13 ; with Mal. iii. 17. The world's dusts be God's diamonds. If, then, the best things of both worlds can oblige, you see yourselves obliged to turn presently unto God.

REASON IV. *You are convinced by your own consciences, as truly as other people be, that you ought presently to turn unto God.*—Therefore it is [your] duty. Young people, God's commands, threats, and promises do oblige, whether you learn and know and mind them, or not. Your negligence and unbelief cannot make them of no effect ; though to yourselves they may easily make them of very ill effect. But when the kindness of God brings them unto your knowledge and thoughts ; when he sets conscience, which is his viceroy and deputy in your souls, to the work ; and makes it in your very heart and reins to command his commands, to promise his promises, and to threaten his threats ; what think you then ? Believe it : then he accounts your engagement to be heightened with your advantage. And he stands up for the honour and reverence of conscience ; the honour of which he takes for your utmost honour of himself, and contempt of which he takes for your utmost contempt of him. And, if now it appear that his vicegerent, conscience, hath been contemned, and you have sinned against the edicts and commands thereof ; your sin then is "exceeding sinful" in his eyes. Then have you broken many, yea, all, his bonds ; and must be beaten with many, yea, the worst of his stripes. The conscience then which you would not have to be your ruler, shall be your tormentor : sooner or later, it shall.

What plead you, therefore ? Which of you all can look me in the face, and say that your consciences are convinced of no such thing ; and therefore, whatever witnesses I do bring, your consciences are none, unto the truth of my doctrine ? You are men, and not brutes. You are English people, too : you live where the gospel shines ; and I must tell you, I nothing doubt but the Holy Ghost beams-in light very early into English children ; light, convincing them of the necessity of conversion, and of the malignity of procrastination. I would be understood especially of the children of religious parents, and such as are carried to hear ministers that do understand and preach Christianity, and not scoff at all regeneration beside baptismal ; and do not dispense stones for bread, and serpents for fish ; but do give babes "sincere milk ;" designing to edify, not to amuse, them.

[Of] all such as are likely to hear or read my labours, I would ask these questions :—

1. Think you not, that your minds, wills, and practic powers, were given to you to know, love, and serve your God ?

2. That you are bound from your first capacity to exercise them thereunto ?

3. That, in order to your so exercising them, it is incumbent on you to go [and] learn the gospel-covenant, and accept its gracious offers, and rely on its promises, and purpose, promise, and vow, by the grace of Jesus Christ, from this time for ever to be the Lord's ?

4. That haste hereto is your duty, and delay is sin, very manifold
 + sin?

5. That present conversion will be unto the present pardon and mortification of all sin? but the delay of it will keep every sin unpardoned; mortify no sin, but give a growing strength unto all?

6. That present conversion is most honour to God, benefit unto yourselves, joy to your pious friends, &c.?

I am so far from suspecting the more grown of you, that I have satisfactory grounds to believe that most of five, six, and seven years old do, in their hearts, believe all; yea, and have their consciences oft-times telling them these things, as parents and ministers are inculking [inculcating] of them. As St. Austin said of Seneca, I dare say of most of you youngest ones: You "make much of what you think nothing worth, and declaim against that which you do above all prefer in your heart."

However, can you choose but see, that you all, who are convinced, are all extraordinarily obliged to convert presently? It is infinitely the duty of all; but yours it would be, if possible, more than infinitely. No man must tell me, regeneration is a great mystery, above children's reach; and therefore, for all my confidence, I do mistake them. Well I know, regeneration is a mystery, of the greatest; but I deny, that the necessity of it is a mystery; that is of the plainest principles. And I utterly deny, that so young children as I have named, are incapable of understanding as much of conversion as God will accept of from them. Know it, O little ones: give God your all; he will not reject it as little: give him your best; he will accept it, as little good as is in it.

But, O greater and lesser of you, hear and fear! Hell gapes for all delaying unconverts; and, of any, is likeliest to swallow up those whose delays are against convictions. Peter Martyr says, St. Paul dealt more severely with the Galatians than the Romans for the same fault, because the Galatians had been fore-instructed, and sinned against more light. In all the Bible, though it be a history of more than four thousand years, we read of but one that converted just before his death; and we do believe that he also did convert at his first convincing call. Rarely do any savingly convert, who do not upon their first convictions convert. St. Austin's stifled convictions cost him dear. You that will make so bold with conscience as Spira did, should expect to roar for it here as he did; or hereafter to fare worse than many hope him to do. They are considerable divines who are not hopeless of his salvation.

REASON v. *You die, and go to judgment, as ordinarily in your young days, as others in their older.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. Come, stand forth, the liveliest spark of you all; and tell us, if you can, that nobody was ever known to die at your years; or, if there did, your life is no such "vapour," your flesh no such "grass," as theirs. You know, our weekly Bills of Mortality would shame you, and the great multitudes of graves of all sorts every where. You do know your own vanity in putting far from

your minds the fatal day that cannot be thrust off one minute from your persons.

It is an undeniable truth : The day of life and [the day] of grace be not always of a length ; and that, if they were, that could be no warrant for delaying the work of your salvation. But, one would think, your life's uncertainty itself, if considered, should be of weight enough to press you unto haste, and make your wilful delay as impossible unto you as it is impious. For, you are not Papists ; and if you were, prayers for you after death you could not think regularly to obtain. They do not hold it lawful to pray for any after their death, that do not repent and convert in their life. If you die unconverted, your fathers and mothers are taught to consent to your being damned ; and the best friends you have be forbidden to pray for your being taken out of hell, or your being cooled in it. You do not imagine, I hope, that a cold crying, " God be merciful to " you, just before death, is a saving conversion. If it were, we might say, " Heaven is the receptacle of the most and worst of men ; and a great part of the scripture is taken up in requiring our needless labour." But we are well sure of the contrary : though you ought to be told, also, that if it were really so, yet were your delay still a prodigious folly ; being [seeing] of your ability to utter those words at your death you are as uncertain as of any thing ; and you have little reason to think that your present obstinacy shall not then be punished with (at least) impotency.

O death ! O judgment ! come, look you in the faces of these secure young folks ! Show yourselves unto them : ask them, whether, upon sight of you, they can think two or three broken words preparation enough for your terrors ; and that it can be time enough to think of peace with God, when pain will not let men be able to think three thoughts together of him ? I knew an excellent person that used to exclaim, " O Lord, pain will not let one think upon thee."

REASON VI. *You, as much as elder people, are absurd in your promises to convert hereafter.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. It is no easy thing to ascend to the height of atheism ; in which alone you can dare [to] say, " There is no God," or none that you are bound penitently to convert unto ; or [that] you will not, whatever follows, ever turn to him. Wherefore, you must be dumb, or find somewhat else to say. Very many I suspect to harbour in them a dumb devil, and to say little to themselves about matters between God and their souls. But many there are, in whom conscience will not be so easily muzzled ; but will have somewhat said, or else give no quiet. For want of all things besides, this is said : " Hereafter I will convert."

But who has bewitched hearers of the gospel ? Neither law nor gospel itself knows any way to heaven by a delayed conversion. The law requires continuing, the gospel requires beginning and persevering ; neither admits of delaying. " Cursed be every one," young and old, " that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) Did you not only

intend, but begin,—and *that* this present minute,—not only to wish, but to do, not only some, but all, things of the law; the law, for all this, would damn you without mercy, for having ever ceased to do all. “Glory be to God in the highest for the blessed gospel!” And what says that? Why, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts xvi. 31.) Thou art a sinner; a sinner grievous against law, gospel, and conscience. But what then? “Believe” now “on the Lord Jesus;” turn to God by him dutifully; God will draw nigh to thee graciously: but neither there nor any where is it said, “If thou art not minded to believe presently, do but promise hereafter to do it; thou shalt be saved.” And for your lives, young people, consider (after law and gospel) but example and precedents. When Christ called his disciples, all followed him presently. When the three thousand were preached to, and were convinced, they were converted presently. So the jailor converted “straightway.” (Acts xvi. 25—33.)

But look we a little into these your words,—you “will convert hereafter.” Fall they not into these two parts?—1. “We will not convert now.” 2. “We will hereafter.”

1. *You will not convert now.*—That is, you will abide rebels to God, devils to yourselves, vassals to the devil, idolizers of this vain world, &c. This you will do, though you know it unjust, unsafe, unprofitable, ungrateful, and all that is worst; and though you would think it hard, if God should hold you in such a state against your wills, or suffer Satan to keep you in it by force. This you will do, though you know [that] if God should now use you like yourselves, (that is, like unreconcilable enemies, even against his very entreaties,) you must be sent quick to hell. Though you know, too, that every sin you commit makes conversion harder, if ever it be made; and hell hotter for you, if it be not made; this ye will do; of choice you will, and because you will; without any reasons that you dare to produce, or let mortal men hear you speak.

2. *You will convert hereafter.*—Thy power, foolish creature, thy power! where is thy power, thy will, or thy reason? Thy power, man! Canst thou live as long as thou wilt? Or canst thou keep what ability God has now given thee for conversion, and make it more when thou wilt? Canst thou save thyself from distraction, delusions of Satan, &c.? Art thou able thyself to supply thyself with necessaries, natural and supernatural, now and hereafter? Well; if thou couldest, say plainly, What is thy will? It is a will not moved by God’s threats or promises to fear or love him. If it were so, thou wouldest convert now. And if it be not so, what is thy purpose, for all thy fair promise? Dost [thou] intend hereafter to turn unto a God neither feared nor loved? Surely thou dost not. Thinkest thou that thou shalt hereafter fear and love him? I ask, What should make thee so think? He will for ever be the same God that now he is. Lay to thy heart what I tell thee:—If God be not just now worthy of fear and love, then he never was or will be so; for he changes not. In a word: what, if thou hadst both power to convert

when thou wouldest, and hadst a real will to convert hereafter to God! where is the reason for staying without and against God all the while? Thou art servant, he is Lord; thou the child, he the Father. When servants run away, and will not return to their masters; and very children run away, and will not come back to their fathers; no, though the masters and fathers call and send and promise, and do not need them, while they all the while need their masters and fathers: all people conclude there is a cause of this, and a fault must lie somewhere in one of the parties. Either the father is unnatural, and the master cruel; or else the child is a viper, and the servant a monster. Speak, man, and say now: where is the fault? what is the cause that thou canst not yet be prevailed with to return to thy Lord and Father? Thou must charge him or thyself with most black and bloody faults. If thou layest it on God, thou makest him worse than the devil, and proclaimest Satan the better master and father of the two. If thou takest the blame on thyself, I ask thee, how thou canst endure to see, hear, or think of thyself! a creature hating its God, that is all love and all loveliness! No words, I think,—no words of mine, I am sure,—can express how blasphemous or how self-condemned they are, all that put off conversion to another time.

Alas! here is life and all in the case. Conversion is the life of thy soul, man: it is dying, till it convert; it is in hell, till thou convert. And is this a fit word?—"I will then convert hereafter." Thy darling child drops into the fire, and thou promisest to come [and] help it out to-morrow: a very kind creature thou wilt be thought, and as wise an one! Upon every account I may say of these promises of turning hereafter, as was said of Judas:—It had been better they had never been born. And they be Judases indeed; for, though they flatter and kiss, they betray and kill poor souls.

REASON VII. *You, as plainly as elder people, do dare God to damn you, all the while you delay your conversion.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. I have heard of a man much accustomed to cursing in his health, that could not utter any word but a curse in his sickness; could not pronounce "Yes" or "No;" but as oft as he spoke, in several months' time, he bid God to damn him. "A most frightful thing!" you will say. And yet, young people, I take you to be in very like condition, all that delay your conversion.

For the language of practice is, with God and men, as significant as any; if not more. If you practically bid God damn you, you are of the same spirit with them who verbally bid him so do: and, if I know any thing, delayers do bid him in deeds, as certainly as any sinners do in their words. I appeal to your very own thoughts in the case:—

You are corrupted with sin, and condemned for it. The grace of God calls you to come [and] take your pardon and your cure; but tells you, "*Now* is your time;" promises you no breath of life but what is in your nostrils, nor any offer of cure or pardon after the first; in every precept, requires present coming. Your delaying, therefore, is running the venture. And that adventuring is plain

saying, "Lord, if now, *just now*, be the time, I shall not take hold of it. Though I burn, I will not yet turn. Thou dost not promise to stay longer for me; but, if thou wilt not, damn and do thy worst with me. I would rather thou wouldest change thy word. Blot, 'Now in the days of thy youth,' out of the Bible: write, 'Remember thy Creator when thou art old and bed-ridden.' But, if this thou wilt not do, I will live under thy threatening wrath; and let its vials fall on me, if they must: I am set against present conversion for thy peace."

Let me add but this, sirs:—There is but one way possible to hell; which is by sin. For nothing else can incense God against you; he cannot be in the least displeased for aught besides: but sin is that which he cannot but hate and punish. Now, to go on wilfully, delightfully, and resolutely in sin, is in effect as if you should kneel down on your knees, and beg and pray, with tears in your eyes, that you may never be saved, but may be assured of a place in the lowest hell. The former is interpretatively the latter. O madness beyond compare! though not admired, because so much practised.

REASON VIII. *You, as well as elder people, do hate and rob God, and imitate and obey Satan, till you do convert.*—Therefore it is your duty presently to convert. Young people, it may be, you know not what you do; but, knowingly or ignorantly, these things you do do, till you convert. You hate God. *Interpretatively* you hate him: by your actions, no other can be judged of you. If you desired to express hatred of him, you could not take a more direct way for it, than that [which] you are in: for you walk contrary unto him. *Comparatively* you hate him: if you have any love to him, sure it is nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison of that which you bear unto your idolized things and persons. Yea, *absolutely* you hate him, as a holy and just Ruler and Judge. *In his government* you hate him, and wish you could dethrone him: deny it, if you dare. *In his children and friends* you hate him: their company is an eyesore and burden unto you; his image on them you cannot bear. If it were otherwise, you could not but convert unto him. You rob him, yea, and all his. You rob him of a child, Christ of a member, the Holy Ghost of a temple, the heavenly host of a joy, the church of a star, the world of a pillar. And in the mean time, what do you? Why, Satan is the god of every unconvert creature. Him, in your spiritual impurities, you imitate; in your bodily, you obey; in both, you serve and gratify. Horrid servitude! unendurable by souls any jot less senseless than plants, or less wild than brutes!

REASON IX. *You, as elder people, do out-sin Satan himself, till you do convert.*—Therefore it must needs be your duty to convert presently. Sirs, muse on it. It is sin, and the highest, to slight the richest offers of Divine Grace. You that convert not, do slight such offers as be the kindest [that] God ever made to men, and such as he never did offer unto fallen angels. Ye do not believe, that the devils and damned ghosts in hell would slight them so, if God should make the same offer unto them: I mean, provided they were not under irre-

vocable damnatory sentence, and also final obduration and implacable malice ; the which you are not under. You would then think, that, if the gospel were preached unto them, they would not say, as you do virtually say every day of the week ; namely, " Lord, we cannot hearken at present to thy proposals : we will, at some more convenient season. Or, if thou wilt not wait that leisure of ours, then will we go without thy offered kindness." No ; I suppose you would think, that they would rather answer thus, which you have not yet done : " Lord, our astonished minds never heard so ravishing news. Our inflamed hearts cannot contain their praise or thanks. We are not able to utter fast enough our acceptation of thy offers, or our consent unto thy demands. We would celebrate the grace of both ; but who can express things infinite ? The eloquence of heaven is exceeded by its King's mercy," &c.

Sirs, I must have you convert presently, or must have leave to say, " You are of your father the devil, and the works of your father you will do ;" (John viii. 44 ;) and worse, if worse can be. But though I thus speak, I would by no means have you think any good to be in the devil. Only I would have you know, there is much more evil in yourselves than you are aware of ; and that you can never know your sin too much, if you do not know your Saviour too little. Wherefore I add,

REASON X. *You, young people, do sin beyond the measure of all old ones that convert not, if you put off your conversion.*—Therefore it is your duty, and you are singularly obliged, to convert presently.

This reason gives me opportunity to slide into the very heart of the case propounded unto me. I do consider with whom I have to do, and shall thus plainly and even rudely make my way :—

The measure of their sin is far greatest, who do then sin, when the lions in the way of their duty be fewest, and their helps be most, and their encouragements greatest :

But young people, not converting unto God, have this to be said concerning their sin,—that it is committed then, when fewest lions be in the way of their duty, when their helps to it be the most of any men's, and their encouragements greatest :

Therefore the sin of young people not converting is far greatest ; and so far from being to be extenuated and thought less of than old people's, that it ought to be held, of the two, the greater.

I shall suppose my work here requisite to be only this ; namely, to show that young people have ordinarily fewer discouragements from going about to convert, than old ones have ; and have more helps than they ; and greater encouragements than old people now have, and than they themselves can have when they become old. I say, *ordinarily*. For which service, I advance these seven considerations ; directing them unto yourselves, my young folk :—

CONSIDERATIONS.

CONSIDERATION I. *Your God is not so angry with you, as he is with older people, and will be with you, if you convert not before you*

are older.—He is indeed angry with you for sin original and actual. Go, roll you in the dust before him. Yet know for your comfort, he is less angry, as I have said. For, these two assertions are most true; namely,

1. Every day continued in refusal of subjection to his authority, and every wilful refusal of obedience unto his gospel-precepts, do increase the fire of God's indignation.

2. Every last day of unsubmission, and every last act of disobedience, do increase that fire of God's indignation more than the former.

As for *the first*: though it be self-evident, and granted of all men, let me add this:—A command supposes authority in the commander, and subjection in the commanded. Obedience unto a command supposes acknowledgment of authority in him that gives, and subjection in him that receives, it. God is Sovereign; we are subjects. He first publishes his authority, and requires our subjection; then enacts laws, and requires our obedience. Our orderly duty is, to submit us first to his authority, and own him for our God and King; and then to perform his commands, for expressing that submission. The sin of the world, that incenses God, is denial of this submission to him, and of this expression of it. Of this denial the first rise and beginning kindles his wrath; but the continuance, against his means of reducing us unto subjection and obedience, doth more than continue it,—even greatly increase it. Nor is it wonder, being [seeing] that the sinful denial, continued under such constant means aforesaid, daily increaseth. And accordingly, barren trees have it counted to them, how many years they have cumbered the ground.

But then, as to *the second* particular: therefore doth every last day's unsubmission and disobedience more exasperate than the former, because they are against more means used and patience exercised than the former; and they are, as it were, a justifying and an approving of all former sin also; a virtual acting of all again.

There can, therefore, be no doubt but the degree of God's displeasure is less against you, than against those who have many more years disowned and disobeyed him. And you have less reason to fear making of your peace with him, if you go [and] seek it, than they have; and more ground of hope to get it made now, than you can have hereafter, if you delay. For you to say, "I will not seek my peace till I am older," is as if a condemned man should say, "I will not go [and] try to get my pardon, till the king is a hundred-fold more angry with me than yet he is." Matchless frenzy!

CONSIDER. II. *Your enemy Satan has not so much power over you, as he hath over older people, and will have over you, if you convert not before you are older.*—Sirs, Satan is an enemy that you must conquer, or be destroyed by. His power to deceive is very great. It was so from the beginning; and shown in Paradise to be so, when he slew all mankind in their first parents. Besides, it is now much greater. In more than five thousand years, he has learned much: and being now an "old," he is a more subtle, "serpent." (Rev. xii. 9.) But it

is not his natural and acquired power, without that which is judicial, that is the matter of our just fear. The lion in chains scareth no child : it is the lion let loose that frightens the town, and doeth the mischief. All Satan's power is no power as to us, if God doth not judiciously [judicially] let him loose on us. God, as he is more or less angry with men, holds up Satan in a longer or shorter chain. Being less angry with you, young people, he suffers him not to fall upon you with such strength of fraud or force, as upon old transgressors. So much reach at you God doth allow him, as maketh needful your watching and prayer, and wariness of his devices. But God allows him so very much less at you than at others, that he may be repelled more easily by you than others : and you have less reason to doubt of victory, when you fight against him, than others have ; and may be certain, that if you abide unconvert in your sins, and go on to incense God more against you, you shall then have a much more powerful enemy of him than now you have.

Now would any general of an army delay to fight with his enemy, till he himself were weaker, and his enemy stronger ? O do not any of you say practically, "I will not yet fight for my translation out of the kingdom of darkness ; I will have the prince of darkness get a hundred times more forces against me, and more advantageous ground, before I will encounter him !" How kind to Satan are delaying children !

CONSIDER. III. *Your hearts, which are your rulers under God, be not yet so bad within you, as old people's be ; and as they will themselves be sure to be, if you now convert not.*—Your hearts (the Lord show it you !) are they that do most under God for your conquering, or your being conquered by, sin, death, and hell. These hearts of yours be blind and foolish, proud and perverse enough ; they be sufficiently unteachable, untractable, unfaithful. The Lord humble you deeply in the deepest sense of it ! But still, they be not near so bad as old sinners' hearts be. Believe it : there is a sense in which Nicodemus's words be smart : "How can a man be born when he is old ?" (John iii. 4.) God has, in his offence, departed farther from old men than [from] you ; Satan, in his long stay in them, has hammered them into a greater hardness than he has yet brought you into ; *actual* sins have put more strength into their *habitual*, than into yours ; and they have more mill-stones about the neck of their souls, than yet are about yours : insomuch that you have as much the better of them, as those who have in war a less unqualified commander, have of them whose leader is most blind, most lame, and most lunatic itself. Your work is more easy, and your encouragement to expect victory is more ample, than old sinners' ; and both such as they will not continue unto you, unless you now convert unto God : which if you do not, you do like soldiers that should say, "We will have no battles with our enemy as yet. The leader, whose conduct and action are our life or death, will shortly be stone-blind, and under the dead palsy : and we will stay till he be so, before we employ him." O plotted self-destruction ! O chosen ruin ! If this consideration go for

nothing with you, ye are blind against sunshine, and deaf unto thunder.

CONSIDER. IV. *Your bodies, the instruments of your souls' action, be not yet so sorry as old people's be ; and as yours will be most certainly, if you convert not presently.*—Sirs, an unsanctified body is a soul's unknown enemy, a Trojan horse, a Pandora's box, a forge of mischiefs. Your young ones are such, that (almost proverbially) the blood of youth is Satan's tinder and match. It is seen, you have warm bosoms for all snakes. Legions of devils are a less formidable army, than your own five senses unhallowed. Beware of the flesh.

But withal know ye, an unruly horse is more desirable than a dead one : he may be bridled, and made serviceable. It is better with you than with old folk, if you will but well use that whereof they want the use :—health and strength in general ; reading eyes, and hearing ears, and walking feet, in particular. “Old age is itself,” say some, “a disease,—a very hospital of all [diseases].” Many are deprived of the means of grace by blindness and deafness : most do use them with much pain and great disadvantage : none have so few clogs about them as you. So that great is your advantage for working out your salvation. Your labour is less to read or hear a hundred sermons, than theirs to hear or read one ; and to go twenty miles for advice, than theirs to go twenty steps. Being [seeing] that sin, and so death, came in at the eye and ear ; and it is God's will to drive them out at the same, and to transmit the wisdom that saves our souls through those bodily senses ; these are not inconsiderable things.

O that you had heard but what I have done of poor old creatures' outcries ! cursing the courses and companies that devoured their strength ; wailing with sighs and tears their disability to read, difficulty of hearing, and utterly-lost faculty of remembering. The memory ought to cut my heart ; may the notice sway yours ! If you will yet put off your conversion, this is the language which that delay utters : “I have a work given me to do that is for my life eternal. I have yet eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet : I have ease and strength. But these all have wings, and will shortly fly and be gone, as others' be. When gone, I cannot work ; or, if I do, it must be in the fire, as it were. Nevertheless, I will not set to my work, till my sun and moon and stars be darkened. (Eccles. xii. 2.) I will not stir one foot for heaven, till my other foot is in the grave. If my peace be ever made with God, it shall be even at the grave's brink. When I am just come to the mouth of hell, and can scarce open my own mouth to deprecate it, I will bestow a wish for heaven, if that may possess me of it.” Senseless creature, that wantest nothing of a brute, but hair, and two feet more !

CONSIDER. V. *The world, another back-friend of yours, hath not yet laid so many loads on your backs, as upon old people's ; and as it will lay on yours, if you live longer, and live under its power, and unsubjected and unconvert unto God.*—This I speak to you especially of the younger sort, children, and next to children. I hope you have heard what an enemy the world and the things of it do make to conver-

sion and sanctification. Read the texts in the margin.* "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 15, 16.) "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.) Read Ecclesiastes; a whole book of sacred scripture taken up in warning us against this said enemy. More or less woe is to every dweller in it, because of the avocations, the distractions, and interruptions of this Old Adam's world. But here also you have the better, ordinarily, of old people. For themselves, or (their more beloved selves) their children, they are swallowed up of designs, bargains, &c. Gains and losses make their souls a sea of tempestuous cares, knowing little calm or quietness. You are yet free, comparatively, and unladen. You may contemplate and act for [the] next world, without the weights of this depressing you; and go to Jesus Christ, without farms and oxen and wives haling you back; haling you, as they do hale away multitudes before your eyes, and as they will ere long be haling yourselves.

If now "ye will not come to Him, that ye may have life;" (John v. 40;) if you will not now begin running your race toward the Redeemer; what do you do? Truly, just as a man that is to run for his life, but cannot be persuaded to stir a foot, till he has gotten many more sheets of lead upon his back, and many more fetters upon his feet. Rise, sinner, rise! if not, these words shall be thy soul's eternal loads.

CONSIDER. VI. *The providence of God lendeth you more physicians and kinder ones, than it doth lend old diseased sinners; and than it will lend you, if you live much longer; especially, if you live unconvert.*—True it is, God's love and mercy unto all is wonderful. God sends abundance of helpers unto all poor sinful creatures. Every baptized professor is obliged to be his "brother's keeper." All believers are bound to be charitable ministers unto each other; ministers of reproof, counsel, comfort. In Christ's body, no member should be all for himself, or for less than the good of all.

But a double portion of spiritual help is ordinarily vouchsafed unto you young people. Of soul-physicians, you have more than two, for old people's one. They have ministers; so have you, or may have if you please. They have religious friends; so have you, I hope. But then, you have parents, which they have not: you have masters and tutors, which they have not. And be it considered, the aged people have few or none that will deal so boldly with them as almost all

* In this paragraph, and in other two in this sermon, I have quoted in full the passages of scripture, instead of inserting the mere references. I have pursued the same plan in a few instances, in the succeeding sermon by Dr. Daniel Williams.—EDIT.

deal with you. Ministers and friends do mostly either fear to offend, or despair and think it impossible to benefit, old sinners with any counsels. They think it the same thing to give advice to an old body, and physic to a dead one; and if they give any, it is as cold as Eli's rebukes. But both come more courageously upon you. They less fear your displeasure, and more hope your reformation; and therefore with more frequency and acrimony deal with you. Besides, your parents' love, and your masters' and tutors' interest, and the comfort and credit of both, do engage them to follow you close, and to do more than ministers and friends are ordinarily capable of doing, for the conversion of your souls. Upon all hands it is best with you. You have the help of most physicians, in number; and of all the number, you have most of their help; incomparably more than old folk have, and than you must look to have in your "evil days" approaching.

But you will still delay; will you not? I doubt, many will; and will, as it were in so many words, show us [that] this is their mind. Sick they think themselves; sinners, they confess it, they are. A store of spiritual physicians now they have,—they own it: but, of these physicians and helpers, some will by-and-by die, others decay, and none be so helpful hereafter as now. Nevertheless, live soul or die, they will not, till hereafter, engage in any serious care of their spiritual cure and recovery. They will stay till they have helpers fewer in number, more chill in their affection and care, and less capable of taking pains for their salvation. Sad infatuation! a wondrous will to get out of probability, unto bare possibility, of life; if so much!

CONSIDER. VII. *You have special encouragements to convert now, from all general observation and experience; such as old people are past, and you will ere long be past.*—I must remember my bounds; and therefore will name but three. One would think they should be enough to move any thing not twice dead; and to pull out your folly, unless it be extraordinarily bound up in you. Young people,

1. *God regenerates the most of his chosen in early years.*—If that early risers were mostly the men that grew rich, and lived long in the world, who of you would not leave lying late in bed? Truly, they that rise in the morning of their days, and turn unto God, be mostly the men that ever overcome the devil. They that continue in the bed of their security late, are in danger of having their bed in hell for ever. "A young saint, and an old devil," is a proverb which was certainly hatched in hell. God and men break colts when they are young.

2. *God doth regenerate most easily those souls whom he turneth early.*—Know it, sirs; pain is necessary,—thank sin for it. Had not sin entered, never had we known pain, grief, fear, or shame; but now there is a very natural necessity for it. Sin is a painful, grievous, fearful, shameful thing: nor can I see how the honour of God's justice could possibly have excused repentance. Spiritually, as well as naturally, we are born in sorrow. Both sorts of children cry before

they laugh : all new creatures be first mourners. But all are not in the same degree so ; nor are all equally long sowing in tears, before they do reap in joy. Some sinners are lanced more deeply than others ; and God keeps open the wounds of some of his children longer than others', as he pleaseth. But ordinarily we see, young Timothys be not struck down like Sauls ; or, if they be, they be not kept so many days in frightful darkness.

And is this a small thing ? Think of it, and say, " If my body had a sore, of easy and speedy cure if the surgeon were applied quickly unto ; I should not suffer a little matter to hold me from him. My soul and body is all spiritual wounds. God alone can heal them. Those [which] he doth heal easiest and soonest, they be [those] of first comers most commonly. Tardy and late comers are healed rarely, and so as by fire when they be. What should ail me ? Why should I not presently arise, and go to my Father ? Why should I buy dearly God's hardest blows ? "

3. *God doth honour singularly, and reward with grace extraordinary, his early converts.*—If any, *they* be those that have two heavens ; great service and sweet assurance on earth, and greater degrees of glory also than others above. Most divines think so. Late converts too much imitate the Indians, that eat the honey themselves, and offer but the wax unto their deities. " They give God but the bran of their life, when Satan has had the flour," as some have expressed themselves. None so much honour God, and none are so honoured by him, as those who give honour to him, and accept it from him, in your early days. Infer you, then, my young folk,—

You must convert presently, or delay with loss ; even with certain danger of hell, and certain loss of much of heaven. And may I not now suppose the objections of your minds against my doctrine in good measure removed ? O that the oppositions of your wills were but as much overpowered ! I conclude that your own hearts do tell you by this time, (unless they be unpenetrable as the leviathan's skin,)

1. Conversion is your duty and wisdom.

2. Conversion this very minute made, is so.

3. Conversion now made, is most easy, most hopeful, most honourable.

4. Conversion, therefore, is, of all people, most unexcusably neglected, and most encouragedly attempted, by you.

Yet before I make application, I would prevent or remove a pestilent exception.

EXCEPTION. Too many may be ready to say, I talk as if conversion were a man's own work ; yea, every child's itself : and so grace and glory were very cheap things ; not the peculiarities of the elect, but every body's that will but lift up their hands and take them.

ANSWER. I humbly desire to speak agreeably unto the holy scripture. Thence I learn conversion to be both God's work, and ours, and our children's too : " Thou hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) It is *God's* work ; and he promises it : " But this

shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.) It is *ours* ; and he commands it : " Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) It is *His*, we say, as to its rise ; he gives to will and to do : it is *ours* as to the act itself ; we do it, and move, by him moved. The holy word is the ministration of the Holy Spirit : gospel-light is accompanied always with some spiritual strength and ability to turn toward God. It is true that only special light and strength from the Spirit avail to thorough and effectual conversion : but the lesser and common are talents given to profit with, and may be put to use ; and when they are so, though God be not bound to give the special, yet the goodness of his nature and the usage of his grace make it expectable, especially considered conjunctly with the general promise of it unto some seekers. All I add is this :—Act you up to the light and power you have received, not daring to dream that conversion is not the duty of children, because it is the work of God. And let not Satan make you think God a tyrant in his laws, or a niggard of his aids ; until you have diligently used all his means prescribed, and implored his blessing requisite, and failed of his grace when you have done.

We are indeed certified from the divine oracles that God has his *segullahs*, his "peculiar chosen ones." (Exod. xix. 5.) We ascribe to himself, and no other, the grace that "makes us to differ." (1 Cor. iv. 7.) But it is also made as certain, that God is not wanting to the happiness of any souls : unblemished goodness governs his absolute sovereignty itself. His decrees be as firm as though no man had a liberty of will ; yet we are all at our choice as truly as if there were no fore-determining decree. *Vult Deus nos liberè velle* : "God suffers men to make a free choice," and gives all men that which they do supremely and finally choose. He gives not to his elect either grace or glory without their knowledge and against their consent : and he doth not utterly desert or destroy others, till they harden their hearts, and choose darkness rather than life ; till they "hate" their Saviour, and "love death." (Prov. viii. 36.) The culpable cause of men's damnation is certainly stark wilful unconversion : the outcries of every sinner in hell are of his own will. I offer grace and glory but at Christ's own rates, to my best understanding.

I am bold to call young people thus to think :—How justifiable would God be in their destruction, if in their childhood he had taken them up to heaven, and down to hell ; had shown them both, and offered them their choice ; advising them to choose heaven, and conversion,

the way to it ; assuring them, that hell and unconversion should never be theirs against their wills : and they should never here or hereafter be able to cry out, “O Lord, fain would I have grace, rather than all the world ! I cry, pray, wait, do all and the utmost I can ; and yet thou wilt not give me my longing ! Grace and heaven are my choice ; but thou deniest them to me.” The truth is,—and one day will appear,—God doth all this in effect. In his word he sets heaven and hell before you ; shows you what they are ; bids you choose whether you please ; advises you to choose the best ; points out the ways that lead unto both ; assures you that the worst home and way unto it shall never be yours against your wills ; and if you long for the best home and way, you shall not lose your longing : in a word, assures you that his arbitrary will shall never be your ruin, if your own sinful, obstinate will be not ; charging you of all enemies to beware of yourselves, and of all in yourselves to beware of your wills.

These your wills are inaccessible and unmovable but through your minds : unto which I therefore proceed to commend some of the truths which result from our preceding discourse. Young people, you are those to whom I continue speaking, and whose regards I call for unto these ten inferences ; even *present* regards ; *now*, while time has opportunity, and you have ability. Delay never knew weal ; and haste unto God never knew woe. Never did the youngest saint lament his being one so soon : but every true convert all his days lamenteth his converting so late ; and if they have any trouble in heaven, it is this,—that they did not come sooner into the way of heaven. If nothing can make you know what delay’s poison is, but the draughts of it ; and what the swords be, but the stabs of them ; you must take your way, and God will take his : and ministers and parents must be for God’s glory in your damnation, if you will not be for it in your conversion. But come, I have a hope and very confidence [that] I shall prevail with some of you ; yea, all ; save such as say in their hearts, “God is not ; God cares not ; God cannot destroy unconverts.” Yea, and I would hope to prevail with such too, if I could make them but look upon the frame of the world, look into the Holy Bible, and look what is become of the most daring atheists of former ages. This would loosen the cords of death and hell, and make even such spirits less furious downward, and more tractable upward. However, I declare it : I cast the net in a sweet hope of a good draught. I do not believe my prayers and pains will be all lost this time. Some of you will so suck the pipes of knowledge now, that they will draw the breasts of mercy for ever. Some will drink in these following truths, and drink therein their souls’ everlasting health.

INFERENCES.

INFERENCE I. *Your unconvert state is a miserable one.*—It is not requisite to one’s being a miserable creature, that one should be an old one. Young ones, that forget or unconvertively remember God,

are truly miserable as the devil : yea, and are much liker to the devil than wicked old people. For Satan is not a cold, dull, feeble, decrepit, unactive enemy of God : no ; he is, as youthful sinners be, spritful, quick, strong, full of activity, and unwearied. A young sinner is the devil's most lively picture. You see in my text, your state is one that God judges an ill one, and calls you out of, and charges you to make all possible speed out of. Many wish themselves in a state of God's wrath, when they say, "O that I were in but so good a condition as this or that child!" *They* know less than many catechised little children, *who* know not this :—Such is an unconvert state, that Christ himself cannot save a soul in it. The Lord make you all to *feel* the words that I can make you but *hear* ! My father in all his letters to me used to write, "O child, better never born, than not new-born!"

INFER. II. *Your miserable state is one alterable.*—Would God call you out of your damning forgetfulness, if there were no return possible? Would he call you to a saving remembrance, if there were a fixed gulf and unpassable between you and blessedness? It is sin and madness for the worst of sinners to say they are reprobates. No man alive can know himself to be so ; and the worst man living must make himself still worse by concluding so. Young people, your unconversion hitherto has kept you unreconciled to God but hitherto. You are not now unreconcilable, if now ye be not obstinate and unpersuadable. I praise him who, when Satan tempted him to despair of salvation, thus answered : "For shame, Satan! say not there is no hope of me ; thou mightest be saved thyself, if thou couldest repent."

INFER. III. *God is willing your miserable state should be altered, and that speedily too.*—Would he otherwise call you, and so call you as you have heard? Or can you tell what should make him unwilling? True, he needs you not : but you need him ; and he delights in mercy, if you will believe him. Forget not this of God and his Son :—God swears by his life, he desires not a sinner's death : (Ezek. xxxiii. 11 :) consequently, he must desire their conversion. And as for his Son, your blessed Redeemer : as he shed his blood to save sinners, so he sheds tears over them when they refuse his salvation. It is Satan, not God, that is the Herod desirous to slay you, children. And be confident of this : if he now moves you to duty, he surely means you mercy.

INFER. IV. *You yourselves can do more toward your conversion and perfective alteration, than all the world can do.*—This is hence gathered,—from God's setting his ministers, and your parents and friends, all upon yourselves. He bids us not go to any others, and tell them they must go [and] new-form your hearts : no ; but charges us to apply unto you, and call on you to make you new hearts and new spirits, and convert unto him, and "remember" him to right purpose. It is therefore certainly most in the power of your own hand, next to God's. God has committed you more to your own keeping, than unto any mere creature's ; and given you more power

over yourselves, than any other creature hath. Wherefore, neither can best angels benefit you, nor worst devils injure you, as you can benefit or injure yourselves : and it less concerns you daily to inquire, what all the world has done for you, or against you ; than what you yourselves have done for or against yourselves. Would you know what is the just extent of this power,—what it is you can do, and what it is you cannot do, toward your conversion ? Others have answered more largely ; I say this briefly:—Try ; and you shall know : do all the good you can ; and you shall know what good you can do. To lie idle and do nothing, because you know not how much you can do, were a folly ; like Ezekiel's infant wallowing in its own blood. (Ezek. xvi. 6.)

INFER. V. Your tempters from present conversion are hell's black legion.—I infer it thus:—It is only hell that opposeth heaven ; devils, that fight against the command of God ; black devils, that withstand his express commands : But it is his command, and most express one, that you now presently do convert : Wherefore, as oft as any man dissuades you from it, tell him, you find by his lip [that] he has a cloven foot ; and you see, Satan is grown idle and impudent, and leaves off the trouble of transforming himself into an angel of light. Tempting company is the openest mouth of hell in all this world.

INFER. VI. Your way unto salvation is one and the self-same with other folk's.—If not, why should it be prescribed in the self-same words that the way of all others is prescribed in ; namely, “remembering” God. (Deut. viii. 18 ; Jer. li. 50.) There be many about you, that will show you, young people, a shorter cut to heaven ; and there is much within you, that will catch at it greedily enough. But the Lord give you to receive your sight ! You will then as easily believe there is one God for you, and another for old people, as that there is one religion for you, and another for them. Verily there is but one narrow gate for the entrance, and one strait way for the progress, of both of you. Blessed are both that find it ! miserable, both that miss it ! I know not how he himself shall be saved, that prompts young people that they may be so, without understanding, owning, and living sincerely according unto, their baptismal engagement. May the weight of Matt. v. 19 never lie upon any soul dear unto me !—“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.”

INFER. VII. Your greatest danger is of delaying to convert.—Why else are you twice warned thereof in the text ? Why required to convert in your youth, before you are old ? and just now, before you are a minute older ? Death stands before old men's faces ; and one would think they should not venture to put it off. It is somewhat farther out of your sight, indeed ; but so swiftly it oft comes, that it is [matter] of wonder [that] you yourselves should be so daring as to do it. But, alas ! both of you are daily seen full of your delays. Full often in my pulpit I think, “What a number should I convert this time,

but that my old folk think they may as well convert next week, and my young ones think they may convert next year! both think they may convert another time." And what says my trembling heart? Plainly thus: "O delay, delay! thou bond of iniquity, thou bane of piety, thou bar of conversion, Satan's great barge into 'the lake of fire and brimstone!' begone, and destroy not this congregation!" Sirs, remember it: downright denial of conversion is nothing near so likely to ruin you as dallying delay of it. It is delay [that] is the element of unregeneracy, as unregeneracy is the element of hell.

INFER. VIII. Youthful unconverts are the worst of demoniacs, and break most bonds of God.—For, as you have heard, you have special obligations on you. Though God makes your days choice and good, yet cleave you will unto the worst evil. Though you have on you the restraints which old sinners have long ago had taken off from them, you sin as they. The Spirit of God, that has done striving with many of them, strives still with you. Conscience, that is seared in them, is yet of some sense in you. Parents and other reprovers, that have done long ago with them, are still plying you. And yet, as they, you say unto God, "Depart from us; we desire no communion with thee." With more violence than they, you take the kingdom of hell by force. The path to hell is harder unto your feet than theirs.

INFER. IX. It is your duty to shame your unconvert fathers and mothers.—For, observe you: you shame them, if you remember, and they forget, God; if you come to Christ, and they either come not, or come behind after you: God, angels, and men will pronounce you wise, and them fools. But what then? Would God have you stay for them, and not convert until they do? By no means. He commands you to convert just now; and consequently to shame them, if they have not [converted], and do not. By so shaming them, some children have been the blessed instruments of converting their parents, of spiritually begetting their natural fathers. The only way this seems, wherein a child can requite a parent. For if a beggar's child win a kingdom, and give it his father, his debt to him is too big to be so paid: but if he converts him, he pays him in broad gold, methinks. Parents, think ye of this. And children, this know ye: it is therefore I do not caution you against all sinful ways of shaming your parents, because well I know, becoming dutiful to God, you cannot but honour and love your parents next unto God himself. That which I see of many parents in city and country hath extorted this inference from me.

INFER. X. Your present days are your precious and best.—So the word in the text, and words following, speak plainly. Sirs, your young days be but days, and of short continuance; yea, and dubious. Some are old, as we speak, sooner than others: their flowers sooner fade, and their grass more quickly withers. But whenever your evening falls, you shall wish it again morning with you. If nothing else will do it, old age will convince you of the excellence of youth. It was wittily that, by some, Time was thus pictured of old:—*Time to*

come had the head of a fawning dog; *Time present*, the head of a stirring lion; *Time past*, the head of a biting wolf: so teaching, that though silly souls fancy still that their best days are to come; yet, if they bestir not well themselves in their *present* ones, they will be very miserably bitten and torn in their *future*. I sadly remember sometimes the tears and words of a very ancient gentleman to myself and my school-fellows in our childhood. "Children," said he, "your age is good for every thing that you can desire to get; mine is good for nothing but to spend whatever one has got. A thousand worlds I would give for a few of your learning-getting days again. Of all things, prize your time; and of all time, your young, which is your sowing-, time." It is upon eternity's account that any thing can be judged excellent: nor doth aught make for our blessed eternity, but vital piety. And surely, for that, there is no season like to life's morning. Poets say, it is a friend to the muses; divines must proclaim it the friend of graces.

For why? As incongruous as atheistic vermin do conceit youth and religion, it is plain as noon-day light, that religion is specially framed for youth and youth for religion. Let shame be their portion who are ready to drop the Italian proverb upon every religious young head: *Tanto buon*—"This puritan youth is so good, that he is good for nothing." Young people, remember the seven stars in your firmament; and tell me how fit they are for religion, and religion for them:—

Quick wit and fruitful invention.—What are these for, but religion? and what appearance makes religion without these! Age will make you lame and barren in mind as in body.

Tenacious and prompt memory.—What is this treasury for, but religion? and how poor must religion live (if live) without it? Age will dry your brains, and make sieves of your memories.

Lively and stirring affections.—What are these horses for, but the chariot of religion? and how heavily must the wheels move (if move) without them! Age keeps no such horses; nor travel old souls but upon crutches, and [at] the pace of snails.

Flexibleness and self-denial.—What are these spiritual joints for, but religious bowings? and how little can the most profoundly religious soul stoop to its Maker without them! Old age has stiff joints of soul as well as body.

Amatoriousness, and love of love.—What is this soul of the soul for, but religion? and how is religion herself, if her soul has lost itself? Love is all the religion that I know of. But old age lays your souls in frost and snow.

Alacrity and cheerfulness.—What is this God-like quality for, but religion toward God? and what likeness has religion to itself without it? For God taketh all things not cheerfully given, as forced spoils, rather than free gifts. Now old age's clouds do so return after the rain, that it admits little of this sunshine. Rarely it is that old Sarahs bear Isaacs.

Vigour and strength of body.—What is this for, but religious ser-

vice to Him whose the body is, as well as the soul? and how little can the soul while it is in this body do without it! But where is the old body can let the wind blow on it? at least, where is the head of gray hairs that has a body of brass for a soul of gold?

Sirs, in a word, the truth [which] I beg deepest engravement of upon your hearts, is this of the matchless excellence of your present days. Verily, so fit is youth, the best of life, for religion, the best of employments; and so useless, yea, harmful, are the endowments of youth without religion; and so poor and unlovely an aspect has religion without the use of youth's endowments; that it is a pity but youth and religion should marry and unite. All time is too good for Satan; but if he must have any, let him not have the best, which is your youth. But,

*Cynthia aurem vellit, &c.—VIRGILII Bucol. Ecl. vi. 5.**

I was minded to wave all particular exhortation, and remit you unto my "Call unto Sinners;" in which I have said the things which you do most of all need, and with more plainness and brevity than I have discerned any where else. But second thoughts bid me give you these DIRECTIONS to improve my doctrine. And the rather, because they are of experienced usefulness.

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Choose each of you a spiritual guide in the affairs of your souls.*—There are men ordained by God to be "eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and fathers to" all that would be God's children. (Job xxix. 15, 16.) Refuse not eyes and feet for your souls; nor live you orphans, when you may have fathers. Go unto some one or another of them: tell him, you hear that Christ's ministers are his representatives; and that Christ's word, without his appointed ministry of it, may not be expected to cleanse a young man's way, nor any other's. Get a promise from him, to lend you his best direction to thorough conversion. A youth without a pastor is a child without a nurse.

DIRECT. II. *Use him whom you choose your guide for your soul; and follow him as far as he follows Jesus Christ.*—Hear him ordinarily: a child's own parent's milk is commonly best for it. Write after him; the heads of his sermon, I mean, and his chief notes.—Incomparable king Edward VI. used to write sermon-notes.—Go often to his house, and always to ask things worth his time and your own. Little rest give him, till grace has blessed his labours to fit you for the Lord's table. Plainly tell him, you shall count small good gotten by the word, till you are qualified for the sacrament; and that it is to you a dolorous thing, to have but a place in God's house, and no room at his table; it looks as if you were but a dog, and not a child.

DIRECT. III. *Look alway and adhere closely unto God's Son and*

* "With friendly caution Phœbus touch'd my ear," &c. — WRANGHAM'S Translation.

Spirit.—Without these, the Holy Bible can no more make you wise unto salvation, than the Fables of Æsop, that Papists dare compare it to. The word of life is a word of death to you, without these to make it beneficial; these, without whom you can expect no more edification from the best minister than from a blind harper. In all things, ye want Jesus Christ for acceptance; in all, you want the Holy Ghost for assistance; in all things, and at all times. Without right use of them, no soul can fetch a breath of divine life, or take a step of holy walk. Nature, indeed, shows you a Heavenly Father,* and ties all of you unto him: but it is only special revelation [that] reveals a redeeming Son of God, and a Holy, sanctifying Spirit of God. And it is much grace, and that much used too, that can keep you close unto these: without which, you may be great Socinians, but no Christians.

DIRECT. IV. *Beware of setting against each other, God's mercy, Christ's merits, holy faith, and good works.*—We cannot say to either of them, “We have no need of thee.” All are truly necessary, and unspeakably. But,—in the country I saw it, and in this city I see it,—most people do fix on some one of them, and cry it up, to the exclusion of the rest; to the virtual exclusion. Of so epidemical and fatal a hinderance of conversion, beware you.

The mercy of God all the rhetoric of heaven cannot praise enough: but woe be to you, if you expect the pardon of the least sin by it, otherwise than through Christ's merits!

The merits of Christ: these, without question, are infinite. But you are undone, if you dream you shall have the saving benefit of them, living and dying without marriage unto him by faith.

Holy faith is a grace most precious; by God most highly honoured; and, of all, most honouring God; honouring him, in some respects, more than Adam's personal obedience did before the fall. But mortally you err, if you look to put off God with it, without obedience; and slight good works, as super-erogations.

Good works are the blessed fruit of God's indwelling Spirit, and the very end of our election, redemption, and conversion. But what then? They be neither acceptable to God nor profitable to us, but through the gift of the mercy, the purchase of the merits, and the means of the faith aforesaid. If you rest on works, and imagine them otherwise good, your eternal lodging will be among evil-workers.

Young people, make your pastor set you well at rights about these things: and let the excellency, connexion, order, and necessity of them, be judged worthy of your frequent and serious thoughts.

DIRECT. V. *Be very critical in the choice of your company.*—Be sour and unkind unto none, affable to all, but pleased with few; to wit, the best; who are those that will either best teach you, or best learn from you. “Companions of fools” are doomed to destruction: but wherever you are “walking with wise men,” you are on your way to heaven. (Prov. xiii. 20.) Souls the most thoughtful of eternity,

* *Jupiter, quasi Juvans Pater.* [“As if he were a helping father.”]

are still the most careful of their company. And it is certain, the company of your choice in this world is both that which you would have and shall have in the next.

DIRECT. VI. *Beside the holy scriptures, read ye such good books as shall be commended to you by your pastors.*—It is not every good book that is *for you* good; nor every one that will hereafter be good for you, that is good *now*. Your pastors can judge best which are most suitable.

I think it soul-felony for you to be without the Westminster Assembly's Catechisms. And I should think it as little needful to commend Mr. Baxter's "Call," or Mr. Alleine's; or Mr. Howe's very jewel "Of yielding unto God;" or Mr. F. Fuller's "Words to give Wisdom," with his piece of "Repentance and Faith;" or Mr. Lawson's "*Magna Charta*." England is blessed with the best in this world; and I do not light upon any that excel, or equal, them in England. You must search farther than I have done, young people, if you find things better worth your most careful reading. Books be dead things; but God makes them oftentimes lively preachers. These several last years, many have acknowledged to me, that they have been blessed stars to lead them unto Christ.

Yet do not, for your lives, ever neglect reading the scriptures. Take some portion of God's word, as daily as you eat of his bread. It is very honourably that I do remember a poor soul who sometimes burned the thatch of her house, to read her Bible by the light of it: and no less a saint than Mr. Richard Fairclough told me, she died a glorious one. It was Luther's saying, "The reading of the scriptures is the terror of devils."

DIRECT. VII. *Examine often the state of your souls.*—Scrupulousness itself is as much more safe, as it is less sweet, than audaciousness. But humble and careful inquisitiveness is (*sine nævo Venus*) as "unspotted a virtue" as the state of grace is adorned with. Humility one calls "the violet of graces;" of sweetest scent, though lowest place. And care is the commanded "fear" of falling short of God's rest. (Heb. iv. 1.) The exertion of humble care in heart-searches doth answer many gospel-precepts. And when it is much and often, it is not the least evidence of truest grace. For bankrupts can no more endure much looking into their account-books, than sore eyes can bear long beholding of sunshine: and as impatient be hypocrites of very much conning the scriptures and their hearts.

But I conclude. Young people, Mahomet gat the Turkish empire by making extraordinary haste; and Alexander conquered the world by the same policy,—never delaying. Go you and outdo them: conquer world, flesh, and devil, and take by violence the kingdom of heaven, by your hasting to remember and convert just now. With great reason our law makes it death to conceal high treason so much as four and twenty hours. I am sure, God's law requires you to confess and forsake your higher treason against Christ's crown, without so much as a minute's delay; and with much more reason and equity.

I thought I had done. But I am sensible how little I have done: and therefore, before I make an end, I must try to set two sorts of people a-doing more for poor unconvert young ones;—two very concerned ones in the case; two that my text hath surely somewhat to do with. I mean, PARENTS and MINISTERS. Surely natural and ecclesiastical fathers are all bound to join me in preaching of this portion of scripture.

1. To you, NATURAL PARENTS, I first address; beseeching you, that you go [and] study what you have to do, and do all that you shall know, for your children's early conversion. I am of the mind, that "gallant language never did God's work;" and do find it what you call "wild note," rather than "set music," that I can ever move you by. Wherefore plainly I tell you, We may thank you for earth's becoming thus unlike heaven, and like to hell. We may thank your negligence, and worse, for the ruin of more children than ever Herod slew, or the liar and murderer of France himself. We may thank you, that children be so generally beasts, before they are young men; and young devils, before they are old men. We may thank you for vitiating the most numerous, the most ductile, and the most hopeful part of the world; for robbing God of his first-fruits in the world.

I beseech you by God's tender mercies, repent of your cruelties. And I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, reform ye straightway, and do as aforesaid. The light of nature, that guides you to help your children to go, and to speak, and to do what is necessary for this life, guides you also to help them for the divine life. Nor can you doubt but God's ordinance in the old church for the appearance of the male children before him thrice in the year, was to bring them to an early acquaintance with himself: and there is still both need and obligation to keep the substance of that precept now under the gospel. O let it not be said any longer, that your care is more for your children's clothes, than their souls! For shame, sirs, for shame! let them not be wicked without your pity, nor converted without your pains! Think ye daily of both the advantages and engagements to do it.

Your advantages.—You do love your children best; do you not? and you are best-beloved by them. You are nearest unto them, and have most authority over them. You do know their capacities and their tempers. Who can suit them as you?

Your engagements.—Their sore needs do engage you: and so do the sore evils that (however undesignedly) you have done them. Who brought Adam's sin upon them and into them, but you? And who dares say, that your own personal sins have done them no wrong?

Dying Dr. Harris said, he had made his peace with God, and told his children, that his sins should not hurt them therefore, unless they made them their own. Can you say so, if you were now to die? Well; very nature also engages you. Ay, and equity binds you: for your children are God's, more than yours: and, surely it is to him,

and for him, that you should educate his children. Truth also engages you. For you promised you would so educate them, when you had them baptized; did you not? *

The fear and love of God, if any be in you, do engage you. And so doth your own interest also. Yea, lastly, shame engages you. For it is a shame—is it not?—to teach children to honour and serve you, and not to honour and serve their God and yours. I have bid many children ask you, whether, if they were too young to be bound to keep God's commands, they were not also too young to be bound to keep yours. Listen not to the white devils that will suggest, "If your children take not to religion of themselves without your a-do, your pains will do but little good." Do horses or camels tame themselves? Do men tame beasts of the wilderness? and do you not tame the children of your own bodies and families? But, all in a word: does God set you a work, and promise you success; and [do] you dream it to no purpose to set about it? Read you Prov. xxii. 6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Prov. xxiii. 13, 14.) "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (Prov. xxix. 15, 17.)

2. As for you, CHURCH-FATHERS, may I humbly assume to stir up your minds but in way of remembrance? You know, if the lambs be lost, the Lord of the flock will with great anger ask, "Where were the shepherds all the while? What were they doing?" Nor will our highest feeding of the sheep compound for the loss of his lambs. And I doubt, it will not suffice to say, "Lord, we were the while digging for profound notions, or disputing nice questions, or studying polite sermons, for people whose peace and whose praise we could not have cheaper."

Brethren, for the Lord's sake, let us all do somewhat weekly, and set the parents of our congregations doing somewhat daily, for young people's souls. And let both set to it hopefully, for the reasons foresaid. The difficulty and impossibility, as to our endeavours, be left but to drive us to diligence, and dependence on Him to whom nothing is difficult or impossible. The more we do look for success, the more it will come. Let not catechising, that is praised by all, be unpractised by any. And in preaching, let none of us make need, where we find none, to shoot over young folk's heads, and use a language [which] we must needs know they understand not. Love of God and of them would make us willing rather to be trampled under scornors' feet for our faithfulness, than to ride over their heads in

* A minister of the church of England told me, he had refused to baptize some of his parishioners' children, because, as he saw, they would not afterward breed them up to Christianity.

figures of vain-glorious impertinence ; the which, wise hearers do no more commend, than weak hearers do understand. Neither be it any more grievous to us than it was to St. Austin, to have now and then an *Ad vos, juvenes* ; to call and tell them, “Young people, this is for you.” I would be glad to see wanton wits have less sauce, and weak souls have more meat, in all our sermons ; and to discern that our pains in making converts did exceed the Papists’ in making proselytes. For it must be owned, it is an uncolourable profaneness, to baptize infancy and not teach youth, or but slightly : because otherwise we shall starve the nursery ; and then what becomes of Jesus Christ’s family ?

The good Lord awaken us all, and set ministers, parents, young people themselves, all a-doing, and well-doing ! Our churches then shall be beautified, and joyed, and strengthened with abundance of young meditating Isaacs ; young Jacobs, seeking the blessing ; young Solomons, choosing wisdom ; young Obadiahs, fearing the Lord ; young Johns, lying in Christ’s bosom ; yea, young children, crying “Hosanna ;” stilling, or shaming at least, and balking, God’s enemies and ours. Origen’s father, Leonides, would sometimes uncover his breast as he lay asleep, and solemnly kiss it ; blessing God, that had given him to be a father to so excellent a child. And so shall many of us have warrant to do. Upon our houses, schools, and churches, it shall be writ and read of all, *Jehovah-shammah*, “The Lord is there.” Amen and Amen.