

Ghost, according to the particular articles of the christian faith ; and heartily repenting of my sinful life, I do personally, absolutely, and resolvedly give up myself to him, my Creator and reconciled God and Father in Christ, my Saviour and my Sanctifier ; renouncing the devil, the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh : that, taking up my cross, and denying myself, I may follow Christ, the Captain of my salvation, to the death, and live with him in endless glory.

Read but our church liturgy, yea the papists' liturgies, and you will see that here is not a word but what is in the sense of baptism, and what papists, and protestants, and all Christians, are agreed on.

I pray you, Sir Elymas, read it, and tell him here whether there be any word that you except against.

El. I cannot deny it without denying Christianity. God make us all better Christians ; for I perceive we are not what we promised to be. It was you that I talked against, I thought, all this while ; but I begin to perceive that it is Christianity itself (in the ' practice, though not in the name) which my heart is against. I cannot like this godliness, and self-denying, and mortification, and cross-bearing ; and yet I perceive that I vowed it, when I was baptised : and if I renounce it, I must renounce my Christianity itself. I would I had not talked with you, for you have disquieted my mind ; and I find that it is serious religion itself that is against my mind and course of life, and my mind against it, and that I must be either a saint or an atheist ; and which I shall prove I cannot tell. But if I must repent, there is no haste.

THE FOURTH DAY'S CONFERENCE.

The Resolving and Actual Conversion of a Sinner.

Speakers.—Paul, a Teacher ; and Saul, a Learner.

PAUL. Welcome, neighbour ; you have been longer away than I expected ; what was the matter with you ?

SAUL. O, sir, I have seen and felt the heavy hand of God since I saw you. We had a violent fever common among us, and my laudlord, Sir Elymas, is dead, and so is his servant that

¹ Prov. lii. 18, 19.

was with him when you talked with him ; and I narrowly escaped with my life myself.

P. Alas ! is he dead ? I pray you tell me how he took our conference, and how he died ?

S. He told me that you were too bold and saucy with him ; but he thought you were an honest man, and that you had more reason for your religion than he thought any of you had : and that the truth is, you had the Scripture on your side ; and while he disputed with you on Scripture principles, you were too hard for him. But though he was loth to tell you so, he liked the papists better, who set not so much by Scripture ; and when a man hath sinned, if he confess to the priest, they absolve him. Yea, rather than believe that none but such godly people could be saved, and rather than live so strict a life, he would not believe that the Scripture was the word of God.

P. Alas, how the rebellious heart of man stands out against the law and grace of God ! As for the papists, I assure you they confess all the Scriptures to be the word of God, and of certain truth, as well as we ; and they will deny never a word of that which I persuaded you to consent to. They differ from us in this, and they take in more books into the canonical Scripture than we do ; and they say, that all that is in their Scripture and ours, is not religion enough for us ; but we must have a great deal more, which they call tradition. See, then, the ignorance of these men : that because they think we make them too much work, they will run to them that make them much more. Though I confess their additions consist so much in words, and ceremonies, and bodily exercise, that flesh and blood can the more easily bear it. When the papists dispute with us, they would make men believe that our religion is too loose and favoureth the flesh, and that theirs is far more strict and holy ; and yet our sensualists turn papists to escape the strictness of our religion.

And as for their pardons and absolutions, I assure you, their own doctrine is, that they profit and save none but the truly penitent. And even their Gregory VII., called Hildebrand (and the firebrand of the church and empire), and that, in a council at Rome, professeth, that neither false penitence, nor false baptism, is effectual : though some of them make attrition, without contrition, or bare fear without love, to serve the turn. And if their priests do flatter the presumption and false hopes of fornicators, drunkards, and such grosser sinners, by absolving them

as oft as they confess their sin, without telling them that it is all ineffectual, unless, by true conversion, they forsake it, they do this but as a mere cheat for worldly ends; to increase their church, and win the great and wealthy of the world to themselves; quite contrary to their own knowledge and professed religion.

But as for his not believing the Scriptures: the truth is, there lieth the core of all their errors. There are abundance amongst us, that call themselves Christians, because it is the religion of the king and country, who are no Christians at the heart, which made me say so much of the hypocrisy of ungodly men. And I cannot see how a man, that truly believeth the Scripture, can quiet himself in a fleshly and ungodly life, but his belief would either convert him or torment him.

S. But I am persuaded he had some convictions upon his conscience, which troubled him. When he was taken first with the fever, they all put him in hopes that there was no danger of death; and so he was kept from talking at all of his soul, or of another world, till the fever took away his understanding; but twice or thrice he came to himself for half an hour, and Mr. Zedekiah, his chaplain, advised him to lift up his heart to God, and believe in Christ; for he was going to a place of joys, and angels were ready to receive his soul. And he looked at him with a direful countenance, and said, 'Away, flatterer! You have betrayed my soul! Too late! too late!' And he trembled so that the bed shook under him.

P. And how died his servant, Malchus?

S. O, quite in another manner! He heard, in the next room, all the talk between his master and you, and, doubtless, it convinced him; but he went on in his former course of life, till sickness took him, and then he was greatly terrified in conscience, especially when he heard that his master was dead. And he would often talk of you, and wish that he could have spoken with you; but none would endure to hear of sending for you. O! if you had but heard how he cried out toward the last: 'O, my madness! O, my sinful, wicked life! O, what will become of my miserable soul? O that I had the time again which I have lost! Would God but try me once again, I would lead another life than I have done; I would make nothing of all the scorns of fools, and all the temptations of the world!' His groans did strike me as a dagger at the heart: methinks I still hear them which way ever I go.

† Eccl. vii. 2-6.

P. And what hath been your own condition since I saw you ? And what thought you of your master's conference ?

S. O, sir, I would not, for a great deal, but I had heard it. I thought, till I heard you answer him, that there had been some sense in the talk of these revilers at a godly life ; but then I soon saw that it is all but a foolish scorn and railing ; any scolding woman could talk as wisely. His superiority, and confidence, and contempt, was all his wisdom.

P. It is no wonder if he talk foolishly, who talketh against the God of wisdom, and his holy word, and against the interest, health, and happiness of his own soul. He that can live so far below reason as to sell his salvation for the short and swinish pleasures of sin, may talk with as little reason as he liveth.

S. But how could I be any longer in doubt, when you constrained him, in the conclusion, to yield you all the cause ?

P. And what course did you resolve upon, and take ?

S. Alas ! sir, my own naughty heart did hinder me much more than his objections did. I went home, convinced that your words were true, and that I must become a ^h new creature, or be undone. And I perused the Baptismal Covenant which you wrote down, and the Articles of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Commandments. I studied the meaning of them, with that exposition which you gave me. My ignorance so darkened my mind, that all seemed strange and new to me, though I used to rote them over in the church from day to day. And being very unskilful in such matters myself, I went oft to my neighbour, Eusebius, as you advised me ; and, I thank him, he gladly helped me to understand the words and things which were too hard for me. But when I had done all this, my worldly business took up my thoughts so, and the cares of my family were so much at my heart, and my old companions so often tempted me, and my flesh was so loth to let go all my sinful pleasures, and the matters of religion were so strange to me, that I delayed my resolution, and continued still purposing that I would shortly turn ; but while I was purposing, and delaying, the fever took me. And having seen the death of Sir Elymas, and of Malchus, and then received the sentence of death in myself, God, by his terrors, did awaken me out of my delays.

P. O what an unreasonable thing is it to delay, when you are once convinced ! What ! delay to come out of the bondage of the devil ; the guilt of sin ; the flames of Sodom ; the wrath

^h 2 Cor. v. 17.

of God ! If death take you in an unconverted state, you are lost for ever ! What, if you had died formerly in your sin ? What, if you die this night ? What assurance have you to live an hour ? Alas ! how brittle and corruptible a thing is the body of a man ! And by what a wonder of providence do we live ! Is sin so good ? Is the state of a sinner so safe, or comfortable, that any should be loth to leave it ? Is God, and Christ, and heaven, so bad, that any should delay, and be loth to be godly ? Can you be happy too soon ; or too soon be a child of God ; or too soon get out of the danger of damnation ? Is God hateful ? Is sin and misery lovely, that you are so loth to change ? If sin be best, keep it still. If God and heaven be worst, never think of turning to him. But if best, do you not presently desire the best ? Must Christ, and his Holy Spirit, wait on you, while you take the other cup ; and stay your leisure, while you are destroying yourself ? How know you, but the Spirit of God may ^l forsake you, and leave you to your own will, and lust, and counsel ; and say, ' Be hardened, and be filthy still.' What a forlorn, miserable creature would you be ! Do you not know that every sin, and every ^k delay, and every resistance of the Spirit, doth tend to the greater hardening of your heart, and making your conversion less hopeful, and more hard ? Do you hope for pardon and mercy from God, or do you not ? If not, desperation would begin your hell : if you do, is it ingenuous to desire to commit more of that sin, which you mean to repent that ever you committed, and to beg for pardon of from God ? Dare you say, in your heart, ' Lord, I have abused thee, and thy Son, and Spirit, and mercy, long ; I will abuse thee yet a little longer, and then I will repent, and ask forgiveness ?' Do you love to spit a little longer in the face of that Saviour, and that mercy, which you must fly to, and trust too, at the last ? Do you not purpose to love him, and honour him, afterward, and for ever ; and yet would you a little longer despise and injure him ; would you gratify and please the devil a little longer ; and root, and strengthen sin a little more, before you pull it up ; and kindle a greater flame in your house, before you quench it ? Must you needs give yourself a few more stabs before you go to the physician ? Is your life too long ; and hath God given you too much time, that you are desirous to lose a little more ? Are you afraid of too easy an assurance of forgiveness, that you would make it harder, and would invite despair, by sinning wil-

^l Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.

^k Psalm cxix. 60.

fully against knowledge and conviction? What will you delay for? Do you think ever to find the market fall, and Christ come down to lower terms; and change his law and Gospel, to excuse you for not changing your heart and life? Do you ever look to find conversion an easier work than now? Do you know how much more you have to do, when you are converted; what knowledge, faith, hope, assurance, and patience, and comfort, more to get; how many temptations to overcome, and how many duties to perform; and what a work it is to prepare for immortality? And are you afraid of having too much time, and beginning so great a work too soon? Believe it, Satan doth not loiter; time stands not still; sun, and moon, and all the creatures, delay not to afford you all their service. Delay is a denial: God needs not you, but you need him. You would not have him delay to help you, in the time of your pain and great extremity. Patience will not be abused for ever. Behold, this is the ^laccepted time! Behold, this is the ^mday of salvation! We, that are Christ's servants, are apt to be weary of calling and warning you in vain ourselves; and, usually, when the preacher hath done, God hath done his invitation; because he worketh by his appointed means. O that you knew what others are enjoying, and what you are losing, all the time that you delay, and on how slippery ground you stand; and what after sorrows you are preparing for yourself!

S. Sir, I thank you for your awakening, convincing reasons. But I was telling you, how God hath already, I hope, resolved me against any longer delay. When I thought I must presently die, all my sins, and all your counsels, came into my mind; and the fear of God's displeasure did overwhelm me. I thought I had but a few days to be out of hell; and, O what would I not have given for assurance of pardon by Jesus Christ; and for a little more time of preparation in the world, before my soul did enter upon eternity! Oh, I never saw the face of sin, the truth of God's threatenings, the need of a Saviour, the preciousness of time, the madness of delaying, thoroughly, until then! And now, Sir, the great mercy of God having restored me, I come presently to you, to profess my resolution, and to take your further good advice.

P. You see that God is merciful to us, when we think that he is destroying us.ⁿ Afflictions are not the least of God's mercies

^l 2 Cor. vi. 2.

^m Heb. iii. 7, 13, 15, and iv. 7.

ⁿ Psalm cxix. 61, 71, 75; 1 Thess. i. 6.

which our dull and hardened hearts make necessary: such fools we are, that we will not understand without the rod. My advice is, that you read over here, again, the doctrine of Christianity, which I gave you in our second day's conference; and the covenant of Baptism, which I wrote you the third day; and let me see whether you understand and believe it, and consent thereto. (Here Saul readeth it over.)

S. You would have me understand what I do. I desire you, here, to answer me these few doubts, that I may clearer proceed, and make my covenant with God in ^o judgment.

Question I. What must I trust to for the pardon of my sin; and which way, and on what terms, may I be sure of it?

P. The prime cause is God's mercy: this mercy hath given Jesus Christ to be our Redeemer. Christ hath, by perfect holiness and obedience, and by becoming a sacrifice to God for our sins, deserved and purchased our pardon and salvation. So that you must trust to the sacrifice and meritorious righteousness of Christ alone, as the purchasing, meritorious cause of your forgiveness, and of your reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and salvation. But the way that God, our Father and Redeemer, doth take to give us a right unto these blessings, is by making with man a law and ^p covenant of grace. By this law he commandeth us to become Christians; that is, to believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to give up ourselves to him in the covenant of baptism, repenting of sin; and thus turning to God by Jesus Christ. To all that do this, he giveth right to ^a Christ himself, first as their Head and Saviour, and with him right to pardon, to the Spirit, and salvation: so that God is the Giver of Christ to redeem us. Christ is our Redeemer, and the Meriter of our life: the new law, or covenant, is the instrumental donation of life; like an act of oblivion. Your own covenanting, or giving up yourself to God in Christ, which is by a repenting, practical ^r faith, or (which is all one) your accepting the gift of the covenant as it is offered, according to its nature, is that condition, or duty, on your part, upon which the covenant giveth you right. So that God's covenant, gift, or grant, is your title, or the foundation of your right, (as Christ is the Meriter and Maker of the covenant,) and

^o Jer. iv. 2; Hos. ii. 19.

^p Heb. ix. 15—17, and vii. 22; Matt. xxviii. 19, and xxvi. 28; 2 Cor. iii. 6; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 16.

^a 1 John v. 9—12.

^r John i. 10—12.

your practical faith is the condition on your part. And to every one of these, to ^o God's mercies, to Christ's sacrifice, merits, and intercessions, to the covenant, or gift of God, and to your own sincere faith, consent, and acceptance, you must trust for its own proper part. And you must understand what the part of each one is, and not trust to any one of these for the other's part. The mercy of God as the fountain; the blood and righteousness of Christ as the merit and purchase; the covenant of Christ, or donation, as the instrument and title; and your faith and consent as the condition of your title: as thankful acceptance usually is, of all free gifts.

And then the gift itself, or benefit given, is Christ and life. (1 John v. 11, 12.) By life I mean, 1. Pardon. 2. The Spirit. 3. Right to glory, or justification, sanctification, adoption, and future glory. I have repeated things that I might make them as plain to you as I can.

S. Quest. II. Are all my sins pardonable whatsoever? I have been a greater sinner that you know of. I must here confess to you in secret what I did not before confess, I minded not my soul: I prayed not once in a week: I have been in the alehouse when I should have been at church: I have been drunken more than once or twice. When I was a servant, I robbed my master; I sold for more than I gave him, and I bought for less than I told him I paid. I was oft guilty of immodest carriage with women, and, to confess my shame, I was guilty of actual fornication. I made little conscience of a lie: alas! my sins have been so many and so great, that I can hardly think that God will pardon them!

P. The covenant of grace ^t forgiveth all sins without exception, which consist with the performance of the condition of pardon after them; that is, all sins are pardoned to the penitent believer; but to the impenitent unbeliever, no sin is pardoned (except conditionally); and final impenitence and unbelief are pardoned to none. So that a true Christian is not to doubt of the pardon of any of his former sins, any further than he doubteth of his faith and Christianity.

S. Quest. III. But I shall sin again, in some degree: how then must I have pardon of my sins hereafter? I have heard that baptism washeth away all sin: but it is long since I was baptised; and I am yet imperfect.

Rom. iv. 16, 22, 24, 25.

^t Acts v. 31; xiii. 38, 39, and xxvi. 18; Jam. v. 15; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; Matt. xii. 31, 32; Luke vii. 47.

P. Baptism is said to wash away sin, because that God's covenant, celebrated in baptism, giveth pardon of all sin through the blood of Christ, to all that truly receive it, and consent, on their part, to the covenant. Now this covenant on God's part is a standing law and pardoning act; and it pardoneth all sin to our death to them that still repent and believe. But it is said to pardon all at baptism, because then there it is supposed that we have no more to be pardoned. But if any be ungodly after baptism, God's law or covenant pardoneth all that it findeth us guilty of, whenever we truly turn to God, by faith and repentance. But afterward it pardoneth daily our daily sins of infirmity only; and to the lapsed their extraordinary falls upon their extraordinary repentance: because the faithful ^u have no other afterward to be forgiven. For being sanctified, they no more live an ungodly, sensual, worldly life. So that you must hereafter, for your particular sins, have a particular repentance, and recourse to Christ.

S. Quest. IV. How must I do for grace and strength to keep my covenant when I have made it?

P. ^x Of yourself you can do nothing that is good. Your heart is so corrupted with sin, till it be sanctified, that you will not be willing; and your mind so blind that you will not well understand your duty nor your interest; and your soul so dead and impotent, that you will have no life or strength to practise what you know. But if the ^y Spirit of Christ do once give you faith, and repentance, and consent, by this you have right to him as an indwelling principle; and you are then entered into covenant relation to the Holy Ghost: and that which he will do in you is to sanctify your three faculties. 1. Your vital power, with spiritual ^z life, strength, and activity. 2. Your understanding, with spiritual light, that is, knowledge and faith. 3. Your will, with holy love and willingness. And when he hath planted these in you, he will be ready still to preserve, excite, actuate, and increase them. So that it is the Holy Ghost that must be your life, light, and love. But you must know how to obey his motions, and not resist him.

S. Quest. V. What must I do to get, keep, and obey the Spirit, that I lose it not, and miss not of these benefits?

P. You must know that God hath first possessed Christ's hu-

^u 1 John i. 6-9; Rom. vi. 1-3, 16, &c.; 1 John iii. 9.

^x John xv. 5.

^y Rom. viii. 4, 9.

^z Eph. ii. 1-3, 5, 11, and i. 18, 19; Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. v. 3-6, 10; 2 Tim. i. 7.

man glorified nature with the Spirit, that he may have it as the Head, and from him it is to come to us as his members. Therefore I said that the whole gift of the covenant is ^a Christ and life. Now Christ giveth us his Spirit, both as a Saviour, freely, and as a Ruler, according to his law of grace, as to the order of conveyance. Therefore, as the first gift of the indwelling Spirit is on condition of your faith, so the continuance of it is on condition of your continuing in the faith. (For all that you neither had faith at first, nor in continuance without the antecedent work of the Spirit.) And the increase and actual helps and comfort of the Spirit are given you on condition of your dependence on Christ your Head for the daily communication of it.

Therefore you must remember, 1. That the giving or denying the helps of the Spirit to our souls, are the greatest rewards and punishments which Christ, as our King, doth exercise and administer on us in this world. And therefore look much at this in yourself, whether God's Spirit help you or forsake you.

2. That your means is to wait on Christ in the daily exercise of faith, and use of all his instituted ordinances, and to attend his Spirit, and not resist it.

S. But I am afraid I have sinned against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin; for I have joined with profane persons in deriding the Spirit. Especially when I heard many young students, and ministers themselves, do the same, it emboldened me to imitate them. I have mocked at them that did but talk of the Spirit, or speak of the necessity of the Spirit: I have said, 'These be the spiritual men, the holy brethren, that pray by the Spirit, and preach by the Spirit, and whine by the Spirit, and cheat and lie, and dissemble by the Spirit. These are the gifted brethren!' with many such foolish scorns. And is not this the sin against the Holy Ghost?

P. The sin was very great, and the case of those that encouraged you, fearful; and no doubt but it was a sin against the Holy Ghost. But it is not every sin against the Holy Spirit which is unpardonable; but only the blasphemy of infidels described Matt. xii; which is, that when they cannot deny the miracles of Christ, they will rather hold and maintain that he ^b wrought them by the power of the devil, than they will believe

^a John vi. 51, 52, &c.; lvii. 58, and xiv. 19; Gal. ii. 20; iii. 3, 14; iv. 6, and v. 17, 21—23; 1 Thess. v. 19; Heb. x. 29; Neh. ix. 20; Prov. i. 23; Luke xi. 13; Eph. iv. 30; Psalm li. 11; Col. i. 23.

^b Matt. xii.

in him. So that it is none but infidels, and but few of them, that have this blasphemy of the Holy Ghost.

S. Quest. VI. How shall I do to know the operations and motions of the Spirit from delusions, and how shall I know whether I have the Spirit or not?

P. 1. The Spirit is from God and our Saviour, and leadeth to them. I told you its operations are 1.^c Holy life, or vivacity toward God. 2. Holy light, to know and believe God. 3. Holy love, to love God, and his government, and children. If you have these, you have God's Spirit; for it is nothing else. These are God's restored image on the soul, and the new divine nature of his regenerate, adopted children.

II. The motions of the Spirit are, 1. Always fitted to God and holiness, as the end. 2. And always actuate the three aforesaid habits, of holy life, light, and love. 3. And they are always agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and by them must be tried.

S. What is the reason of that?

1. Because God giveth the same Spirit indeed,^d but not in the same measure to all. Now, to the apostles and evangelists he gave it in the greatest extraordinary degree, purposely to plant his churches, and to indite an infallible Scripture, the records of that gospel, and to confirm it by miracles; and leave it to the world, as the rule of our faith and life; so that as a man first engraveth a seal, and then sets it on the wax, so the Holy Ghost first inspired the apostles to write us the infallible word and rule; and then he is given to all others, in a smaller degree, only^e to help us to understand, believe, and obey that word. Therefore the lower operations of the Spirit in us are to be tried by the higher operations in the apostles recorded.

S. Quest. VII. What then is the law and the rule that I must live by, according to the covenant that I make?

P. 1. God is the universal King, and Christ, our Redeemer, as man, his Administrator. God's law is written, as I told you, 1. In nature. 2. In Scripture, where also the law of nature is contained, in the main. This is God's law which you must live by.

2. But God hath officers under him in the world.^f 1. Parents and masters in families. 2. Pastors in the churches.

^c John iii. 5, 6; Col. iii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 7; 2 Cor. v. 17; Tit. iii. 3, 5; Gal. iv. 6.

^d 1 Cor. xii. 11—13, &c.; Eph. iii. 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16; Matt. xxviii. 20.

^e 2 Tim. iii. 16; John xvi. 13.

^f Deut. xi. 19; Rom. xiii. 3—5; 1 Thess. v. 2, 13; Eph. vi. 1, &c.

3: Kings in kingdoms. These are to promote the execution of God's laws; and, to that end, to make subordinate laws or commands of their own, about things subordinate, undetermined in God's universal law, and left to their determination. Like as are the by-laws of corporations under the laws of the king: and all these, under God, must, in their places, be obeyed.

S. Quest. VIII. What church must I join myself unto?

P. You were baptised only into Christ's universal church; and to be a Christian and to be a member of that church is all one.^f That church is nothing but, spiritually, all heart covenanters, or believers, and, visibly, all baptised, visible covenanters, or professors, united to, or with, Christ the Head: and no pope or general council is the head of it, supreme or official.

But you must join with that part of this church where you live, and God giveth you opportunity to worship him and learn his will, with the best advantage to your own soul, not violating the common good, and peace. But you must join actually with none that will not receive you unless you sin.

S. Quest. IX. What are the institutions or means which I must use, in attendance on Christ and his Spirit?

P. 1. The reading and^h hearing of God's word, and its explication and application by your teachers.

2. Prayer, thanksgiving, praises to God, and the Lord's supper, in communion with his church.

3. Holy discipline, in submission to your guides, in obedience, penitent confessing sins when necessary, and the like; if you live where such discipline is exercised.

S. Quest. X. What must I do with my calling, and labour, and estate in the world: must I forsake it or not?

P. Adam was to labour in innocency. Six days must you labour and do all that you have to do. (Exod. xx.) He that will not labour,^l if able, is unworthy to eat. Idleness was one of Sodom's sins; religion must be no pretence for slothfulness. You must not love the world^k as your felicity,^k or for itself, or for your fleshly lust: but you must make use of the world in the service of your Creator, yea, and love it as a sanctified means of your salvation, and as a wilderness way to your promised in-

^f Eph. i. 22, and iv. 3, 4, 15; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 27—29; we never find in Scripture two churches in one city; Acts ii. 42; xiv. 23, and xx. 7, 8.

^h 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Acts ii. throughout; 1 Cor. xi. and xiv; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; James v. 16.

^l 2 Thess. iii. 10.

^k 1 John ii. 15, 16.

heritance, as the mariner loveth not the sea for a dwelling, but as a passage to his desired port. Good husbandry is not unbecoming a good Christian. You must labour for your daily bread, as well as pray for it: yea, for the maintenance of your family, and that you may have things decent, and give to him that needeth. (Rom. xii. 17; 2 Cor. viii. 21; Eph. iv. 28; 1 Tim. v. 8.)

But this is the thing that you must principally remember, That God and the heavenly glory is your end,¹ which must still be desired for itself and before all; and the world, and all things in it, are but means to help you to that end; and only as they are such must be valued, loved, desired, and sought; and whenever they oppose God and your heavenly interest, must be forsaken, and used as we do hated things.^m

And when common, worldly things thus further your obedience, and are devoted to God, and referred to his will and service, then they are sanctified to you, which else will be but common, unclean, and your mortal enemy.

S. Quest. XI. What, if I am now uncertain whether my heart be sincere in this covenant which I make with God when I renounce all, and profess to prefer him before all? May I venture to covenant and profess that consent whose sincerity I am uncertain of? Will not this be a kind of lying unto God?

P. If your heart be false, it will be lying: but if it be not, it will be no lying, though you are uncertain. The truth of your consent is one thing, and your certainty of it is another. That it be true is necessary to your salvation; but not that you be sure that it is true. But there is much difference between, 1. One that flattereth himself with conceits that he consenteth, when he doth not. Such an one sinneth in professing a lie. 2. And one that is but yet deliberating, and is unresolved what to choose and do. This person must not covenant till he feel the scales turn by a true resolution. 3. And one that truly consenteth and resolveth, but is afraid lest his deceitful heart is not sincere in it: this person must covenant in this uncertainty, because all that can be expected from us is, that we speak our own minds, according to the best acquaintance with them that we can get; otherwise we must forbear all thanksgiving for special mercies, and a great part of our worship of God, till we

¹ Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33; John vi. 27; Col. iii. 3—5.

^m Luke xiv. 26, 33; Tit. i. 16.

* Acts ii. 38, and xxii. 16; John iii. 5, 6; Mark xvi. 16; Eph. iv. 5; Col. ii. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 21; Rom. vi. 3, 4; Gal. iii. 27.

are certain of the sincerity of our own hearts, which too many are not.

S. But some think that baptism is not to enter us into this special covenant which presently pardoneth; but only to enter us into Christ's school, as our teacher, that by him we may learn how to be regenerate and sincere, that we may then be pardoned. If this would serve, I could more easily consent.

P. I may not stand at large to show you the falseness of that opinion. The best is, baptism hath these sixteen hundred years been kept unchanged by the church in one form; and the church never knew any baptism but, 1. Such as was joined with a present profession of present faith and repentance, and renunciation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a total devotedness to God in Christ. 2. Such as had the promise of present pardon of sin to all sincere receivers of baptism. 3. Such as stated the receiver in a visible membership to Christ, and right to glory; so that in charity we are bound to take, and love, and use such as sincere, till they show the contrary. 4. The church never baptised any whom they took not thereby to be made visible Christians; and they took no man for a Christian that took not Christ presently for his Saviour, Priest, and King, as well as for his Teacher, yea, and God for his God, and the Holy Spirit for his Sanctifier. 5. And so much as you talk of maketh a man but one of the catechised, prepared for Christianity, whom the church never took for Christians till they were baptised. 6. And the few that are of the opinion which you mention yet confess that you cannot be saved till you consent sincerely to the covenant of grace itself.

S. Quest. XII. What if it prove that my heart is not sincere? or what if I should fall away again hereafter?

P. If your heart be not^o sincere in your consent to the covenant, you will remain unpardoned in your sin and misery, till it be sincere.

II. If you fall into a particular sin, I have told you how you must be restored, by renewed repentance for it, through faith in Christ. But as you love God and your soul, take heed of wilful sinning. But if (which God forbid) you should fall quite away from Christ, renouncing him, as if you believed him not to be the Messiah; I say, if you thus totally and settledly renounce Christ by unbelief, I cannot see but you must either be guilty of the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, or come so near it as that,

^o Psalm xxxii. 1—3.

according to Heb. vi. 6—8, your recovery will be utterly improbable.

S. I am much afraid lest, when temptation cometh, I should turn again to my former folly (though God forbid I should renounce my Saviour). I am so entangled in ill company, and in a custom of sinning, and have so bad a nature, and so many temptations and worldly snares, that though I am now resolved, I am afraid lest I should yield, and lose my resolutions.

P. It becometh you to ^p fear it, that so you may prevent it. But this fear should not hinder you from resolving and consenting. For, 1. You know that sin is odious, and its pleasures are poison and deceit; and, therefore, that this world affordeth nothing to stand in competition with God and your salvation. If you will take this world for your part, you are undone; if you will not,^q resolve accordingly. But dream not of joining sin and holiness, or the worldly and the heavenly felicity into one, and dividing your heart and service between^r God and Mammon; for that is the damning self-deceit of hypocrites.

2. You shall not only have that which is an hundred-fold better than all you forsake; but you shall have the world itself, refined and sanctified to your greater good. You would have it as your fleshly felicity: God would have you renounce it in that sense; but he will give it you as your daily provision for his service, and as a blessed means to further your salvation, that you may see God in every creature, and thank him for it, and serve him by it. And one mercy thus sanctified is worth a thousand abused: ten pounds, or ten shillings, a-year used for God to further your salvation, is better than lordships and kingdoms, used to serve the flesh and the devil, and to prepare men for damnation. Read Jam. v.

3. When you are once entered well into the service of God, you will find the light which will shame all temptations, and that sweet experience of greater pleasures, which will make you loath what formerly you loved. The comforts of faith, and hope, and love, will make you spit out the filthy pleasures of the flesh.

4. And you will have the direction, encouragement, and example of those that fear God; and the help of all his holy ordinances.

5. And, which is more, you will be planted into Christ, and receive the communications of his Spirit, and his strength will be magnified in your weakness. You are not to trust in your

^p Heb. iv. 1.

^q Matt. vi. 24.

^r Matt. xiii. 46.

own strength, but in the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the communion and operation of the Holy Ghost.

6. And your resolution is a matter of absolute necessity: you must resolve, or perish for ever; you must consent, or be condemned as a rejecter of salvation. God sets before you Christ, and holiness, and heaven; the devil sets before you the pleasures of sin for a moment, and everlasting damnation in the end. Take which you will; for one you must have. There is no middle way; nor no reconciling both together.

The truth is, it is that shameful folly which you must lament, that in so great, so necessary, so plain a case, you should be unresolved to this day! That a man in his wits should live twenty years so, as if he had been resolved to be damned; and after that, stay so long delaying before he can resolve, whether he were best be saved or no? What! is it yet a hard question to you whether God or the devil be your owner, and the better friend and master; and whether heaven or hell be the better dwelling; and whether sin or holiness be the better life; and whether you should consent that Christ and his Spirit save you from your sins or not? Have you so long taken on you to be a Christian; and are you yet unresolved, whether it is best to be a Christian indeed, or not? Certainly you have had leisure enough, and reasons enough set before you, to have resolved you long ago. Till you firmly resolve, you are not a Christian and convert indeed. If you did well know what a case you stand in till you are resolved, and what a scorn and indignity you put upon your God and Saviour, and heaven, to make a question of it, whether the filth of sin, and the dreaming profits and pleasures of this world be not better than they; and whether your Redeemer, after all his love, should be preferred before a fleshly lust, you would fear and blush to make such a question any more.

S. But I have been used so long to a looser life, that I am afraid I shall be weary of a strict, religious, godly course, and shall never be able to hold out.

P. I tell you again, that if you think of the life that you must turn to, as a tedious, melancholy, grievous state, you know it not; and are not well informed what it is you have to do. It is the only honourable, the only profitable, the only safe, and the only pleasant life in the world, as to manly pleasure.

I will give you but a taste of it in some particulars.

* Heb. xi. 25, 26, &c.

† Josh. xxiv. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

1. You must, indeed,^u repent of sin with shame and godly sorrow, and loathing of yourself; but it is no further than fitteth you for the comfort of pardoning and healing grace.

2. You must believe all the comfortable promises of the Gospel; all the love that Christ hath manifested; all the wonderful history of his life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension and heavenly glory; the certainty of his word and gracious covenant.

3. You must believe the wonderful^x love of the Father, in giving us his Son, and reconciling us to himself, and adopting us as his sons, and undertaking to secure us as his peculiar treasure, and giving us his Holy Spirit.

4. You must live under the helps and consolations of the Holy Ghost, still drawing you to God, and making you more holy, and helping your infirmities against your sins.

5. You must live in the hopes and desires of everlasting glory, verily to see Christ glorified, with all the saints and blessed angels, and to see the glory of God, and with a perfected soul and body, perfectly to feel his love, and perfectly to love and praise him to eternity.

6. In all your sickness, wants, persecutions, and^y death itself, you have all these comforts, and this hope of glory, to be a constant cordial at your heart; and when others fear death for fear of hell, you must welcome it as the door to endless life.

7. You must live in the church, in the communion of saints, where all God's ordinances must be your helps for the daily exercise of all these graces and delights. And your chiefest exercises of piety must be the hearing these glad tidings in the gospel opened to you; begging for more grace; joyful thanksgiving for all these mercies; singing forth, and speaking the praises of Jehovah; and, with joy and thankfulness, feasting upon Christ's flesh, and blood, and Spirit in the sacrament thereof, and there, in the renewing of this your covenant, receiving a renewed, sealed pardon, and new degrees of life and strength.

Tell me now, what trouble is in all this, that a man should be afraid or weary of it? Unless you take it for a trouble to be safe and happy; to have the greatest mercies, the greatest hopes, and to live in the love of your dearest friend, and in the

^u Luke xiii. 3, 5, and xv., throughout; 2 Cor. xi.

^x John iii. 16; 1 John iii. 1.

^y 1 Cor. xv. 55, &c; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 15—18; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Phil. i. 21, 23; 2 Cor. v. 1, 3, 5—9, and iv. 16—18.

foretastes of everlasting joys. In a word, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 7.)

S. You tell me of another kind of godliness than I thought of. And I was the more afraid it had been a melancholy, tedious life, because I saw many that professed it live so.

P. I told you the reasons of that before, which I must not repeat. And, moreover, to young beginners, that come new out of another kind of life, and whose souls are not by grace yet suited to the work, it may seem strange and troublesome. And the truth is, many converts, in the beginning, are moved at a sermon, and stifle their own convictions, and open not their case to their teachers, or else fall not into the hand of a judicious guide, who will clearly open to them the true nature of conversion; and so they set on they know not well what; which maketh me lay all these matters so plainly and distinctly before you; because it will be a wonderful prevention of your troubles and dangers after, if you do but set out well instructed in the beginning.

But the worst and common cause of all is, that people are so exceeding ignorant and dull, (together with their undisposedness,) that one must be whole months, if not years, before we can make them understand these few, plain things which here I have opened to you. But yet we must take up with a dark and general understanding, rather than delay too long, or be too strict with them.

S. I thank God for your counsel, and his grace; I am resolved, and ready to subscribe my resolution to be the Lord's, entirely upon his covenant terms.

P. I will go home with you to your house, and I will try whether you and I can instruct all your family that need it, and bring them to the same resolution. For as it is your duty to endeavour it, so God useth to bless his believing servants, with the conversion of their household with them; as the case of the jailer, and Lydia, (Acts xv.,) Zaccheus, Stephanus, and others, show us. You shall therefore delay your open profession of your resolved conversion till you do it in the presence of them all. And it will be a great mercy to you, if God give you but a family willing to go along with you in the way to heaven; and daily to worship the same God and obey him. Then your house will be part of the family of God, and under his continual blessing, and protection. [Here Paul goeth home with Saul, and openeth such things to his family as he did to

him, and convinceth them : and they promise him to take time, as Saul did, to learn the true knowledge of the covenant of grace, that so they may consent to it themselves : and Saul before them all lamenteth his sinful life, and openly professeth his consent to the covenant, and they pray together for his confirmation.]

S. I bless the Lord for this day of grace. What would you yet advise me do ?

P. One thing more, to God's glory and your comfort ; that you will the next Lord's day communicate with the church in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which is appointed to be the renewal of the baptismal covenant before the church ; where God will set his seal to your pardon, and to his covenant part.

But withal, seeing you have been a known offender, that you will freely, before the congregation, confess your sinful life, and profess your repentance and resolution, for a new and holy course ; and crave their prayers to God for your pardon and strength, and their loving reception of you, and give God the glory, and warn others to take heed of sinning against God and their baptismal vows.

S. This is sweet and bitter ; I shall be glad to be admitted to the sacrament of communion ; but I shall be ashamed to make so public a confession.

P. It is a shame to sin, but it is an honour to confess it and repent. I persuade you not to confess your secret sins before the church ; but only those which are commonly known, and therefore are your shame already : and how will that shame be removed, till men have notice of your repentance ? And you must not be ashamed of your duty, if you would not have Christ be ashamed of you.

S. But where doth God require such confession ?

P. 1. Those that were baptised by John, confessed their sins. (Matt. iii. 6 ; Mark i. 5 ; Acts ii. 37.) The Jews confessed their killing of Christ, by being pricked at the heart, and crying out for help when it was charged on them. (Acts xix. 18.) The converts confessed their sinful deeds, and publicly testified it to their cost. (Jam. v. 16.) "Confess your faults one to another." (Prov. xxviii. 13.) "Whoso confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." (See further Lev. xv. 5 ; vi. 21, and xxvi. 40 ; Numb. v. 7 ; Neh. i. 6 ; 1 John i. 9 ; Ezra x. 11 ; Neh. ix. 2, 3 ; Josh. vii. 19 ; 2 Chron. xxx. 22.)

2. You were publicly baptised, and you have openly sinned against that covenant ; therefore, if you will be openly taken

for a penitent into church communion, you must openly profess repentance. Unless you would have us take all impenitent persons to communion.

3. You are obliged to be more tender of^a God's honour than of your own; and therefore to honour him publicly, as you have publicly dishonoured him, and stick at nothing that tendeth to his glory, as this will do.

4. You are bound to cast the greatest shame that you can on sin; it is the shameful thing that hath deceived and defiled you: if you have set it up above God, and now refuse to cast it down, by open shame, how do you repent of it?

5. You owe all possible help to others, to save them from the sin which hath deceived you. You have encouraged men to sin, and, for aught you know, some of them may be in hell for ever, for that which you have drawn them to; and should you not do your best now to save the rest, and to undo the hurt that you have done? See, therefore, that you tell them, with deep repentance, how sin deceived you, and warn them, and beseech them to take warning by you, and to repent with you, as they sinned with you. Your companions that are not there, may hear of this and be convinced.

6. You owe this to the church and^a godly Christians, that they may rejoice in your conversion, and may see that you are indeed a due object of their special love.

7. You owe this to yourself, 1. That you may remove your public shame, and have the comfort of Christians' special love: as God cannot delight in an impenitent sinner, no more should his servants. 2. That your conscience may have the comfort that your repentance is sincere; which it will justly be still doubting of, if you cannot repent at as dear a rate as open confession. How will you forsake all, and die for Christ, if you cannot so far deny your pride as to confess your sin?

8. Lastly, you owe this to me, that the church may not take me for a polluter of its communion by admitting the impenitent thereto.

S. You have said more than ever I heard of this, and it fully satisfies me. But would you have all that are converted and repent do thus?

P. Some have lived with some kind of religiousness from

^a Paul frequently confesseth his sinful life; Acts xxii., and xxvi; Tit. iii. 3—5; 1 Tim. i. 13—15; Luke xxii. 32.

^a Jam. v. 13, &c.

their childhood, though with many ordinary sins, and have, by undiscerned degrees, grown up unto true godliness. These are uncertain when they first had special grace, and were not open scandalous violators of their baptismal vow; and, therefore, I can lay no such injunction on them.

But I would have all do thus, that have thus broken that vow, and are converted afterward to true repentance, for all the reasons which I now mentioned: and the universal church hath ever been for such public repentance in such a case; yea, and for particular gross lapses afterward. And the papists to this day call it the sacrament of penance, though they corrupt it by auricular confession, when it should be open; and by many unwarrantable adjuncts and formalities.

S. What would you have me do after that?

P. I will record your name in the church book among the church communicants, and we will all pray for your confirmation and perseverance; and you must live as a member of the holy catholic church of Christ, in the communion of saints, and return no more to your ungodly, sinful life: and come to me again, and I shall give you further counsel. In the mean time, you may do as the converted eunuch did, (the lord treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia, Acts viii. 39,) even go on your way rejoicing in this, that you are united to Christ, and are justified from all your former sins, and are sincerely entered into the covenant and family of God, and are made a^b fellow-citizen with the saints, and an heir of certain, endless glory.

THE FIFTH DAY'S CONFERENCE.

Directions to the converted against temptations.

Speakers.—Paul, a Teacher; and Saul, a Learner.

PAUL. Welcome, neighbour. How go matters with your soul?

SAUL. I thank God and my Redeemer, and you, his minister, since I publicly repented, renounced my sin, and gave up myself to my God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier. I find myself as in a new world. My^c hopes revive, and I have had already more

^b Eph. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 16—18, 30, 32.

^c Rom. v. 1—6, 10.