

THE

LEGACY OF A DYING MOTHER.

NOTE.

I have not been able to trace another copy besides my own of this interesting and touching little volume. It appears to be wholly unknown to bibliographers. The original title-page will be found below.\* The 'Epistle Dedicatory' of Brooks forms a pungent and quickening little treatise on the duty of children to walk in the footsteps of their godly parents. The 'Legacy' or 'Experiences' itself occupies only eighteen out of the sixty-two pages; and as it is experimental, and also furnishes glimpses of 'good men' in America—*e.g.*, Cotton, Shephard, Eliot—of whom very little is known, we have decided to reprint it along with Brooks's 'Epistle Dedicatory.'—G.

\* THE  
LEGACY  
OF A  
DYING MOTHER  
To Her  
*Mourning* CHILDREN,  
Being the  
EXPERIENCES  
of  
Mrs *Susanna Bell*,  
Who died MARCH 13. 1672.

With an  
EPISTLE DEDICATORY  
By  
THOMAS BROOKS Minister of the  
Gospel.

LONDON,

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Popes-Head Alley in *Cornhill*. 1673.

[12mo.—G.]

## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

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To his Honoured Friends, Mr T. B., I. B., S. B., I. T., Merchants,  
and to their Wives, and to the rest of the Children of Mrs  
SUSANNA BELL, deceased: the Author wisheth all grace, mercy,  
and peace.

HONOURED FRIENDS,—My design in this epistle is not to compliment you, but to benefit you; it is not to tickle your ears, but to better your hearts; nor it is not to blazon her name or fame to the world whose heaven-born soul is now at rest with God, and who is swallowed up in those transcendent enjoyments of that other world which are above the comprehensions of my mind and the expressions and praises of my pen; but it is to allure and draw you to an imitation of what was praiseworthy in her. Shall I hint at a few things?

1. First, *Imitate her in that sincerity and plain-heartedness which was transparent in her.* Sincerity is not a single grace, but the source of all graces, and the interlineary that must run through every grace; for what is faith, if it be not unfeigned? and what is love, if it be not without dissimulation? and what is repentance, if it be not in truth? Sincerity is the soul of all grace; it is the grace of all our graces. What advantage is it to have 'the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope,' Eph. vi. 13–17, if they be but painted things? It is the 'girdle of sincerity' that makes all the other parts of our armour useful. Was she not a true Nathanael, John i. 47, a person in whom there was no guile—I mean no allowed hypocrisy? and was not this that which carried her through the pangs of death with a great deal of comfort, as it had done Hezekiah, Paul, and other saints before? Isa. xxxviii. 3; 2 Cor. i. 12. A sincere Christian is like the violet, which grows low, and hides itself and its own sweetness as much as may be with its own leaves; or like Brutus' staff, gold within and thorn without; or like the ark, gold within and goats' hair without. The very heathen loved a candid and sincere spirit, as he that wished 'that there was a glass window in his breast, that all the world might see what was in his heart. But,

2. Secondly, *Imitate her in that humility which was a grace she was clothed withal,* 1 Peter v. 5. I ever found her low and little in her

own eyes, much in debasing herself upon all occasions, looking upon herself as below 'the least of mercies,' with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10; and as 'dust and ashes,' with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27; and as 'a poor worm,' with David, Ps. xxii. 6; and 'less than the least of all saints,' with Paul, Eph. iii. 8. And commonly the more high in spiritual worth, the more humble in heart. God delights to pour in grace into humble souls, as men pour in liquor into empty vessels. Humility makes a person peaceable among brethren, fruitful in well-doing, cheerful in suffering, and constant in holy walking. Humility makes a man precious in the eyes of God. Who is little in his own account is always great in God's esteem. It is well observed by some, that those brave creatures, the eagle and the lion, were not offered in sacrifice unto God, but the poor lambs and doves were; to note that God regards not your brave, high, lofty spirits, but poor, meek, and contemptible spirits. Humility is a rare grace. Many, saith Augustine, can more easily give all they have to the poor, than themselves become poor in spirit. Be low in your own eyes, and be content to be low in the eyes of others; and think not of yourselves above what is meet, as ever you would write after your mother's copy, and affect more to be amongst God's 'little ones,' Mat. xviii. 10, than the 'great ones of this world.' Be humble Christians; as ever you would be holy, be humble. Humility is of the essence of the 'new creature.' He is not a Christian that is not humble. The more grace the more humble. Those that have been most high in spiritual worth have always been most humble in heart. Ignatius could say of himself, *Non sum dignus dici minimus*, I am not worthy to be called the least. Lord, I am hell, but thou art heaven, said blessed Hooper. I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me, said holy Bradford. I have no other name, saith Luther, than 'sinner;' sinner is my name, sinner is my surname. This is the name by which I shall be always known. I have sinned, I do sin, I shall sin *in infinitum*. Ruth was the daughter of the king of Moab, if we may give credit to the general opinion of the Rabbins; or if that be not so probable, yet she was one that we may well suppose to have been one of good quality in her own country, as being wife of Mahlon, the elder brother of the family of the prince Naasson: yet she accounts herself scarce equal to one of the maid-servants in the house of Boaz, Ruth ii. 13. So Abigail, the wit of the time, 1 Sam. xxv. 41. So Elizabeth, though she was the elder and the better woman for outward quality, yet how confounded was she with Mary's visit, as being too great a weight of honour for her to bear, Luke i. 43. So Mary, Luke i. 38. 'If I were asked,' said Austin, 'what is the readiest way to attain true happiness, I would answer, the first, the second, the third thing is humility.' Humility doth not only entitle to happiness, but to the highest degree of happiness, Mat. xviii. 4. Humility is that Jacob's ladder which reaches from earth to heaven.

3. Thirdly, *Imitate her in her charity and mercy towards suffering, needy, and wanting ones.* How seldom did you find her ear or hand shut against charitable motions! She knew that those that did good to the poor and needy for Christ's sake, God would do good to them for the poor's sake, most sure for his Son's sake. She knew that he

who promised they 'should have that asked,' had first commanded such to give unto them that asked; she knew that unmercifulness is a sin which least becomes and worse beseems one that had so largely tasted of the mercies of God, as she had done both in New and Old England. She was much made up of pity and mercy to the poor; the bellies of the hungry, and the back of the naked, did often proclaim her pity and charity. Many ministers, widows, and fatherless ones, have tasted not only of her husband's bounty, but of hers also. Vain persons, when they give, they will cause their kindness to run in a visible channel, they will sound a trumpet, to be seen of men, Mat. vi. 1, 2; but was she not a secret and hidden reliever of God's distressed ones? Did she not refresh the bowels of many with her hid treasures? Will you all learn to write after this copy? Of Midas it is fabled, 'that whatever he touched he turned into gold.' It is most sure that whatever the hand of charity toucheth it turneth into gold,—be it but a cup of cold water,—nay, into heaven itself; cold water, having not fuel to heat it; cold water, which costs not the charge of fire to warm it. Salvian saith that Christ is *mendicorum maximus*, the greatest beggar in the world, as one that shareth in all his saints' necessities, Heb. vi. 10; and will never forget the charitable person, the merciful person. Cicero could say, 'That to be rich is not to possess much, but to use much;' and Seneca could rebuke them that so studied to increase their wealth that they forgot to use it. I have read of one Evagrius, a rich man, that lying upon his death-bed, being importuned by Synesius, a pious bishop, to give something to charitable uses, he yielded at last to give three hundred pounds; but first took bond of the bishop that it should be repaid him in another world before he had been one day dead. He is said to have appeared to the bishop, delivering in the bond cancelled, as thereby acknowledging what was promised was made good, according to that promise: Mat. xix. 29, 'And every one that hath forsaken houses,' &c.

4. Fourthly, *Imitate her in keeping off from the sins and pollutions of the day wherein you live.* Was she not one of God's mourning one's for the abominations of the time? Did not men's abomination in worship and practice vex, grieve, and wound her poor soul? Was it not her great work to live by no rule, to walk by no rule, to worship God by no rule, but by that which she dared to die by, and to stand by in the great day of our Lord Jesus? Ezek. ix. 4, 6: Jer. ix. 1, 2; 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8; Ps. cxix. 53, 136, 158. She knew that worshipping of God in spirit and in truth was the great worship, the only worship that God stood upon, John iv. 23, 24. She did not, she durst not, worship God according to the customs of the world, or the traditions of the elders, Phil. iii. 3, or the examples of great men. She knew that that worship that is not according to the word, is (1.) Worshipping of devils and not God. Those that depart from the true worship of God, and set upon false worship forbidden by God, do not serve God by it, but the devil, what boasting soever they make, as you may evidently see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together.<sup>1</sup> She knew, (2.) That that worship that is not according to the word, is an image of idolatry, which of all sins is most provoking to a holy, jealous

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ix. 20; 2 Chron. xi. 15; Amos v. 25, 26; 1 Cor. x. 20; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Ezek. viii. 3.

God. 'The devil,' saith Synesius, 'is as glad to be worshipped in an idol, as he was by Israel in a calf,' Exod. xxxii. 4: there being nothing that provokes God to destroy poor sinners more than this. The learned Jews have a saying, 'That no punishment ever happened to them in which there was not an ounce of the golden calf,' grounding it on Exod. xxxii. 34, 'Nevertheless I will remember to visit this sin upon them.' The Egyptians worshipped a pied<sup>1</sup> bull, and whereas some thought it strange that when one died, they should have another of the same colour, Austin thinks that the devil, to keep them in idolatry, might do with their cows as Jacob did with the ewes, present to them when they conceived the likeness of such a bull. Certainly Satan will use all the art he can to keep poor sinners in ways of false worship, it being the most compendious way that can be to engage God to destroy them. She knew, (3.) That that worship that is not according to the word hath destroyed the most flourishing churches and nations; witness the church and nation of the Jews, the seven churches of Asia, and the whole eastern parts of the empire: see Hosea viii. 5-7; Rev. ix. 20; Ezek. x. 2; 2 Chron. vii. 20. She knew, (4.) That that worship that is not according to the word is a cursed worship. It is the observation of one well skilled in the Jewish learning, that there is only one verse in the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah which is written in the Chaldee tongue, all the rest being in Hebrew: and that is Jeremiah x. 11, 'So shalt thou say, Cursed be the gods who made neither heaven nor earth;' and this is done by the Holy Ghost, on purpose that the Jews, when they were in captivity, and exhorted by the Chaldeans to worship false gods, might be able to answer them in their own language, 'Cursed be your gods; we will not worship them, for they made neither heaven nor earth.' That God that made heaven and earth is only to be worshipped according to his own word; for he will own no worship but what he will accept of, no worship but that; he will bless no worship but that, nor he will reward no worship but that. Your glorified mother kept close to instituted worship when she had health and strength; in this it will be your wisdom to write after her fair copy. But,

5. Fifthly, *Imitate her in justifying of the Lord under the sharpest, bitterest, and most afflictive providences and dispensations.* How often have I heard her to justify the Lord, even whilst he has been a-writing bitter things against her; when gall and wormwood hath been put into her cup, hath she not said with Ezra, chap. ix. 13, 'God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve;' and with Nehemiah, chap. ix. 33, 'Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly;' and with Job, chap. i. 21, 'Oh! the Lord gives, and the Lord takes, and blessed be the name of the Lord;' and with Daniel, chap. ix. 14, 'The Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth.' You know what afflictive providences she has been under, both in respect of her person, and in the loss of her husband, and in those variety of weaknesses that attended her body, and in the great losses that some of you have met with in the world, besides several other exercises; yet how has she commonly been taken

<sup>1</sup> Parti-coloured, spelled 'pide.'—G.

up in blessing of God, and in justifying of God, and also in admiring the goodness of God, that it has been no worse with her; and here I am satisfied she would not have exchanged her gains by afflictions for all the gains of the world. Stars shine brightest in the darkest night. Torches are better for the beating. Grapes come not to the proof till they come to the press. Spices smell sweetest when pounded. Young trees root the faster for shaking. Vines are the better for bleeding. Gold looks the brighter for scouring. Glow-worms glisten best in the dark. Juniper smells sweetest in the fire. Pomander becomes most fragrant for chafing. The palm-tree proves the better for pressing. Camomile, the more you tread it, the more you spread it. Such is the condition of God's children; they are the most triumphant when most distressed, most glorious when most afflicted; as their conflicts, so their conquests; as their tribulations, so their triumphs. God's people are true salamanders, that live best in the furnace of afflictions; so that heavy afflictions are the best benefactors to heavenly affections. When afflictions hang heaviest, then corruptions hang loosest. And grace that is hid in nature, as sweet-water in rose-leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distil it out. But,

6. Sixthly, *Imitate her in the standing, bent, and course of her life and conversation.* No man is to judge of the soundness or sincerity of his spirit by some particular acts, but by the constant frame and bent of his spirit, and by his general conversation in this world. *Una actio non denominat.* If particular actions might determine whether a man had grace or no grace, whether he were in Christ or not in Christ, whether he were a saint or no saint, whether he were sincere or unsound, we should many times conclude that those have no grace who indeed have, and that they were not in Christ who indeed are, and that they are no saints who indeed are, and that they are not sincere who certainly are true Nathanaels. The best saints on this side heaven have had their extravagant motions, and have very foully and sadly miscarried as to particular actions, even then when the constant course and bent of their spirits and main of their conversations have been God-wards, and Christ-wards, and holiness-wards, and heaven-wards, &c. Witness David's murder and adultery, Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, Joseph's swearing, Job's cursing, Jonah's vexing, Peter's denying, and Thomas his not believing. Such twinklings do and will accompany the highest and fairest stars. As he that foots it best may be sometimes found all along,<sup>1</sup> and the neatest<sup>2</sup> person may sometimes slip into a slough; he that cannot endure to see a spot upon his clothes, may yet sometimes fall into a quagmire; so the holiest and exactest Christians may sometimes be surprised with many infirmities and unevennesses and sad miscarriages. Certainly particular sinnings are compatible with a gracious frame, though none are with a glorified condition. Our best estate on earth is mixed, and not absolute. Glory annihilates all sinful practices, but grace only weakens them. The most sincere Christian is but an imperfect Christian, and hath daily cause to mourn over his infirmities,

<sup>1</sup> = fallen and 'lying all along.'—G.

<sup>2</sup> 'Cleanliest,' 'most exact.' Cf. Sibbes, Glossary, s. r.—G.

as well as he has cause to bless God for his graces and mercies. Look, as every particular stain doth not blemish the universal fineness of the cloth, so neither doth this or that particular fact disprove and deny the general bent of a person's heart or life. Particulars may not decide the estate either way. It is true, a man by a particular sinning is denominated guilty, but by no one particular can a man's estate be challenged either to be good or bad. He that shall judge of a Christian's estate by particular acts, though very bad, will certainly condemn 'the generation of the righteous,' Ps. lxxiii. 15. We must always distinguish betwixt some single good actions and a series of good actions. It is not this or that particular good action, but a continued course of holy actions, that denominates a person holy. Certainly as there is no man so holy but sometimes he falls into this or that particular sin, so there is no man so wicked but he falls in with this or that particular duty, as you may see in Pharaoh, Balaam, Saul, the Ninevites, Felix, Herod, Judas, yea, and the very scribes and pharisees. Now look, as every sin which a godly man falls into, through infirmity, doth not presently denominate him ungodly, so neither will a few good actions done by a wicked man prove him godly. It is what the course and tenor of the life is that must be most diligently and wisely observed; for every man is as his course is. If his course be holy, the man is so; if his course be wicked, the man is so. There is a maxim in logic, viz., that no general rule can be established upon a particular instance; and there is another maxim in logic, viz., that no particular instance can overthrow a general rule. We are never to make a judgment of our estates and conditions by some particular actions, whether they are good or evil, but we are still to make a judgment of our estates and conditions by the general frame, bent, and disposition of our hearts, and by the constant tenor of our lives. Now, I dare appeal to you, and all others that have observed the constant tenor of her life and conversation, whether it has not been such as becomes the gospel, and as hath adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour—human infirmities excepted, Phil. i. 27; Titus ii. 10; Gen. vi. 9. And oh that this might be the mercy of all her children, to walk with God as she hath done, and then I should not doubt but that they would all meet in heaven at last. But,

7. Seventhly, *Imitate her in her love to the saints, to all the saints, in whom she could discern aliquid Christi, anything of Christ.* Did she not love, delight, and take pleasure to see the graces of the Holy Spirit sparkling and shining in the hearts, lives, and lips of the saints? 1 John iii. 10, 14; secretly wishing in herself that her soul were but in so noble a case. Were there any men in all the world that were so precious, so lovely, so comely, so excellent, and so honourable in her account, in her eye, as those that had the image of God, of Christ, of grace, of holiness, most clearly, most fairly, and most fully stamped upon them? Ps. xv. 1, 4, and xvi. 3; 1 John v. 1. Did she not love saints as saints? Was it not the image of God that drew out her affection to the people of God? Many, like the Bohemian cur, can fawn upon a good suit; but grace was lovely in her eye, though clothed with rags. Many love godly men, as they are politicians, or potent, or learned, or of a sweet nature, or affable, or



related, or as they have been kind to them ; but all this is but natural love ; but to love them because they are spiritually lovely, because of the seed of God in them, 1 John iii. 9, because they are all glorious within, Ps. xlv. 13, is to love them as becometh saints, it is to love them at a higher and nobler rate than any hypocrite in the world can reach to. Did she not set the highest price and the greatest value and esteem upon those that were gracious ? Had she not an honour in her heart for them that feared the Lord ? Did she not value persons according to their worth for another world, and not according to their worldly greatness or grandeur ? Prov. xii. 26, and xxviii. 6. Did she not prefer a holy Job upon a dunghill, before a wicked Ahab upon the throne ? Did she not set a higher price upon a gracious Lazarus, though clothed with rags and full of sores, than upon a rich and wretched Dives, though he were clothed gloriously, and fared sumptuously every day ? Was not her love to the saints universal ? to one Christian as well as another, to all as well as any, to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham, to a despised Job as well as to an admired David, to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob, to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle ? Phil. i. 21 ; 1 Pet. ii. 17. Did she not love to see the image and picture of her heavenly Father, though hung in never so poor a frame, and in never so mean a cottage ? Without peradventure, he that loves one saint for the image of God that is stamped upon him, he cannot but fall in love with every saint that bears the lovely image of the Father upon him. And oh that this might be all your mercy, to write after this copy that she has set before you ! But,

8. Eighthly, *Imitate her in her constancy in the ways of God, with or notwithstanding all the hazards, storms, dangers, and troubles that has attended those ways, especially in those latter days of apostasy, wherein God had cast her lot.* She was not a reed shaken with every wind ; she was unchangeable in changeable times. Whatever storms beat upon the ways of God, or the people of God, she remained firm and immovable in the ways of the Lord, Ps. xlv., and cxix. 112 ; and doubtless such souls as are truly good, they will be good in the worst of times, and in the worst of places, and amongst the worst of persons. Principles of grace and holiness, they are lasting, yea, everlasting. They are not like the morning cloud nor the early dew, 1 John iii. 9 ; Hosea vi. 4. Let times and places and persons be what they will, a sincere Christian will not dishonour his God, nor change his Master, nor quit his ways, nor blemish his profession, nor wound his conscience to sleep in a whole skin, or to preserve his safety, or to secure his liberty ; and was it not thus with her in the most trying times ? An upright man is a right man. So *יֶשָׁר*, *jashar*, is rendered by the Septuagint, Judges xvii. 6. He is one that won't be bowed or bent by the sinful customs or examples of the times and places where he lives, Gen. vi. 9 ; Rev. xiv. 4, and iii. 4 ; Job xvii. 9. Let the times be never so dangerous, licentious, superstitious, idolatrous, and erroneous, yet a sincere, plain-hearted Christian will keep his ground, and hold on in his way ; as might be made evident by a cloud of witnesses, Heb. xii. 1 ; Ps. cxxv. 1, 2. The laurel keeps its freshness and greenness in the winter season ; a sincere Christian is *semper*

*eadem*; let the wind and the world and the times turn which way they will, a sincere soul, for the main, will still be the same. He will be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed; he will stand his ground and hold his own under all changes; he is like the philosopher's good man, τετραγωνος, four-square; cast him where you will, like a die, he falls always square and sure; so cast a plain-hearted Christian where you will, into what company you will, and into what condition you will, yet still he will fall sure and square for God and godliness. Let the times be never so sad, nor never so bad, yet a plain-hearted Christian will still keep close to God and his ways, and will rather let all go than let his God go, or his religion go, or his integrity go, or ordinances go. Lapidaries tell us of the Chelydonian stone,<sup>1</sup> that it will retain its virtue and lustre no longer than it is enclosed in gold—a fit emblem of an unsound heart, who is only good while he is enclosed in golden prosperity, safety, and felicity. An unsound Christian, like green timber, shrinks when the sun of persecution shines hot upon him. The heat of fiery trials cools the courage of unsound Christians; but a sincere, plain-hearted Christian is like a massive vessel of gold, that keeps its own shape and figure at all times, in all places, and in all companies. When one of the ancient martyrs was greatly threatened by his persecutors, he replied, 'There is nothing,' saith he, 'of things visible, nothing of things invisible, that I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come on it what will, in these evil days wherein multitudes have turned aside into crooked paths.' She kept close and constant to the ways of the Lord so long as her natural strength lasted. And oh that all you, her children, would make it your business in this, as well as in other things, to write after your mother's copy! remembering that if you are not faithful unto death, you shall never receive a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10; and that if you do not continue to the end, that is, in well-doing, you shall never be saved, Mat. xxiv. 13. But,

9. Ninthly, *Imitate her in her high valuations of Jesus Christ.* What low and little things were her own graces, duties, services, and mercies, when she cast her eye upon Christ, when she fell into discourses of Christ! Phil. iii. 8-10; Mat. xiii. 44. Christ was her *summum bonum*, chiefest good. What was all the world to a sight of Christ, to a day, yea, to an hour's communion with Christ! They are no believers that do not value Jesus Christ above all the world and all things in the world; 'for unto every one that believes he is precious,' 1 Pet. ii. 7—most precious, only precious, and for ever precious. They value him (1.) Above their lusts, Gal. v. 24. They can pluck out right eyes for Christ, and cut off right hands for Christ. They value him (2.) Above the world. Witness David, Ps. lxxiii. 25, and Dan. vi.; and the disciples, Mat. xix. 27; and Moses, Heb. xi. 25, 26; and the primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. They value him (3.) Above their lives: Rev. xii. 11, 'They loved not their lives unto the death.' So Paul, Acts xx. 22-24, and xxi. 13. So the martyrs. They value him (4.) Above all their relations. 'If all the world were a lump of gold,' said the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> As before, see Index, s. r. - G.

martyr, 'and in my hands to dispose of, I would give it to live all my days with my wife and children in a prison; but Christ and his truth is dearer to me than all.' You have thousands of such instances upon record. They value him (5.) Above their goods: Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.' So has many thousands since under sharp persecutions. They value him (6.) Above all natural, spiritual, and acquired excellencies, Phil. iii. 7, 8. In all my serious discourses with her about our Lord Jesus Christ, she would still set the crown upon Christ's head. She would lay herself low, very low, that he alone might be exalted. The thoughts of Christ was precious to her, the discourses of Christ were precious to her, the image of Christ was precious to her, the ordinances of Christ were precious to her, the discoveries of Christ were precious to her, the day of Christ was precious to her, the offices of Christ were precious to her, and the rebukes of Christ—whilst she enjoyed his presence under them—was precious to her; but, above all, the person of Christ was most precious to her. In her eye he was 'the chiefest of ten thousand, fairer than the children of men,' Cant. v. 10; Ps. xlv. 1; and all the riches, honours, pleasures, and delights of the world were but dung in comparison of him, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Oh at what a rate has the saints of old prized our Lord Jesus! *Mallet*, said one, *ruere cum Christo quam regnare cum Cesare*: Luther had rather fall with Christ than stand with Cæsar. The same author elsewhere saith that he had rather be *Christianus rusticus* than *Ethnicus Alexander*, A Christian clown than a pagan emperor. Theodosius, emperor, preferred the title of *Membrum Ecclesiæ* before that of *Caput Imperii*, professing that he had rather be a saint and no king, than a king and no saint. And godly Constantine rejoiced more in being the servant of Christ, than in being the emperor of the world. Bernard saith 'that he had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without him.' It was an excellent answer of one of the martyrs when he was offered riches and honours if he would recant, said, 'Do but offer me somewhat that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall see what I will say to you.' It was a sweet prayer of one, 'Make thy Son dear, very dear, exceeding dear, only dear and precious, or not at all.' Another good man cried out, 'I had rather have one Christ than a thousand worlds.' I have read of *Johannes Mollius*,<sup>1</sup> 'that whensoever he spake of the name of Jesus, his eyes dropped tears;' and of another reverend divine, who, being in a deep muse after some discourse that passed of dear Jesus, and tears trickling down his cheeks before he was aware, and being asked the reason of it, he confessed ingenuously, 'It was because he could not draw his dull heart to prize Jesus Christ at that rate he should and fain would.'<sup>2</sup> Christ lay near your mother's heart, and oh that he may be near all your hearts, that so you may be safe and saved for ever! But,

10. Tenthly, *Imitate her in the casting a mantle of love over the infirmities and weaknesses of poor, weak, miscarrying Christians, in the burying of Christians' weaknesses under their graces*. Much I know of this, but some know much more. She was not for blazoning of others' weaknesses, whether they were nearer to her or more remote

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, as before, p. 186.—G.

<sup>2</sup> John Welch, as before.—G.

from her. She commonly carried a mantle of love about her to cast over other men's sins; she seemed to live under the power of that word: Prov. x. 12, 'Love covereth all sins:' and that 1 Pet. ix. 8, 'Charity shall cover the multitude of sins.' By covering must be meant (1.) A favourable construction of all things, which in right reason might well be construed; (2.) A passing by smaller infirmities and private offences; (3.) Such a covering as might cure also, for love is wise. Love hath a large mantle, and covers all sins—that is, all private sins, and all such sins as may be concealed with a good conscience both towards God and towards men. Again, it must be understood, not of our own transgressions committed against God, but of other men's sins and transgressions committed against us. Love is not suspicious, but interprets all things in the best sense, Prov. xvii. 9. Love will not publish private injuries, to the dishonour or shame of the party offending: Prov. xii. 6, 'A prudent man covereth shame.' It is recorded to Vespasian's honour, 'that he was more ready to conceal the vices than the virtues of his friends.' To observe and take notice of other men's faults, but not of our own, is the easiest thing in the world, said Thales. Such commonly are best acquainted with other men's infirmities, who are least observant of their own iniquities and irregularities. 'The nature of man is very apt,' saith Seneca, *Utimum per-spicillis magis quam speculis*, to use spectacles to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold their own.' Erasmus speaks of one who collected all the lame and defective verses in Homer's works, but passed over all that was excellent. The Donatists of old were more glad to find a fault than to see it amended, and to proclaim it than to cover it; to carp at it than to cure it. 'If I should find a bishop committing adultery,' saith Constantine the Great, 'I would cover that foul fact with mine imperial robe rather than it should come abroad to the scandal of the weak and the scorn of the wicked.' Seneca, unmasking the face of their corrupt state, hath this notable passage, 'The news from Rome take thus: the walls are ruined, the temples are not visited, the priests are fled, the treasuries robbed, old men are dead, young men are mad, vices are lords over all. The dictator blames the consul, the consul checks the censor, the censor elides the prætor, the prætor falls foul upon the ædile, and he casts all the fault upon the quæstor, and because no man will acknowledge himself in fault, we have no hopes of better times.' How applicable this is to our present times, I shall leave others to judge; but by the whole you see that all sorts and ranks of men are more apt to shame and quarrel at other men's faults than with their own. Observable is that of our blessed Saviour: Luke vii. 37, 'There was a woman in the city which was a sinner.' No wonder! what woman is not? We may guess both who the woman was, and what the sin was, and which city it was; but he neither names the city, nor the sin, nor the sinner. Seeing her reformation, he consults her reputation. Oh that you would all labour to write after this copy. When Alexander was painted, the painter laid his finger on his wart, and Apelles covered Venus' mole with his finger, that it might not be spied. As you stand in a near relation one to another, so I could wish that you would lay your fingers upon one another's warts and moles, and not blazon one an-

other's human frailties and infirmities to the world ; but love and live as brethren and sisters who are never without a mantle of love to cover infirmities—I say not enormities ; to cover weaknesses—I say not wickedness ; to cover from the world—I say not from God nor from one another. But,

11. Eleventhly, *Imitate her in her earnest desires and endeavours that others, especially that her nearest and dearest relations, might taste that the Lord is gracious* ; that they might all be holy and happy, gracious and glorious ; that they might all have changed hearts, renewed natures, and sanctified souls ; that they might all be born again, adorned with grace, filled with the Spirit, and fitted for heaven. You know that upon her dying-bed she desired me that when she was asleep in Jesus, 1 Thes. iv. 14, that I would, for the advantage of the living, especially for your sakes, who lay nearest her heart, preach on that Psalm xxxiv. 8, ' Oh taste and see that the Lord is gracious,' which accordingly I did once and again.<sup>1</sup> Now what was her design in this, but that every one of you might share with her in the same favour, love, spirit, grace, merit, righteousness, and goodness that her soul had long tasted of? There is not a soul that ever has had any saving taste of the Lord and of his goodness, but is mighty desirous that others should taste of the same grace and goodness. ' Oh taste and see that the Lord is good ;' as if David should have said, I for my part have seen, tasted, and experienced much of God and his goodness, and never more than in my greatest straits. I am loath to eat these heavenly viands and soul-ravishing morsels of contentment alone. ' Come hither, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul.'<sup>2</sup> Come, oh come, poor souls! taste and see with me how good the Lord is ; how comfortable the embraces of Christ are, and how sweet communion with heaven is. We cannot advantage others more than by declaring and communicating unto them our soul-secrets, our soul-experiments. All the saints own it as their duty to glorify God in their generation : and wherein can they bring more glory to God than in helping souls to heaven? and how can they find out a readier way to effect this great business, than by telling them what God has done for their souls, than by making a faithful narrative of their own conditions by nature and by grace, when and how the goodness of the Lord was made known unto them upon a saving account. Oh tell poor wounded sinners what methods of mercy the Lord used to the healing of your wounds and to the quieting of your consciences, that so they may be encouraged to a serious use of all gospel means, and to a hope of the same grace and goodness of the Lord towards them. Oh labour more and more to convince others by your experiences that grace is the only way to glory, and that ' without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' Heb. xii. 14.<sup>3</sup> Paul had tasted that the Lord was good, and he

<sup>1</sup> The three sermons that I preached on Ps. xxxiv. 8 I have been desired to print, but could not answer friends' expectations in that, because I had not the notes by me of what I said upon that text.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxvi. 16 : the words are without a copulative in the Hebrew, *venite, audite* : Calvin, ' Come hearken ;' like that Gen. xix. 14. It not only imparts an invitation, but the affection also of him that speaks.

<sup>3</sup> See my treatise on this text, [ ' Crown and Glory of Christ, ' ] Vol. IV.—G.

wished that both Agrippa and all that heard him were altogether such as he was, except his bonds,' Acts xxvi. 29. As soon as Matthew had tasted that the Lord was good, Luke v. 29, he called together a huge multitude of publicans and others to meet at his house. As soon as Philip had tasted of the sweetness of communion with Christ, he runs to Nathanael to invite him to Christ, saying, 'Come and see,' John i. 45, 46. No sooner had the woman of Samaria tasted of Christ's living waters, but she leaves her water-pot, and posts into the city to call out her friends and neighbours to see and taste how good dear Jesus was, John iv. 28. So those young converts, Zech. viii. 21, 'And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also:<sup>1</sup> Micah iv. 2, 'And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Those blessed converts would not come alone, but draw others along in company with them to worship the Lord, which is lively expressed in a *mimesis* or imitation of the encouragements and invitations they should use one to another, 'I will go also.' Every one was as forward for himself, as zealous for another. Oh blessed frame of spirit! O my friends, it is the nature of true grace to be diffusive and communicative. Grace cannot be concealed. They that have tasted of divine sweetness cannot choose but speak of it to others; their hearts, like bottles of new wine, would be ready to burst if they had not vent. Grace is like fire in the bones. They that have it cannot hide it. All the faculties of the soul, and all the members of the body will still be a-telling of others that there is a treasure of grace in the soul. The blind men that were cured were charged to be silent, but they could not hold their peace. So here, *Lilmor belamned*, we therefore learn that we may teach, is a proverb among the Rabbins: and I do therefore lay in and lay up, saith the heathen, that I may draw forth again and lay out for the good of many. And shall not grace do as much as nature? shall not grace do more than nature? Well, friends, this I shall only say, that the frequent counsels that your glorified mother has given you to taste of divine goodness, and the experiences that she has communicated to you of her taste of divine goodness, both in her health and sickness, both in her living and dying, will certainly either be for you, or else be a dreadful witness against you in the great day of our Lord Jesus. Oh remember not only those experiences of hers that are now presented to your eyes, but those other experiences of hers as to her inward man that has often sounded in your ears. But,

12. Lastly, *Labour to imitate her in her comfortable passage out of this world.* Those words were more worth than a world which she uttered a little before she fell asleep in the Lord, viz., 'Lord, take my aching head, and lay it in thy bosom.' How often did she express her longings to be with Christ, that she might sin nor sorrow no more! Her outward man was full of pain, weakness, and trouble; yet how was

<sup>1</sup> Vide Pem'le, in loc.

her inward man refreshed and quieted in a way of believing, according to that blessed word, Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace;'—the Hebrew runs, שלום, שלום, *shalom, shalom*, peace, peace:—'whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Never did the espoused maid long more for the marriage-day, nor the apprentice for his freedom, nor the captive for his ransom, nor the condemned man for his pardon, nor the traveller for his inn, nor the mariner for his haven, nor the sick man for his health, nor the wounded man for his cure, nor the hungry man for his bread, nor the naked for clothes, than she did long to die, and to be with Christ, which for her was best of all, Phil. i. 23. How often were those words in her mouth, Rev. xxii. 20, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!' <sup>1</sup> The face of none is so comely to the saint's eye, the voice of none so lovely to his ears, the taste of none so pleasant in his mouth, as Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus hath a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it, saith Chrysostom; and is therefore used by Paul five hundred times, as some have reckoned. The name of a Saviour, saith one, [Bernard,] is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. And how often was that blessed word in her mouth, 'Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. A serious sense of her uprightness in the main, of her walking with God, did yield her more than a little sweetness and comfort when she was upon her bed of pain. One of the last speeches of a dying upright Christian was this, 'Satan may as well pluck God out of heaven, as pluck my soul out of his keeping,' John x. 28-30; 2 Tim. ii. 12. She 'knew him in whom she had believed, and was persuaded that he was able to keep that soul she had committed to him against that day.' A child that hath any precious jewel given him cannot better secure it than by putting it into his father's hands to keep; so neither can we better provide for our souls' safety than by committing them to God. 'Keep that which I have committed;' that is, either my precious soul, which I have committed to his care and custody, to bring it forth glorious at that day of his appearing; or my eternal life, happiness, and crown of glory, which I have, as it were, deposited with him by faith and hope. And thus it was with her. The apostle saith he committed to God's custody a pawn or pledge; but about this pawn or pledge interpreters differ. One saith it is his soul; another saith it is himself; and a third saith it is his works; and a fourth saith it is his sufferings; and a fifth saith it is his salvation. In short, he committed to God his soul, himself, his doings, his sufferings, to be rewarded with life and salvation; and so did she who is now at rest in the Lord. Lord, saith Austin, I will die that I may enjoy thee; I will not live, but I will die; I desire to die that I may see Christ, and refuse to live, that I may live with Christ. The broken rings, contracts, and espousals contents not the true lover, but he longs for the marriage-day; and so did she who has now exchanged a sick-bed for a royal throne, and the company of poor mortals for the presence of God, Christ, angels, and the 'spirits of just men made perfect.'

<sup>1</sup> In all my visits to her, my hardest task was still to work her into a willingness to stay in this world till all her doing and her suffering work was over.

It was well said of [by] one, 'So far as we tremble at death, so far we want love.' It is sad, when the contract is made between Christ and a Christian, to see a Christian afraid of the making-up of the marriage. But your deceased relation was no such Christian. I know nothing in this world that her heart was so much set upon as the completing of the marriage between Christ and her soul. My eye is upon that text, Isa. lvii. 1, 'The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come.' I have read of one Philo, a Jew, and another, that when they came to any city or town, and heard of the death of any godly man, though never so poor, they would both of them mourn exceedingly, because of the great loss that place had by the death of that godly man, and because it was a warning piece from God of evil approaching. But ah, how many famous, godly ministers, and how many choice Christians, hath the Lord of hosts taken away from us, and yet who lays it to heart! There is no greater prognostic of an approaching storm, than God's calling home so many worthies, 'of whom the world was not worthy,' as he has lately done. Now oh that God would beautify all your souls with all these twelve jewels, with which your mother was adorned in life and death!

Sir[s], your having signified to me that it was your mother's mind and your desires that her following experiences should be printed, I did think it might be somewhat reasonable to put you all in mind of such things as I had, among many others, observed, and which should be all your ambition to imitate, as you would give up your accounts at last with joy, and be happy with her for ever in the other world.

Considering that these Experiences may fall into other hands besides your own, I thought it meet to let such readers know that these were taken from her by one of you, when she was in a very weakly condition, and had little more strength than to speak; and they are but some of those that lay most warm upon her heart at that time. God began to work upon her in the morning of her days, and had there been a collection of all her most close, inward, spiritual experiences, they would have been greatly multiplied beyond what is now presented to the reader's eye; but that was a task too hard for her under those variety of weaknesses that she was every day contending with. The experiences of old disciples commonly rise high; but the ingenious reader may easily discern by the twelve jewels with which she was adorned, that she was a woman both of choice and great experiences. Austin observes on Ps. lxi. 16, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;' 'he doth not call them,' saith he, 'to acquaint them with speculations—how wide the earth is, and how far the heavens are stretched out, or what the number of the stars are, or what is the course of the sun;—but come and I will tell you the wonders of his grace, the faithfulness of his promises, and the riches of his mercy to my soul.' Now all ministers and Christians that had any inward acquaintance with her soul concernments, do very well know that she was most taken up with the wonders of God's free, rich, and sovereign grace, and with the sweetness, the freeness, the riches, and the faithfulness of his promises, and with the riches of his mercy in Christ to her soul.

To draw to a close, it is observable that even the holy apostles in



their canonical epistles, have spent some good part of their holy lives in the ample commendations of those eminent saints to whom they wrote; as Paul in his to Philemon, and John in that of his to an honourable lady, and that other to a meaner person—viz., Gaius; and that they went not behind the door, as we say, to whisper, but as on the house-top did proclaim the religious and pious practices of those more choice Christians to the imitation of others. And further, when I consider that which the apostle speaketh of Demetrius, a rare and not ordinary testimony: ‘Demetrius hath a good report of all men, and of the truth itself: and we also bear record; and we know that our record is true,’ 3 John 12. And yet further, when I consider what is recorded of Hezekiah, ‘Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought what was good, and right, and true before his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law and commandments, he did it with all his heart, and prospered,’ 2 Chron. xxxi. 20, 21. And when I consider what high commendations the apostle bestows upon the churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1–11; and upon the church of Thessalonica, 1 Thes. i. 1–9; and also 2 Thes. i. 3–5. And when I consider that it was the Holy Ghost who writ Jehoiada’s epitaph, ‘They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both towards God and toward his house,’ 2 Chron. xxiv. 16. It is said also of Josiah, in his commendations by the same Spirit, ‘Like unto him there was no king,’ 2 Kings xxiii. 25. Moses and Mordecai, Sarah, Deborah, Esther, Elizabeth, and others, after their deaths, have had their due praises. When I consider of these things, I am very well satisfied in what I have said concerning this deceased sister and friend. I do noways doubt but that we may very safely say good of such when dead, whose ordinary course and practice it was to do good while they lived; but in this censorious age, no sooner is dust cast upon some Christians’ heads, but there are those that will do what they can to throw dirt in their faces. Augustine doth very fitly compare those to Dives his dogs; they lay licking and sucking Lazarus his sores, but his sounder parts they never meddled with. To trample upon the reputation and stain the glory of them that ‘die in the Lord,’ argues such persons to be akin to fleas, who bite most when men are asleep. It was one of Solon’s laws, that none should dare to speak evil of the dead; and Plutarch tells us, that that was highly commended and duly observed. But is it so now? This I am sure, that it well becomes Christians not to dare to speak evil, if they could, of those who for the main have lived holily and died graciously, as this deceased friend hath done. Let this satisfy us, that she is above the praises and envies of men. It is the good, the profit, the advantage of all your souls and theirs into whose hands this little piece may fall, that has drawn me out to write so large an epistle. If I had only the dead in my eye, a few lines should have served my turn. I doubt not but that you will kindly accept of my endeavours to be serviceable to your immortal souls; and who can tell what fruit may grow upon this tree? I shall improve all the interest I have in heaven, that both the Epistle and your glorified mother’s Experiences may be blest to the furtherance of the internal and eternal welfare of all your souls. The ‘good-will of him that dwelt in the bush’ rest upon you and yours. So I rest, honoured friends, your souls’ servant,

THOMAS BROOKS.

A TRUE RELATION  
OF SOME OF THE  
EXPERIENCES OF MRS SUSANNA BELL,

TAKEN FROM HER OWN MOUTH BY A NEAR RELATION OF HERS,  
A LITTLE BEFORE HER DEATH.

*Left as a legacy to her mourning children.*

IT pleased the Lord to order it so that in my young days I was cast into a family that feared the Lord; and going to hear Mr White<sup>1</sup> preaching from these words, Prov. xv. 15, 'But he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast;' from these words he did shew how happy a thing a good conscience was, and what a sad thing it was, with Judas, to have a bad conscience. And what a blessed thing it was to have a good conscience from that of Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'And he said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' This sermon God made useful to me; and after this it pleased the Lord to order it so that I changed my condition, and the Lord provided for me a good husband, 'one that feared him.' And some troubles being here, many of the people of God went for New England, and among them my husband desired to go; but I and my friends were very averse unto it. I having one child, and being big with another, thought it to be very difficult to cross the seas with two small children; some of my neighbours advising me to the contrary, living so well as I did. But I told them that what the Lord would have me to do that I would willingly do; and then it pleased the Lord to bring that scripture to my mind: Eph. v. 22, 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord'—and then my heart was brought off to a quiet submission. But after this, I being well-delivered, and the child well, it pleased the Lord soon after to take my child to himself. Now upon this, so far as it pleased the Lord to help a poor wretch, I begged earnestly of him to know why he took away my child, and it was

<sup>1</sup> Probably the excellent John White of London.— G.

given in to me that it was because I would not go to New England. Upon this the Lord took away all fears from my spirit, and then I told my husband I was willing to go with him; for the Lord had made my way clear to me against any that should oppose. And then my husband went presently upon the work to fit to go. And the Lord was pleased to carry us as upon eagle's wings, according to that Deut. xxxii. 10, 11. We were eight weeks in our passage, and saw nothing but the heavens and waters. I knew that the Lord was a great God upon the shore; but when I was upon the sea I did then see more of his glorious power than ever I had done before, according to that of the psalmist, Ps. cvii. 23, 24. And when the Lord was pleased to bring us in safety on shore, his people gave us the best entertainment they could; and then I thought I could never be thankful enough to the Lord for his goodness in preserving us upon the sea, I being big with child, and my husband sick almost all the voyage. After this my husband would have gone by water higher into the country; but I told him the Lord having been so good in bringing us safe ashore amongst his people, I was not willing to go again to sea. And it was a good providence of God we did not; for most of them that went were undone by it. The first sermon that I heard after I came ashore was out of Jer. ii. 13, 'For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' Now the minister did shew that whatever we did build on short of Christ would prove but a broken cistern; and by that sermon the Lord was pleased to shake my foundation. But I being a poor, ignorant creature, thought if I could but get into the fellowship of the people of God, that that would quiet my spirit and answer all my objections; and I did accordingly attempt to join with the church; but they were very faithful to the Lord and my soul, and asked me what promise the Lord had made home in power upon me. And I answered them, Jer. xxxi. 3, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee:' but they told me that that was a general promise, that I must look to get some particular promise made home in power upon me; and persuaded me to wait a little longer to see what God would further do for my poor soul, which accordingly I did. And going to hear Mr Cotton,<sup>1</sup> who did preach out of Rev. ii. 28, 'To him that overcometh I will give the morning star;' from which words he did observe that that star was Christ. And [from] this he came to shew how a soul might know whether it had an interest in Christ or no, and that was by the Lord's giving out such precious promises as these to the poor soul—viz., that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19; and that John xvi. 21, 'And your joy shall no man take from you:' and Isa. liv. 22, 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins;' and that Isa. xliii. 25; which promises afterwards God made sweet to my soul. After this I went to hear Mr Shepherd,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Cotton of Boston in Old England, and afterwards of Boston in New England. Died, 1652.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, Mass., whose Works—including his celebrated sermons expository of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, mentioned by Mrs Bell—have been collected in 3 vols., cr. 8vo, 1853, (Boston.)—G.

and he was preaching out of the parable of the ten virgins, Mat. xxv. 1-13. In his discourse he shewed that all were professors, but the foolish had nothing but lamps without oil, a profession without grace in their hearts; but that the wise had got grace in their hearts, and so were ready-prepared to meet the Bridegroom when he came. Now by that discourse of his the Lord was pleased to convince me that I was a foolish virgin, and that I made a profession, but wanted the oil of grace in my heart, and by this means I was brought into a very sad condition. For I did not experimentally know what it was to have oil in my lamp, grace in my heart, nor what it was to have union with Christ, that being a mystery to me. And then I did think myself guilty of breaking all the commandments of God except the sixth. For I thought I had never desired, wished, or endeavoured any man's death. But then the Lord shewed me that if I were saved by Christ my sins had murdered him, according to that Acts iii. 15, and iv. 10. And that did greatly aggravate my sin the more unto me. Now one of my neighbours, observing that I was in a distressed condition, told me that she had been a-hearing, and that the minister she heard was a-shewing that the Lord had more glory in the salvation than in the damnation of sinners. For in their salvation his mercy and his justice were both glorified, but in their destruction only his justice was glorified. Hearing of this the Lord was pleased to draw out my heart to plead with him, that if he might receive more glory in my salvation than in my destruction, that then his mercy might be manifested to me. For I thought, although I had many worldly comforts, yet I had no interest in Christ, and that if I should die presently, hell would be my portion; and in this sad and sore distress the Lord was pleased to imprint that scripture upon my mind: Job x. 2, 'I will say unto God, Do not condemn me: shew me wherefore thou contendest with me:' Job xl. 2, 'Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it;' and that word of the apostle's: Rom. ix. 20, 21, 'Nay but thou, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' After this it pleased God that Mr Eliot<sup>1</sup> and some other of the people of God, seeing me in this sad condition, [sent to] tell me the church would have me come in to be a member with them; but I did reply that all church-fellowship would do me no good. Then Mr Eliot asked me, what would do me good? and I told him, nothing but an interest in Christ. His answer was, that I was already in the pangs of the new birth, and he did believe it would not be long before the Lord spoke peace to my poor soul. After that, reading a book of Dr Preston's,<sup>2</sup> where he did shew 'that when the Lord joined himself to a believer, he did first comprehend the soul, and then enabling [enable] the soul by faith to apprehend him,' which double act of faith I then knew not. About fourteen days after, considering what a distressed condition I

<sup>1</sup> The venerable apostle of the Indians, John Eliot, born 1604, died 1690.—G.

<sup>2</sup> Sibbes's great friend. Died 1628. Probably his 'Breastplate of Faith,' is referred to.—G.

was in, I was bemoaning myself before the Lord, and the Lord was pleased to bring that scripture to my remembrance in John xvi., 'I will give you that joy that no man taketh from you.' And then I thought with myself that it was Christ that I did want, and not joy. But the Lord brought that scripture to me that Christ was tidings of great joy, Luke ii. 10, 11; and I thought, how could this be to such a poor wretch as I was, and the Lord was pleased to bring that scripture to my mind, that he looked not as man looked, 1 Sam. xvi. 7, and that he was God and not man, Hosea xi. 9; and by this means he took away all my fears. And then the Lord did help me to discern that this was a mystery indeed, and did so quiet my heart that all the world seemed as nothing unto me. For I never heard such a voice before, blessed be his name. And then the people of God would have me come into fellowship with them, and soon after I was admitted a babe in Christ among them. Afterwards being to hear Mr Cotton on 1 Pet. ii. 2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby;' and from thence he shewed that if it were a living babe it would cry out for nourishment, and that the soul that did once really taste of Christ was never satisfied, but would still be crying out for more and more of Christ. When such a soul came to any ordinance as hearing, prayer, the Lord's supper, and did get nothing of Christ, they were all as lost ordinances to it.

It so fell out that the next Lord's day was the day of sitting down at the Lord's table, and the Lord did put it into my thoughts that if we received nothing but a piece of bread and a sip of wine, it would be but a poor empty thing; and so the Lord did help me to beg that if what he had been pleased to speak to my soul before were a true manifestation of himself, that he would be pleased to speak again unto my soul, for a threefold cord is not easily broken, Eccles. iv. 12. Being at the ordinance, the bread and wine coming about, I was thus sighing unto the Lord, What! shall I have nothing but a bit of bread and a sip of wine this day? and the Lord was pleased to bring that scripture to my mind: John vi. 55, 'For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' And so the Lord was pleased to give something more of himself to my poor soul at that time. After this, a sad providence attended one of my neighbours. I was full of fears that her condition might be mine; but the Lord brought that scripture to my mind: Jer. xxix. 11, 'For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end;' and thereby the Lord stayed my heart in trusting upon himself, and giving me a safe delivery. And being up again, I went to hear Mr Cotton, and he was shewing what assurance was, and how happy that soul was that could say as Job did, chap. xix. 25; and with David, Ps. cxix. 89, 'For ever, Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens;' and so the Lord was pleased to shew me what a mercy I had that had assurance. Then I went to speak to Mr Cotton, to ask him what he thought of the work of God upon my poor soul, and he told me that he was satisfied that it was a real work of God. And he did counsel me to walk humbly and thankfully, and to take heed of grieving that Spirit of God by which I was sealed up to the day of redemption, and to walk humbly to-

wards those that God had not revealed so much of himself to as he had to me. And then the Lord was pleased by his providence to call my husband to come for England, and he did tell me that he should so order business that I should have less of the world to trouble me. I was glad to hear it from him, and desired him to go. And then the Lord was pleased to help me to consider whether I had not got a better husband, and the Lord did quiet my heart in himself; my soul being espoused to him, 2 Cor. xi. 2. After he was gone from me, we did hear of a war broke forth in England, and friends told me my husband would be in danger of his life if taken. I told them the best I knew, and the worst I knew; and that if God should take my husband out of the world, I should have a husband in heaven, which was best of all. And Mr John Eliot did visit me in his absence, and asked me how the Lord did bear up my heart in my husband's absence; and I did tell him that the Lord was as well able to bring him to me in safety as he did to carry him out. And he answered me, I believe the Lord will say unto thee as he did to the Canaanitish woman, Mat. xv. 28, 'Be it unto thee according to thy faith.' And the Lord was pleased to keep me, and all that I had, and to preserve him, and to bring him home in safety unto me. And then, instead of having less of the world, which I desired, the Lord did cast in more of it. After this, my husband told me that he must go again to England, and I was very unwilling to it; but he told me if he did not, the name of God would suffer. To prevent which, I consented, and it pleased God to bring him home in safety to me; and in a few years after he brought me over to England, and God shewed much of his goodness to me.

At my coming ashore, he brought that scripture to my remembrance, Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27, 'There is none like unto thee, O God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'

After it had pleased God to bring me back to my native country, I was much troubled that there was no better observation of the Lord's day—it being our practice in New England to begin it at sunset the evening before, as it is recorded in Genesis 'that the evening and the morning was the first day;' and that scripture was brought to my memory, Prov. xiv. 10, 'The heart knows its own bitterness, but no man intermeddles with its joy.' Many trials the Lord hath been pleased to exercise me with, but in the midst of all God hath made that word sweet to my soul, Isa. liv. 10, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' It pleased the Lord after a year or two to exercise me with much weakness; but then he made that word sweet unto me, Isa. l. 8, 'He is near that justifies me: who will contend with me?' and that word, Job xv. 11, 'Are the consolations of God small unto thee?' After these things, when I was in a very great strait upon the apprehension of some public dangers that seemed to threaten us, the Lord was pleased to bring to my mind that scripture, Zech. ix. 12, 'Turn to your strongholds, you prisoners of hope.'

And since, in the midst of my many bodily infirmities, God hath made that word sweet to my soul, Ps. cxvi. 7, 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee;' and that word, Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' I still remain as a 'prisoner of hope,' waiting for a fruition of that happiness which the Lord Jesus Christ hath prepared for me, 'for I know that he that hath the Son hath life,' 1 John v. 12. 'And if the Son make us free, then are we free indeed,' John viii. 36. And 'blessed is that people that knows the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance,' Ps. lxxxix. 15. I find the Lord Jesus very free in the tenders of his love to poor sinners; and that love hath in a great measure been manifested to my poor soul.

After this it pleased the Lord to visit one of my daughters with a great sickness, upon which my heart was drawn out to seek the Lord on her behalf; then that scripture was brought to my mind, John xi. 21, 'Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: and he that believeth in me shall never die.' And it pleased the Lord to give me her life as an answer of prayer.

It pleased the Lord after this to visit this land with the pestilence; a severe stroke of his that swept away many thousands; and under that sad providence of his, the Lord did help me to rely alone upon himself from that scripture, Ps. xci. 7, 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.' And according to my faith, it pleased the Lord to preserve both myself and all my relations from that sad stroke, though some of them were often in the midst of danger; blessed be his name.

The next year after the Lord did again, for our sins, visit us, and that by a dreadful fire, which reduced to ashes many thousand houses; and yet his love was then manifested to me in the preservation of my habitation, when many better than myself were burned out. Therefore unto my God shall I, who am less than the least of all his mercies, render that praise which is due unto his name.

Since that, whilst I was upon a languishing bed, and death even knocking at the door, it pleased the Lord once again to alarm me in that weak condition, by a dreadful fire which broke out very near us; and at that time it pleased my good God to support and strengthen my spirit with that scripture, Isa. xliii. 2, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee;' and that scripture, Isa. liv. 5, 'For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.' And this second time also the Lord was graciously pleased to preserve me and my house from that amazing stroke which did so much threaten us. And oh that all

those new and old experiences might be high obligations upon me and mine to holiness and fruitfulness all our days!

Whilst I remained in New England there happened a great earthquake, which did shake all in the house, and my son being by me, asked me what it was; I told him our neighbours were all amazed at it, and knew not but that the world might then be at an end, and did run up and down very much affrighted at it, but I sat still, and did think with myself what a Christ was worth to my poor soul at that time. And then God made these scriptures sweet refreshings, supporting and quieting my soul: Ps. xviii. 46, 'The Lord liveth: and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted;' Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;' Rev. vii. 9, 'After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;' ver. 11, 'And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'