

Money Society had been formed; and the Synod cordially supported an overture which was introduced to recommend that Society to their notice. "In this overture it was proposed that the friends should appoint a Committee to correspond with the Society in London, securing them of the Synod's hearty approval of their design, and watching them all process in the accomplishment of it; and though they could not 'as a body' promise them any pecuniary aid, saying 'they were not a religious society, and were engaged in other missions,' yet, 'they did not doubt but that many individuals among them would cheerfully contribute their mite.' The Committee appointed to correspond with the London Society, on this occasion, consisted of Messrs. James Hall, James Poddie, John Dick, and Thomas Atkinson." But into details respecting this and other movements it would be wise to leave for us to enter.

In concluding the present communication, however, it may be proper to state, that we are about to proceed to the history of an era in this Church which must be considered most important and memorable, as the period when that controversy about the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which although settled long before in theory, was still not settled practically, was introduced into the Synod, and brought to a conclusion satisfactory so far as to lay a broader foundation for future steps of scriptural progress. But we do not enter on this subject at present.

(To be continued.)

#### THE LIFE OF THE REV. THOMAS BOSTON, AUTHOR OF THE "FOUR-FOLD STATE."

Perhaps no species of composition is more interesting than the biography of those great and good men, who have contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints. But by the term biography, we are not simply to understand a narrative of their external life; of their mental endowments and capacities, of their friends and relations, and of the political and ecclesiastical events which harassed and perplexed them. We are chiefly anxious to ascertain how they felt in the common affairs of life; what was their prevailing habit or bent of mind, and how they lived and acted in reference to eternity. The indiscriminate praise of friends, no less than the malignant censure of enemies, has frequently deprived us of this satisfaction; by preventing us from ascertaining the motives with which they were actuated, and the various holy influences under which they lived and died. Happily, however, those sources of error do not exist with regard to the subject of this memoir: for he has left behind him a very circumstantial autobiography, dedicated to the four children that survived him, John, Jane, Alison and Thomas. In the dedication, which was written within two years of his death, he warns his children of the trials which he saw coming on the Church; he is deeply solicitous about their spiritual and eternal welfare, and very touchingly alludes to his wife, who had been eight years confined to her bed, as a daughter of Abraham. But perhaps nothing within the whole compass of literature, is more deeply affecting than the close of the dedication, where, with eternity full in his view, and longing for his heavenly rest, he thus concludes his address to his children, in his own simple, artless style:—"The Lord bless each one of you, and save you, cause his gracious face to shine on you, and give you peace; so as we may have a comfortable meeting in the other world. Farewell." From this admirable narrative we shall exclusively derive our materials.

Thomas Boston was the youngest of the seven children of John Boston and Alison Trotter, and was born at Dunse, Berwickshire, on the 17th of March, 1676. His father being a non-conformist, and imprisoned in Dunse for his religious opinions, his youngest son, when quite a child, lay with him some time in prison, for the purpose of keeping him company. About the time of his father's liberation from prison, an incident occurred, which made a deep impression on his susceptible mind. When his mother paid to Alexander Martin, sheriff deputy, the sum of £50, Scots, or £5 10s. sterling, as the fine of her imprisoned husband, she desired some abatement. But he, in the true spirit of the persecutor, broke in pieces, with a pint stoup, part of a tobacco pipe which was lying on the table—"hidding the devil neat him as small as that pipe, if there should be ought abated of the sum." Boston makes the following reflection on the spirit which such a transaction manifested:—"May all my offspring be saved from ever embarking with that party, of whom I

say from the heart. O, my soul, come not thou into their secret, mine heart, or be thou entangled with them."

The mother of this martyr went early to school, and, in spite of his natural timidity, by the time he was seven years of age, made such surprising proficiency in learning, that he could read the Bible. He frequently read with his school-mistress in the winter evenings, when the rest of the children were absent; and his own schoolmaster read the Bible in his bed. He, however, acknowledges that his reading the Bible was merely to become acquainted with the Scripture-histories; and that, though regularly attending the Episcopal Church, he was ignorant of the way of salvation, and unconcerned about his soul. In fact, so little spiritual good was expected from the English Curates, that it was commonly said, "Whenever one turns serious about his soul's state and care, he leaves them." But about the close of the year 1687, King James gave the non-conformist liberty of own choice, that he might smooth the way for the formal introduction of Popery; and though the motives were easily seen, yet it afforded a short breathing time to God's persecuted people. During this period, Boston, then in his twelfth year, accompanied his father to hear Mr. Henry Perkins—father of Ebenezer and Ralph Perkins, the founders of the United Association—where he was brought to a due sense of his lost and ruined state by nature. And though he was of a haughty disposition, and had been preserved from many of those vices incident to youth, he yet felt the stings of conviction, and that he could not obtain the victory in his own strength. He was remarkably distinguished for tenderness of conscience, even from a child; and his entire career was strongly marked by the sufferings of reason, and the malice of wicked men, till he laid down his aching head on the breast of his living Redeemer.

Boston attended the grammar school of Dunse, between four and five years, after which, various unsuccessful efforts were made to obtain for him a university education. But at last his father, wearied with depending on the vain promises of others, determined, about the close of 1691, to send him to Edinburgh College on his own resources, where he studied three successive winters. Being in rather straitened circumstances, he was very economical in his habits. His entire expenditure, during the three winters he attended college, only amounted to £125 15s. 8d., Scots, or £12 5s. 8d., sterling. But, perhaps this extreme frugality greatly aggravated the fainting fit to which he was liable through life, and thus scattered the seeds of disease in a very fertile communication.

Having completed his college course, Boston entered the Divinity Hall in the beginning of 1693, when he acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the Professors. As he had received a bursary of £20 Scots, in the gift of the Presbytery of Dunse and Chirnside, his worldly circumstances were comparatively easy. But being encouraged to expect a school at Pomport, Dumfriesshire, an expectation which afterwards proved fallacious, he imprudently gave up his bursary, in consequence of which he met with various discouragements. After many trials, he became tutor to Alexander Fletcher, of Aberlady, a boy about nine years of age, of an amiable disposition, at the salary of 100 merks, or £8 6s. 8d., merling a year. There he felt himself very uncomfortable. His pious, irreproachable life, and fearlessness in rebuking sin, exposed him to the hatred of the servants; and even the lady of the house did not relish his religion. These, and other considerations, induced him to leave the family, as soon as his engagement terminated. And though he had only attended one full session at the Divinity Hall, yet, at the advice of his friends, in consideration of the necessity of the times, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Dunse, on the 15th of June, 1697, in the 21st year of his age. He continued a probationer two years and three months, during which he preached with great acceptance within the bounds of several Presbyteries. Many attributed their conversion to his ministry. But, during the incumbency of the curates, in the time of Prelacy, religion gradually declined; and after the Revolution-settlement, many who had been brought up under their teaching, could not endure sound doctrine. The consequence was, that Boston, was as heartily hated by the worldly, as he was respected and loved by the pious part of the community. The word of God always proves a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and hence if it fails to convince and convert, it must excite the latent enmity of the human heart. Thus, when preaching at Clackmannan, on one occasion—