

time he was called, by the ministry of the famous Mr. Boyd of Trochrig, then principal of the college of Glasgow, in whose hand, as he himself observes in his Memoirs, the Lord put the key of his heart, so that whenever he heard him in public or private, he profited much, he being as it were sent to him from God, to speak the words of eternal life.

Two years after, he was admitted in the room of his brother, Mr. William, to be regent in the college of Glasgow. In the summer of 1616, he entered upon trials for license, and having obtained it, was required to preach in the College Kirk the Sabbath immediately after. This accordingly he did, and some years after, he was, to his great surprise, told by some of his hearers, who were better acquainted with religion than he was then, that in his sermon the Lord spoke to their hearts; which not only surprised, but stirred him up still more and more to follow after the Lord. His experience, however, at the time was in some instances, much less calculated to flatter his self-esteem. Thus, it is related, that on one occasion shortly after that above alluded to, he, by a remarkable providence, had for his hearer the famous Mr. Bruce, and being desirous to have the judgment of so great and good a man upon his discourse, he often said that he should never forget the criticism which he gave: "I found," said he, "your sermon very polished and well digested, but there is one thing I did miss in it, to wit, the Spirit of God; I found not that"—This gave him to understand, that to be a minister of Jesus Christ, implied something more than to be a knowing and eloquent preacher.

In regard also to his experience as a private Christian, he had occasionally some checks. Upon an evening in the same year, having been engaged with some irreligious company, he found himself on returning to his chamber to his wonted devotion, like to be deserted of God, spent a very restless night, and to-morrow resolved on a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. Towards the end of that day, he found access to God with sweet peace, through Jesus Christ, and determined to beware of such company; but running into another extreme of rudeness and incivility to profane persons, he found it was very hard for a short-sighted sinner to hold the right way.

While he was regent in college, upon a report that some sinful oath was to be imposed upon the masters, he inquired at Mr. Gavin Forsyth, one of his fellow-regents, what he would do in this. He answered, "By my faith, I must live."—Mr. Blair said, "Sir, I will not swear by my faith, as you do, but truly I intend to live by my faith. You may choose your own way, but I will adventure on the Lord."—And so this man to whom the matter of an oath was a small thing, continued after he was gone; but some years afterwards, was in such poverty, as forced him to supplicate the General Assembly for relief. Mr. Blair, who was then moderator, upon his appearing in such a desperate case, could not shun observing on his former conduct; and upon his address to him in

private, with great tenderness put him in mind, that he himself had been carried through by that faith, at which he had formerly scoffed.

Some time after he ceased to be a regent in the college, he fell under deep exercise of soul, and therein attained unto much comfort. Among others, that saying, *the just shall live by faith*, sounded loudly in his ears, and led him to search the scriptures anew on the subject.

"By this study of the nature of faith," says he, "and especially of the text before mentioned, I learned 1st, that nominal Christians, or common professors, were much deluded in their way of believing; and that not only do Papists err, who place faith in an implicit assent to the truth which they know not, and say that it is better defined by ignorance than knowledge, (a way of believing very suitable to Antichrist's slaves; who are led by the nose they know not whither,) but also secure Protestants, who abusing the description given of old of faith, say, that it implies an assured knowledge in the person who believes of the love of God in Christ to him in particular. This assurance is no doubt attainable, and many believers do comfortably enjoy the same, as our divines prove unanswerably against the Popish doctors, who maintain the necessity of perpetual doubting, and miscall comfortable assurance, the Protestant's presumption. But notwithstanding, that comfortable assurance doth ordinarily accompany a high degree of faith, yet that assurance is not to be found in all the degrees of saving faith; so that by not adverting to that distinction, many gracious souls and sound believers, who have received Jesus Christ, and rested upon him as he is offered to them in the word, have been much puzzled, as if they were not believers at all: on the other hand, many secure and impenitent sinners, who have not yet believed the Lord's holiness, nor abhorrence of sin, nor their own ruined state and condition, do from self-love imagine, without any warrant of the word, that they are beloved of God, and that the foresaid description of faith agrees well to them.

"2dly, I perceive, that many who make a right use of faith in order to attain to the knowledge of their justification, make no direct use of it in order to sanctification; and that the living of *the just by faith*, reacheth farther than I formerly conceived: and that the heart is purified by faith. If any say, why did I not know, that, precious faith, being a grace, is not only a part of our holiness, but does promote other parts of holiness; I answer, that I did indeed know this, and made use of faith as a motive to stir me up to holiness, according to the apostle's exhortation, *Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.* But I had not before learned to make use of faith as a mean and instrument to draw holiness out of Christ, though it may be, I had both heard and spoken that, by way of a transient notion; but then I learned to purpose,