

believe in God, though everything within thee seems to say, "He cannot save thee; he will not save thee." Believe in God, sinner, over the tops of mountain sins. Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment thereof, that he could not but run into God's arms, and he said, "Though he had held a drawn sword in his hands I would have run on the very point of it rather than have kept away from him." So do thou, poor sinner. Believe thy God. Believe in nothing else, but trust thy God and thou wilt get the blessing. It is wonderful the power of faith over God, it binds his justice and constrains his grace. I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and had him begone. After I had done so he conquered me, and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick, and wagging his tail right pleasantly, he brought the stick to me and dropped it at my feet. Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man. And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence enough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you. There is an omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the divine being himself. Only do but trust him as he reveals himself in Jesus, and you shall find salvation.

I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that this act of coming into contact with God is performed by the sinner just as he is. I do not know how wretched the prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine, nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for them from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came. Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleansing his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! he did arise, and he came to his father. Every moment that a sinner stops away from God in order to get better he is but adding to his sin, for the radical sin of all is his being away from God and the longer he stays in it the more he sins.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine any more, or making a swine of himself either by trusting in priests or sacraments; he will not confess to a priest again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of purgatory; he is not such a fool as that any more. He has been to his God on his own account, and he does not want any of those shavelings to go to God for him. He has got away from that bondage. No more pig-feeding; no more superstition for him! "Why," says he, "I have access with boldness to the mercy-seat, and what have we to do with the priests of Rome?"

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his father, his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own; all his glory is his father's free pardoning love. He never boasts of what he has, for he owns that he has nothing but what his father gives him; and though he is far better off than ever he was in his spend-thrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-companion upon the bounty of his God, and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings. Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been contented to be one of the servants of the house, much more satisfied is he to be a child. He loves his father with a new love; he cannot even mention his name without saying, "Add he forgave me, he forgave me freely, he forgave me all, and he said, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.'" From the day of his restoration the prodigal is bound to his Father's home, and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the covenant of grace, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

Baxter as a Preacher.

W. B. HUTCHINSON, D. D.

One of the great names among English Baptists is that of John G. Pike, who died in 1855. He was for 47 years pastor of the Baptist church at Derby, and was exceedingly popular both as a preacher and an author. Dr. John Clifford says of him: "As a lad, I listened occasionally to the preaching of the Rev. J. G. Pike. His overwhelming solemnity still haunts me like the wierd messenger of another world; and the deep and awe-filled tones of his voice, as he repeated the word which was the key to all his preaching, Eternity, Eternity, Eternity; I never can forget." (Art., "Baptist Theology," "Contemporary Review," April, 1888.)

In the memoir of Mr. Pike is a letter written to his son, also a minister, in which he gives his estimate of the preaching of Baxter. "The sermons to which you refer are very well for modern sermons, but there is not in them the rousing pungency of Bolten and Baxter and others of the same stamp and age. I am inclined to think that, taken generally, the Dissenters are more defective now, in their style of preaching, than some of the pious ministers in the Establishment. Too many sermons are adapted for anything rather than to make people feel. Ministers do not seem to remember that in most cases of a mixed congregation, a large, and frequently the larger, part of their hearers are going to hell, and that their business is to try to awaken them and to lead them in the way to heaven. An essay style of preaching is a miserable style. A minister had better keep out of the pulpit than go into it to deliver essays, though they may be on Gospel truths; and I apprehend that a great part of the preaching of the present day is little more than this. A preacher should pray to feel,

and strive to make his hearers feel, and let them feel that they are the persons he is speaking to, and that he is not merely occupying time by telling them something that may concern people a hundred miles off, but which, for anything that is pressed upon them, may be little concern for them. I have not, of late years, heard many preachers; but when I did hear I do not think there was one sermon in twenty calculated to convert a soul. I would advise you, especially, to read the applicatory parts of Baxter's works. It is there that his strength and excellency lie. For a vigorous style of application and of impressing Divine truth on the hearts and consciences of an auditory, there is no English writer, of much extent, to be compared with him. Others have their peculiar excellences, and some have excellences of which he may be destitute, but in powerful application he stands unrivalled." ("Memoir and Remains of the Rev. J. G. Pike," p. 403.)

This description of preaching half a century ago is perhaps not wholly inapplicable to much preaching of the present time.

Pike's estimate of the preaching power of Richard Baxter is confirmed by a study of the career of that remarkable man. Christian history records no finer example of a soul-saving pastorate than his at Kidderminster.

Speaking of his ministry at Kidderminster, Baxter himself said: I was then in the vigor of my spirits, and had naturally a familiar moving voice, (which is a great matter with the common hearers,) and doing all in bodily weakness as a dying man, my soul was more easily brought to seriousness, and to preach as a dying man to dying men. For drowsy formality and customariness doth but stupefy the hearers, and rock them asleep. It must be serious preaching which will make men serious in hearing and obeying it." (Quoted in Orme's "Life of Baxter," vol. I., p. 151.)

No finer counsel to ministers was ever given than the following passage from Baxter's "Obedient Patience": "Long for the winning and edifying of souls; for I have observed that few prosper this way but those that earnestly desire it. Pray hard for them to God, and see that you neglect not your own duty. Study for eminent abilities; preach plainly, earnestly, reverently; exhort them personally; do them good charitably; hurt none; avoid scandal; lives you teach; shun all unnecessary crossness and singularity; 'Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with all true believers;' and patiently leave the issue to God."

William Orme, the biographer of John Owen and other Puritan worthies, gives the following admirable analysis of Baxter's preaching power: "The simplicity and intense ardor of his preaching demands our notice. It was admirably adapted to instruct the ignorant, to rouse the careless, and to build up the faithful. He sought out acceptable words, but he had neither time nor taste for making what are called fine sermons; he studied point, not brilliancy. His object was not to dazzle, but to convince; not to excite admiration of himself, but to procure the reception of his message. He never aimed at drawing attention to the preacher, but always at fixing it at home, or guiding it to Christ. He never 'counted a grin,' when he might have 'wooded a soul,' or played with the fancy, when he should have been dissecting the heart. His subjects were always the most important which can engage the attention of man,—the creed, the commandments, and the Lord's Prayer; or, according to his own simple definition of them—the things to be believed, the things to be done, and the things to be desired. These were the leading, indeed, the only topics of his ministry. Into these he entered with all the intense ardor of his acute and deeply impressive mind. He never spoke like a man who was indifferent whether his audience felt what he said, or considered him in earnest on the subject. His eye, his action, his every word, were expressive of deep and impassioned earnestness that his hearers might be saved. His was eloquence of the highest order; not the eloquence of nicely selected words—or the felicitous combination of terms and phrases—or the music of exquisitely balanced periods, (though these properties are frequently to be found in Baxter's discourses:) but the eloquence of the most important truths, vividly apprehended, and energetically delivered. It was the eloquence of a soul burning with ardent devotion to God, and inspired with the deepest compassion to men; on whom the powers of the worlds of darkness, and of light, exercised their mighty influence; and spoke through his utterances, all that was tremendous in warning, and all that was delightful in invitation and love."

It was impossible that such a man should labor in vain." ("Life of Baxter," vol. I., p. 164.)

Baxter's "Practical Writings" were nearly all originally delivered as sermons, and the author had the wisdom not to eliminate the preaching quality from them. Open these works where you will you come upon passages of marvellous power, in which the truth is set home to the hearts and consciences of the hearers with irresistible force. One illustration will serve our purpose as well as another. In his "Divine Life," he discourses in the first part on the attributes of God. In considering the attribute of eternity, he thus addresses the unconverted: "Sinners, be awakened by the call of God: do you know where you are, and what you do? You are every man of you stepping into eternity! Will you sin away, will you loiter away, will you sell for nothing an eternal glory? Is thy sinful lust, and gain, and mirth, and gluttony, and excess of drink, a price to set upon eternity? If heaven be no more worth to thee, art thou not as bad as Judas, that for thirty pieces of silver would sell his Lord? O eternity, eternity! what hearts have they that can so forget thee, neglect thee, and disesteem thee, when they stand so near thee! O sleepy souls! do you never use to rub your eyes, and look before you towards eternity? and doth it now not amaze you to see whither it is that you are going? Merrily you run down the hill; but where is the bottom? If you look but down from the top of a steeple, it may occasion an amazing fear; what then should it cause in you to look down into hell, which is your eternity? No good can possibly be small that is eternal; and no hurt or pain can be called little that is eternal: an eternal toothache, or an eternal gout, or fever, were a misery unspeakable. But oh! what are these to an eternal loss of heaven, and to an eternal sense of the burning wrath of God Almighty! To be out of heaven a day, and in hell that day, is a misery now unknown to sinners; but if it were

as many thousand years as the earth hath sands, it were a greater misery; but to be there forever doth make the misery past all hope and all conceiving."

This is not perhaps in all respects a model for present-day preaching; but in intense earnestness it must be a model for all time. "No wonder that such a preacher transformed a whole city, quickened the spiritual life of a whole nation, and left an indelible impress for good on the entire English-speaking world. Topeka, Kansas, April 3, 1902.

The Hymn.

BY ROBERT J. BURDETTE, JR.

When the hymn first spoke to him the man could not remember. Back in his childhood's days it had lulled him to sleep while his head had nestled on a mother's breast, and his childish cares had floated away at the magic sound of her sweet voice. Often and often he remembered hearing it then—but when for the first time, he never could tell. Down through this life they had gone—inspired song and struggling soul. The former as much an instrument of God as the sword of a Joshua, the fervent cry of an Isaiah. The name of the author the man knew. But he never found out more concerning him. Yet in his gratitude he often felt like doing so. Or whether he had written many more such words and songs the man did not know. All he knew was that the song and these words comforted his soul, crushed the frown and brought the look of joy leaping into place.

Once, "When he was a tiny little boy," he remembered hearing the hymn singing to him, just when life had one of those bitter times when everything seemed hopeless and cruel. Some triflesome little hope or pleasure had been spun aside by the great wheel of life, and the childish hands had clutched after the falling joy in vain. And the boyish heart had been perplexed and sorrowful. Then it was that the hymn, which he had never heard before in like circumstances, had come to cheer and bless. He hardly knew the meaning of the inspired words then. He did not appreciate the mellow richness of the tones. But somehow the hymn was God's servant and it helped the child as it later helped the boy and as it often helped the man.

For often afterwards did he call the hymn to his aid. It carried him through the trials and struggles of that smaller world called school and college. It helped him when the forces within him were being welded together for life and for eternity. It helped him when the first savage thrust of the world's stout lance brought him though stunned, to the realization that the thing he had termed "life," and had looked forward to for so many years, was here. To day was life. And all his struggle in the great world arena would be measured by to-day. The joys and sorrows and temptations which had marked to-day would be the glittering mile-stones of his existence. Then it was that the hymn soothed his frightened soul with the love that sprang out of its beating tones and holy phrases.

On through life it sounded until the man had reached today. One of those dark cruel days that stifle the soul. With the freshness of morning he had started out for the week's work. Body and mind and soul had been rested and tuned up for the seven days' struggle by the holy calm and rest of a Sunday.

Almost the first blow of the day came from the enemy he dreaded. Another man. Another immortal soul floundering through the clogging year of time to the vista of eternity. Yet there was something that rang out a discord when those two men met. And their very being resented it. So other men called them enemies. All the man knew when he met the other was, that a flush of hate swathed him, and the love that had been in his breast was shrivelled and dead.

Then came the hymn, with its memories of the true life, with the notes of an ideal existence gently forcing its way into his clenched soul until all was pliable again to the hand of God. The man threw himself into the work again. Second and minute and hour found him forcing body and brain and soul into that one narrow channel—work. Concentration—attention to detail—work. It was all the same. And when the hands grew weary, the brain fagged and his very soul drooped, the song of the spirit world would lead him on again to the path of duty.

And thus the day wore on. But suddenly his way was darkened. The one weak spot in his nature was attacked. We call this "our besetting sin." Somewhere in the armor of each of us lies this weak place, in helmet, shield or sword—breastplate or thigh-piece. Somewhere in the links of mail there is the weak and rusty piece of iron. Always it is there. And so, suddenly the man felt himself assailed. The whole work day was lost in the mists of temptation, as the shore is lost to view on the departing ship. The fog of sin hid all from his view—and all he could see was the deep gray wall of despair. Then, singing to him like the voice of an angelic siren came the music of the hymn—sweetly calling him back, back. There was the voice of temptation, too. But the hymn kept calling, calling. He listened. He had learned to obey its voice.

And with joy he saw the day grow bright again, while, like the carol of a spring morning over the new born day sounded the notes of the hymn, praising the Great Being by whom it was inspired.—Baptist Commonwealth.