

him so fearful and unhappy. He felt that he was a sinner, and as a sinner he wanted a perfect righteousness to present him faultless before God. This righteousness, he also knew, was nowhere to be found except in the person of Jesus Christ. "My original and inward pollution—that was my plague and affliction. That I saw at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me—that I had the guilt of to amazement; by reason of that I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than a toad; and I thought I was so in God's eyes too. Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had. I could have changed hearts with any body. I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own villainy, deeply into despair; for I concluded that this condition that I was in could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the devil and a reprobate mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together."

During these painful apprehensions regarding his own state, it is no marvel that he looked on secular things with an apathetic eye. "While thus afflicted with the fears of my own damnation, there were two things would make me wonder: the one was, when I saw old people hunting after the things of this life, as if they should live here always; the other was, when I found professors much distressed and cast down when they met with outward losses, as of husband, wife, child, &c. Lord, thought I, what a do is here about such little things as these! What seeking after carnal things by some, and what grief in others for the loss of them? If they so much labour after, and shed so many tears for the things of this present life, how am I to be bemoaned, pined, and prayed for! My soul is dying, my soul is damning. Were my soul but in a good condition, and were I sure of it, ah! how rich would I esteem myself, though blessed but with bread and water! I should count those but small afflictions, and bear them as little burdens. A wounded spirit who can bear?"

This long interval of gloom was at last relieved by a brief sun-burst of joy. He heard a sermon on the text, "Behold, thou art fair, my love;" in which the preacher said, that a ransomed soul is precious to the Saviour, even when it appears very worthless to itself,—that Christ loves it when tempted, assailed, afflicted, and mourning under the hiding of God's countenance. Bunyan went home musing on the words, till the truth of what the preacher said began to force itself upon his mind; and half credulous at first, a hesitating hope dawned in upon his spirit.—"Then I began to give place to the word, which, with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul—"Thou art my love, thou art my love; and nothing shall separate thee from my love." And with that my heart was filled full of comfort and hope; and now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me: yea, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of his love, and have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that eat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me. Wherefore, I said in my soul, with much gladness, Well, I would I had pen and ink here. I would write this down before I go any farther; for surely I will not forget this forty years hence."

However, as he himself remarks, in less than forty days he had forgotten it all. A flood of new and fierce temptations broke over him, and had it not been for a strong sustaining arm which unseen upheld him, his soul must have sunk in the deep and angry waters. At one time he was almost overwhelmed in a hurricane of blasphemous suggestions, and at another time his faith had wellnigh made shipwreck on the shoals of infidelity or deliberate atheism. But the very reluctance and dismay of his spirit shewed that a new nature was in him. "I often, when these temptations have been with force upon me, did compare myself to the case of such a child whom some gipsy hath by force took up in her arms, and is carrying from friend and country; kick sometimes I did, and also shriek and cry; but yet I was bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away." It was all that he could do to refrain from articulating such words as he imagined would amount to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and for a year together he was haunted with such diabolical suggestions that he was weary of his life, and fain would have changed condition with a horse or a dog. During this dreary term it is no wonder that his heart felt hard. "Though he should have given a thousand pounds for a tear, he could not shed one; and often he had not even the desire to shed one." Every ordinance was an affliction. He could not listen to a sermon, or take up a religious book, but a crowd of wild and horrid fancies rushed in betwixt the subject and his bewildered mind. He could not assume the attitude of prayer but he felt impelled to break off, almost as if some one had been pulling him away; or, to mar his devotion, some ridiculous object was sure to be presented to his fancy. It is not surprising that he should have concluded that he was possessed by the devil; and it is scarcely possible to peruse his own and similar recitals without the forcible conviction that they are more than the mere workings of the mind, either in its sane or its disordered state.

Only relieved by some glimpses of comfort, "which, like Peter's sheet, were of a sudden caught up from him into heaven again," this horrible darkness lasted no less than a year. The light which first stole in upon it, and in which it finally melted away, was a clear discovery of the person of Christ, more especially a distinct perception of the dispositions which he manifested while here on earth. And one thing greatly helped him. He alighted on a congenial mind, and an experience almost identical with his own. From the emancipation which his new acquaintance

gave to his spirit, as well as the tone which he imparted to Bunyan's theology, we had best relate the incident in his own words. "Before I had got thus far out of my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience, who had writ some hundreds of years before I was born; for those who had writ in our days, I thought (but I desire them now to pardon me) that they had writ only that which others felt; or else had, through the strength of their wits and parts, studied to answer such objections as they perceived others perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep. Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hands one day a book of Martin Luther's: it was his Comments on the Galatians; it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition in his experience so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. This made me marvel; for thus, thought I, this man could not know anything of the state of Christians now, but must needs write and speak the experience of former days. Besides, he doth most gravely also, in that book, debate of the sin of these temptations, namely, blasphemy, desperation, and the like;—shewing that the law of Moses, as well as the devil, death, and hell, hath a very great hand therein: the which, at first, was very strange to me;—but considering and watching, I found it so indeed. But of particulars here I intend nothing; only this, methinks, I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians—excepting the Holy Bible—before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."

There was one thing of which Bunyan was very conscious—that his extrication from the fearful pit was the work of an almighty hand. The transition was very blissful; but just because his present views were so bright and assuring, he knew that flesh and blood had not revealed them. "Now I had an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight. Now could I remember the manifestation and the other discovery of grace with comfort, and should often long and desire that the last day had come, that I might be for ever inflamed with the sight and joy and communion with him, whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit on and body broken, and soul made an offering for my sins: for, whereas before I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, now methought I was got so far therefrom, that I could not, when I looked back, scarce discern it. And oh! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly, that my soul might be gone to rest." "And now I found, as I thought, that I loved Christ dearly. Oh! methought that my soul cleaved unto him, my affections cleaved unto him. I felt love to him as hot as fire; and now, as Job said, I thought I should die in my nest."

Another period of fearful agony, however, awaited him, and, like the last, it continued for a year. In perusing his own recital of these terrible conflicts, the first relief to our tortured sympathy is in the recollection that it is all over now, and that the sufferer, escaped from his great tribulation, is long ago before the throne. But in the calmer, because remoter, contemplation of this fiery trial, it is easy to see "the end of the Lord." When he permitted Satan to tempt his servant Job, it was not for Job's sake merely, nor for the sake of the blessed contrast which surprised his later days, that he allowed such thick-coming woes to gather round the patriarch; but it was to provide in his parallel experience a store-house of encouragement and hope for the future children of sorrow. And when the Lord permitted the adversary so violently to assail our worthy, and when he caused so many of his own waves and billows to pass over him, it was not merely for the sake of Bunyan; it was for the sake of Bunyan's readers down to the end of time. By selecting this strong spirit as the subject of these trials, the Lord provided, in his intense feelings and vivid realizations, a normal type—a glaring instance of those experiences which, in their fainter modifications, are common to most Christians; and, through his graphic pen, secured a guide-book for Zion's pilgrims in ages yet to come. In the temptations we are now called to record, there is something so peculiar, that we do not know if Christian biography supplies any exact counterpart; but the time and manner of its occurrence have many and painful parallels. It was after he had entered into "rest"—when he had received joyful assurance of his admission into God's family, and was desiring to depart and be with Christ—it was then that this assault was made on his constancy, and it was a fiercer assault than any. If we do not greatly err, it is not uncommon for believers to be visited after conversion with temptations from which they were exempt in the days of their ignorance; as well as temptations which, but for their conversion, could not have existed.

But the temptation to which we have alluded, took this strange and dreadful form—to sell and part with his Saviour, to exchange him for the things of this life—for anything. This horrid thought he could not shake out of his mind, day nor night, for many months together. It intermixed itself with every occupation, however sacred, or however trivial. "He could not eat his food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, nor cast his eyes to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come, 'Sell Christ for this, sell Christ for that, sell him, sell him.' Sometimes it would run in my thoughts not so little as a hundred times together, Sell him, sell him, sell him: Against which, I may say, for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it; least haply, before I was aware, some wicked thought might arise in my heart that might consent thereto: and sometimes the tempter would make me believe I had consented to it; but then should I be as tortured: