

MR. BAXTER'S PREFACE

TO
MR. ALLEINE'S ALARM.¹

*Modernized, corrected, and annotated
by William H. Gross www.onthewing.org March 2013.
Scripture in footnotes is taken from the NKJV (Thomas Nelson Publishers).*

TO ALL THE IGNORANT, CARNAL, AND UNGODLY, WHO ARE
LOVERS OF PLEASURE MORE THAN GOD, AND SEEK THIS
WORLD MORE THAN THE LIFE EVERLASTING, AND
LIVE AFTER THE FLESH, AND NOT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.

MISERABLE SOUL!

THERE is that life, and light, and love, in every true believer, but especially in every faithful minister of Christ which engages them to long and labour for your salvation. Life is communicative and active. It makes us sensible that faith is not a fantasy; nor is true religion a stage-play; nor are our hopes of eternal happiness a dream. And just as we desire nothing more for ourselves than to have more of the holy life which we have – alas! in so small a measure – so we desire nothing more for others. With the eye of an infallible (though too weak) faith we see the heaven which you neglect, and the blessed souls in glory with Christ, whose companions you might be forever. We see the multitude of souls in hell, who came there by the same way that you are going in. They are shut out of the glorious presence of God, and are now among these devils that deceived them. They remember that they had their good things here (Luke 16.25);² and how they spent the day of their visitation; and how lightly they once treated God, Christ, heaven, and mercy – while mercy was an earnest solicitor for their hearts. With our bodily eyes we see at the same time the abundance of poor sinners living around us as if there were no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell, no judgment, no, nor death, to be expected. It is as if a man were nothing more than a master-beast to rule the rest, and feed upon them, and perish with them. If it were your own case to see what souls do in heaven and hell, and at once to see how unbelievably, carelessly, and senselessly, most men live on earth – as if there were no such difference in another world – then would it not seem a pitiful sight to you? If you had once seen the five brothers of Dives³ on earth, eating, drinking, laughing, and merry; clothed, and faring daily with the best; and at the same time you had seen their brother's soul in hell, begging in vain for a little ease, and wishing in vain that one from the dead might go to warn his brothers so that they would come not to the place of torment, then would it not seem to you a pitiful sight? Would not pity have made you think, "Is there no way to open these gentlemen's eyes? Is there no way to acquaint them what has become of their brother, and where Lazarus is, and where they themselves are going? No one drives or forces them to hell, and yet will they go there of themselves? Is there no way to stop them, or keep them back? If you could only see what we see

¹ Richard Baxter, *Practical Works* (London: 1830, William Orme, ed.) Vol. XIII, pp. 535-550 – or 1838 ed. Vol. IV, p. 1032ff.

² **Luke 16:25** "But Abraham said, `Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.'"

³ The traditional name assigned to the rich man in Luke 16.19-31, *Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*.

by faith (believing God), and at once behold the saints in heaven, the lost despairing souls in hell, and the senseless, sensual sinners on earth who take none of this to heart, surely it would make you wonder at the stupidity of mankind. Would you not say, O what a deceiver is the *devil*, that he can thus lead on souls to their own damnation! O what a cheater is this transitory *world*, that it can make men so forget the world where they must live forever! O what an enemy is this *flesh*, that it thus pulls down men's souls from God! O what a besotting⁴ thing is *sin*, that turns a reasonable soul into worse than a beast! What a bedlam is this wicked world, when thousands are so busily labouring to undo themselves and others, gratifying the devil instead of the God and Saviour who would give them everlasting blessed life!

Just as by faith we have such a sight as this to make us pity you, so we have a such a taste of the goodness of God, the sweetness of his ways, and the happiness of believers, that it must make us wish that you had but once tried the same delights, which would turn the pleasures of sin into detestation. God knows that we desire nothing more for ourselves than the perfection and eternity of this holiness and happiness which we believe and taste. And should we not desire the same for you?

Being thus moved with necessary pity, we ask God what he would have us do for your salvation. He has told us in Scripture that preaching his Gospel to acquaint you plainly with the truth, and earnestly and frequently entreating you to turn from the flesh and world, to God by Jesus Christ, is the means by which his grace is ready to concur for your salvation – when obstinate resistance causes the Holy Spirit to forsake the sinner, and leave him to himself to follow his own counsels, lusts, and wills.

In this hope we undertook the sacred ministry, and surrendered ourselves to this great and most important work. It was in the great sense of our unworthiness, but yet in the sense of your souls' necessity, that we first set out. And yet, we were not such fools as not to know that it must be a life of labour, self-denial, and patience; and that the devil would do his worst to hinder us, and that all sorts of his instruments would be ready to serve him against our labours, and against your souls. Christ our Captain saved by patient conquest; and so must we save ourselves and you; and so must you save yourselves under Christ, if ever you are to be saved.⁵ It was no strange thing to Paul that bonds and afflictions accompanied him everywhere; nor did he count his life dear, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry committed to him by the Lord. (Acts 20.23-24). It was not strange to him to be forbidden to preach to the Gentiles – that they might be saved – by those who were filling up the measure of their sins, and were under God's utmost wrath on earth. (1Thes. 2.15-16) Devils and Pharisees, and most of those they came to, both high and low, were against the apostles' preaching of the Gospel; and yet the apostles would not sacrilegiously and cruelly break their covenant with Christ, and perfidiously desert the souls of men. Even so, for the love of our souls, their Lord called Peter "Satan," because he would have tempted Jesus to save his life and flesh, instead of making it a sacrifice for our sins. (Mat. 16.23)

What do you think would move us to undertake a calling so contrary to our fleshly ease and interest? Do we not know the way of ease and honour, of wealth and pleasure, as well as others

⁴ *Besotting*: something that makes the wits dull or stupid; or muddles the mind with drunkenness or infatuation.

⁵ Here is the beautiful interweaving and necessity of Christ's sacrifice, our ambassadorship, and an individual's responsibility, if salvation is to reach fruition under God's grace and sovereign will.

do? And do we not have flesh as others do? Could we not be content that the cup of reproach, scorn, slander, poverty, and labours, might pass from us, if it were not for the will of God and your salvation? Why should we love to be the lowest, and trodden down by malignant pride, and counted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things? ⁶ To rulers whom we honour, we are represented as schismatics, disobedient, turbulent, and unruly, by every usurper of the church whom we refuse to make a god. Why do we not, at the will of Satan, give up this preaching of the Gospel that is for the everlasting suffering of your souls, under the pretence of making us suffer instead? Is not all this so that you may be converted and saved? If in this we are beside ourselves, it is for you. Could the words of the ignorant or proud have persuaded us that either your wants and dangers are so inconsiderable, or that your other supplies and helps are so sufficient, that our labours for you would have been unnecessary, God knows we would have readily obeyed the silencing sort of pastors, and have taken ourselves to some other land where our service would have been more necessary. Let shame be the hypocrite's reward who does not take saving souls, and pleasing God, as a sufficient reward without seeking ecclesiastic dignities, preferments, or worldly wealth.

I have told you our motives; I have told you our business and the terms of our undertaking. It is God and you, sinners, that next must tell us what our engagement and success will be. Will it still be neglect and unthankful contempt, and turning away your ears and heart, and saying we have something else to mind? Will you still be cheated by this deceiving world, and spend all your days pampering your appetites and providing for your flesh that very shortly must lie rotting in a grave? Were you made for no better work than this? May we not bring you to some sober thoughts about your condition, not one hour to think seriously about where you are going? What! Not one awakened look into the world where you must be forever? Nor one heart-raising thought of everlasting glory? Not one heart-piercing thought of all your Saviour's love, nor one tear for all your sinful lives! O God forbid! Do not let our labours be so despised. Do not let your God, your Saviour, and your souls be treated so lightly. O let there be no profane person among you like Esau, who for one morsel sold his birthright.

Poor sinners! We do not talk to you as if on a stage in customary words, or because talking this way is our trade. We are in as good earnest with you as if we saw you all murdering yourselves, and we are persuading you to save yourselves. Can any man be in jest with you who believes God? One who by faith foresees where you are going, and what you lose, and where the game of sin will end? It is little better to jest with you now in a pulpit or in private, than to stand jesting over your departing souls, when at death you are breathing out your last.

Alas! With shame and grief we confess that we never speak to you of these things as their truth and weight deserve: not with the skill and wisdom, nor the affection and fervor befitting men engaged in saving poor souls. Yet you may perceive that we are in godly sorrow with you (for God is so). What else do we study for, labour for, suffer for, live for? Why else do we trouble ourselves so much, and trouble you with all this ado, and anger those who would have us silent? For my own part, I will make my free confession to you, to my shame, that I never grew cold and dull and pitiless to the souls of others, till I first grew too cold and careless of my own soul (except when weakness or speculative studies cool me, which I must confess they often do). We never cease pitying you till we have grown too like you, and thus have need of pity ourselves.

⁶ 1Cor 4.13.

When, through the mercy of my Lord, the prospect of the world of souls which I am going to have any powerful operation on me, O then I could spend and be spent for others. No words are too earnest, no labour too great, no cost too dear – the frowns and wrath of malignant opposers of the preaching of Christ’s Gospel are nothing to me. But when the world of spirits disappear, or my soul is clouded and does not receive the vital, illuminating influences of heaven, I grow cold, first to myself, and then to others.

Come then, poor sinners, and help us, who are willing at any price to be your helpers. As we first crave God’s help, so we next crave yours. Help us, for we cannot save you against your wills, nor save you without your consent and help; God himself will not save you without you.⁷ How well we know the devil is against us, and will do his worst to hinder us; and so will all his ministers, by whatever names or titles, however dignified or distinguished! But all this is nothing, if you will only take our parts yourselves; I mean if you will take Christ’s part, and your own part, and not be against yourselves. Men and devils cannot either help or hinder us in saving you, as much as you may hinder yourselves. If God and you are for us, who would be against us?

And will you help us? Give up striving against God and conscience; give up fighting against Christ and his Spirit. Take part no more with the world and the flesh which you renounced in your baptism. Set your hearts to the message which we bring you. Allow it your manly, sober thoughts; search the Scriptures, and see whether the things we speak are so or not. We offer you nothing but what we have resolvedly chosen ourselves, after the most serious deliberation that we can make. Many a time we have looked around to know what is the happiness of man. Had we found better for ourselves, we would have offered better to you. If the world would have served our turns, it would have served yours also, and we would not have troubled you with talk of another world; but it will not. I am sure it will not serve your turns to make you happy; nor will you for long make that sorry, self-deceiving exchange with it, as you now do.

But if you will not think of these things, if you will not use the reason of men, alas, what can we do to save your souls? O pity them, Lord, that they may pity themselves. Have mercy on them, that they may have some more mercy on themselves. Help them, that they may help themselves and us. If you still refuse, will your loss not be more than ours? If we lose our labour (which we will not lose to ourselves), if we lose our *hopes* of your salvation – what is this compared to your everlasting loss of salvation *itself*? And what are our sufferings for your sakes, compared to your endless sufferings?

But O, this is it what breaks our hearts: that we leave you under more guilt than we found you; and when we have laid out life and labour to save you, the impenitent souls must have their pains increased for refusing these calls. And it will be part of your hell to think forever how madly you refused our counsel, and what pains, and cost, and patience were used to try to save you, and all in vain. It will be so. It must be so. Christ says, “It shall be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah in

⁷ While this sounds Arminian, the *Westminster Confession* says that we come to Christ “most freely” (*Of Effectual Calling* Chap. 10, sec 1) – we come of our own free will and volition, at God’s irresistible call. Remember that Alleine’s book and this Preface are written to the *church*. The issue is the godliness of *believers*, not the conversion of *unbelievers*. Sanctification by works through faith must follow justification by faith alone, or else our conversion is suspect. Sanctification is a cooperative process in which a newborn in Christ willingly and willfully follows the Spirit of Christ, who sanctifies him and conforms him to the image of Christ, through various trials and by the renewing of his mind. (Rom 8.14, 29; 12.2; Jas 1.2-4; 1Pet 1.1-7) - WHG

the day of judgment,” than for those who reject his Gospel-calls. The nature of the thing, and the nature of justice, certainly tell you that it must be so.

O do not turn our complaints to God against you! Do not turn us from beseeching you to be reconciled to God, to telling him that you will not be reconciled. Do not force us to say that we earnestly invited you to the heavenly feast, and you would not come. Do not force us to hear this witness against you. Lord, we could have borne all our labour and sufferings for them much more easily, if they would only have yielded to your grace. But it was they themselves who broke our hearts, who lost our labour, who made us preach and entreat in vain. It was easier to preach without salary than without success. It was they who were worse to us than all the persecutors in the world. How often we would have gathered them, but they would not be gathered, and are ungathered still. How many holy, faithful ministers I have known these past eleven years who lived in pining poverty and want, and hardly got bread and clothing by charity. And yet, if they could have truly said, ‘Lord, the sermons which I preach both privately and in danger, have won many souls to you,’ it would have made all their burden easy. But I tell you, senseless and impenitent sinner, you who deny God in your heart, and who deny them your conversion, which was the end of all their labours – you have dealt much more cruelly with them than those who denied the Levites their bread.

Poor sinners! I know that I am speaking all this to those who are dead in sin. But it is a death consisting with a natural life, which has a capacity for spiritual life: or else I would no more speak to you than to a stone. And I know that you are blind in sin; but it is a blindness consisting with a reasonable faculty, which is capable of spiritual illumination: or else I would no more persuade you than I do a beast. And I know that you are in the fetters of your own lusts; your wills, your love, your hearts are turned away from God, and strongly bewitched with the dreams and dalliances with the flesh and the world.

But your wills are not forced to this captivity. Surely those wills may be changed by God’s grace, when you clearly see sufficient reason to change them. Otherwise I would as soon preach (if I were capable) to devils and damned souls. Your Case is not yet desperate. O do not make it desperate! There is just the same hope of your salvation as there is of your conversion and perseverance, and no more. Without it there is no hope. And with it you are safe, and have no cause to doubt and fear. Heaven may yet be yours, if you will. Nothing but your own wills, refusing Christ and a holy life, can keep you out. And will you do it? Will hell be your own choice? And will you – I say, will you *not* be saved?

O think better of what you do! God’s terms are reasonable: his word and his ways are good and equal; Christ’s yoke is easy, and his burden is light, and his commandments are not grievous to anyone, except as blindness and a bad and backward heart make them so. You have no true reason to be unwilling; God and conscience shall one day tell you and all the world that you have no reason for it. You may as wisely pretend reason to cut your throats and to torment yourselves, as to plead reason against a true conversion to God. If I were persuading you not to kill yourselves, I would not question that you would be persuaded. And yet, must I be hopeless when I persuade you from everlasting misery, and from preferring the world and flesh before your Saviour and your God, and before a sure and everlasting joy? God forbid!

Reader, I take it as a great mercy of God, before my head lies down in the dust and I go to give my account to my Judge, that I have this opportunity once more earnestly to speak to you for your own salvation. I beg of you, as one who must shortly be called away and speak to you no more till we come to our endless state, that you would just sometimes retire into yourself, and use the reason of a man, and look before you, where you are going, and look behind you, how you have lived, and what you have been doing in the world till now. Look within you, what a state your soul is in, and whether it is ready to enter eternity; and look above you, what a heaven of glory you neglect, and what God you have to be your everlasting friend or enemy, as you choose, and as you live; and that you are always in his sight. Yes, and look below you, and think where they are who died unconverted. And when you have soberly thought of all these things, then do as God and true reason direct you. Is this an unreasonable request? I appeal to God, and to all wise men, and to your own conscience, when it is awakened. If I speak against you, or if all this is not for your good, or if it is not true and sure, then do not regard what I say. If I do not speak that message which God has commanded his ministers to speak, then let it be refused as contemptuously as you will. But if in Christ's name and stead I beseech you to be reconciled to God (2Cor. 5.19-20), refuse it at your peril. And if God's beseeching you will not prevail against your sloth, your lust, your appetite – against the desires of the flesh, against the dust and shadows of the world – then remember it when, with fruitless cries and horror, you beseech him too late.

I know, poor sinner, that flesh is brutish, and lust and appetite have no reason. But I know that you do have reason; it was given to you to overrule lust and appetite. One who will not be a man, cannot be a saint, nor a happy man. I know that you live in a tempting and a wicked world, where things or persons will daily hinder you. But I know that this is no more to a man that by faith sees heaven and hell before him, than a grain of sand is to a kingdom, or a blast of wind to one who is fighting or fleeing for his life. (Luke 12.4-5) O man! If you only knew the difference between what the devil and sin will give you if you are willing to sell your soul and heaven, and what God has promised and sworn to give you if you heartily surrender to him. I know you may possibly fall into company (at least among some sots and drunkards) who will tell you that all this is only troublesome preciseness,⁸ and more ado than needed. But I know what that man deserves who would believe a fool before he believes his Maker – for he can be no better than a miserable fool if he would contradict and revile the word of God, even the word of grace that would save men's souls.

And, alas, it is possible you may hear some of the tribe of Levi (or rather of Cain,) deriding this serious godliness as mere hypocrisy, fanaticism, and self-conceitedness: as if you must be no better than the devil's slaves, lest you be proud in thinking that you are better than they are. That is, you must go to hell with them, lest in heaven you are proud hypocrites for thinking yourselves happier than they are.

It may be they will tell you that this talk of conversion is fitter for pagans and infidels to hear, than for Christians and Protestants; because such men's big looks or coat may make the poison more easily swallowed. I will entreat you before God to answer the following questions, or to get them answered, and then judge whether it is they or we that would deceive you: and whether as

⁸ *Preciseness*: pedantic behavior; overly concerned with formal rules and trivial points of learning.

men who talk against learning have none themselves, so men who prate⁹ against conversion and the Spirit of God, have no such thing themselves.

Quest. 1. I pray ask them whether it is a puritan or a fanatic opinion that men must die? And what all the pomp, and wealth, and pleasure of the world will mean to a departing soul? Ask them, whether they will live on earth forever, and whether their merry hours and lordly looks will have no end? Ask whether it is only the conceit of hypocrites and schismatics that their carcass must rot in a dark grave?

Quest. 2. Ask them whether a man has an immortal soul, and a longer life to live when this life is ended? (Luke 12.4-5)

Quest. 3. Ask them whether reason requires every man to think more seriously of the place or state where he must be forever, than of that state where he must be for a little while, and from where he is posting¹⁰ day and night? Ask whether it is wiser to lay up our treasure where we must stay, than where we must not stay and must daily expect to be called away, never more to be seen on earth? (Mat. 6.19-20; 2Cor. 4.16-18; 5.1-3, 6-8)

Quest. 4. Ask them whether God should be loved with all our heart, soul, and might? (Mat. 22.21) And whether it is not the mark of an ungodly miscreant¹¹ to be a lover of pleasure more than God? (2Tim. 3.4) And to be a lover of this world above God? (1John 2.15-16) And whether we must seek first God's kingdom, and his righteousness, (Mat. 6.33) and labour most for the food that never perishes. (John 6.27) And strive to enter in at the narrow gate. (Luke 13.24) And give all diligence to make our calling and election sure? (2 Peter 1.10)

Quest. 5. Ask them whether, without holiness, anyone shall see God? (Heb. 12.14; Mat. 5.8; Titus 2.14) And whether the carnal mind is at enmity with God, and to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life and peace? And whether if you live after the flesh you will die and be condemned? And whether those who walk after the Spirit shall live and be saved? And whether any man who does not have Christ's Spirit belongs to him? (Rom. 8.5-10).

Quest. 6. Ask them whether any man can have treasure in heaven, whose heart is not there? (Mat. 6.21) And whether this is the difference between the wicked and the godly: that the wicked make their bellies their Gods, and mind earthly things, and are enemies to the cross of Christ (though perhaps not his name)? And whether the godly have their conversation in heaven; and whether, being risen with Christ, they seek and set their affections on things above, and not on things that are on earth – things to which they are as dead, and their life is hidden (or out of sight) with Christ in God till Christ appears; and then *they* shall appear (openly to all the world) with him in glory? (Phil. 3.18-20; Col. 3.1-5)

Quest. 7. Ask them whether it is credible or suitable to God's word or working, that he should give them the fruits of the earth without their own labour, or feed and clothe them without their own effort, or still yet bring them to heaven without any care, desire, or labour of their own? Is it

⁹ *Prate*: to speak rapidly and continually about unimportant matters.

¹⁰ A post is a temporary place of assignment; a military man stands his post day and night, watching for what may come his way.

¹¹ *Miscreant*: A person without moral scruples.

credible or suitable to ask them to care for the one, and not call for their greatest diligence for the other? (Mat. 6.23, 25, 33; John 6.27)¹² Indeed, ask them whether these are not the two first articles of all faith and religion: 1. That God is, *and* 2. That he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him? (Heb. 11.6)

Quest. 8. Ask them, indeed, ask your own eyes, ears, and daily experience in the world, whether all or most who call themselves Christians, in good sorrow live thus to God in the Spirit, and mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, love him above all, and lay up treasure and heart in heaven – or whether, instead, most are lovers of the world; and lovers of pleasures more than God, and live after the flesh, and mind most the things of the flesh?

I do not mention now the drunkards, the flesh-pleasing gentlemen that live in pride, fulness, idleness and sport, and play away their precious time. Nor do I mention the filthy fornicator, nor the merciless oppressors, nor the malignant haters of a godly life, nor the perjured and perfidious betrayers of men's souls and of the Gospel, nor the betrayers of their country's good. Nor do I mention other men of seared conscience, of whose misery none inquires, but who are blind and miserable. It is not only those that I speak of, but the common, worldly, fleshly, and ungodly ones...

Quest. 9. Ask them whether the name of "Christian" will save any of these ungodly persons? And whether God will like men better for lying, and calling themselves Christians, when indeed they are not? And whether they dare preach to the people that a Christian drunkard, or a Christian fornicator or oppressor, or a Christian worldling needs no conversion?

Quest. 10. Ask them whether they say that hypocrisy is a great aggravation of all other sins? And whether God has made hypocrites and unbelievers to be the standards in hell? (Mat 24.51) And whether seeking to abuse God by a mock religion, make these false Christians better than poor heathens and infidels, or much worse? And whether one is not a hypocrite who professes to be a Christian and a servant of God, when he is not, nor will be? And whether he that knows his master's will and does not do it, will have the sorest stripes or punishment? (Luke 12.47)

Quest. 11. Ask them whether in their baptism (which is their christening as a covenant) they renounced the flesh, the world and the devil, and vowed and surrendered themselves to God their Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier? And whether all or most men perform this vow? And whether a perjured covenant-breaker against God is more fit for salvation than one that was never baptized?

Quest. 12. Ask them whether the holy nature of God is not so contrary to sin, that it would be blasphemy to say he will bring to heaven, and into the bosom of his eternal delights, any unholy and unrenewed soul? (1Pet. 1.15-16)

¹² "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Mat 6:23) "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? (Mat 6:25) "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mat 6:33) "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." (Joh 6:27)

Quest. 13. Ask them why did Christ come into the world? Whether it was to save his people from their sins? (Mat. 1.21) and to destroy the works of the devil? (1 John 3.8) and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? (Titus 2.14) and to bring straying souls home to God? (Luke 15.3-7) and to be the way to the Father? (John 14.6) And whether Christ will save any soul that is not converted by him, and saved from his sins? Or whether it is the dead image of a crucified Jesus that comprises their entire Saviour, while they will have no more of him?

Quest. 14. Ask them why they believe, and were baptized into the Holy Ghost? And whether a man can enter into the kingdom of heaven that is not born of the Spirit as well as of water? (John 3.3, 5, 6) and that is not converted, and does not begin the world anew in a teachable, tractable newness of life, like a little child? (Mat. 18.3) And whether it is not a certain truth that if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his? (Rom. 8.9)

Quest. 15. Ask them why Christ gave the world so many warnings of the damnableness of the Pharisees' hypocrisy, if hypocritical Christians may be saved? And what were these Pharisees? They were the masters of the Jewish church: the rabbis that must have high places, high titles and ceremonies, formal garments, and must be revered by all – that gave God lip-service without the heart, and made void his commands, and worshipped him in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;¹³ that strictly tithe the mint and cummin, while lovely mercy and justice were passed by?¹⁴ Who worshipped God with an abundance of ceremonies, and built the tombs, and garnished the sepulchres of the saints, while they killed and persecuted those that imitated them; and hated the living saints, and honoured the dead. They were the bitterest enemies and murderers of Christ on the pretence that he was a blasphemer, and a seditious enemy to Caesar and to common peace, and one that spoke against the temple. They were the greatest enemies of the apostles, and silencers of those that preached Christ's Gospel, and persecuted those who called on his name. And did these have no need of conversion because they could say, God is our Father (when the devil was their father, John 8.39, 44) and they were Abraham's seed? And are not hypocritical Christians, drunken Christians, fornicating Christians, carnal, worldly, infidel Christians (the contradiction is your own) persecuting Christians, false-named, hypocritical Christians; as bad, indeed, worse as they abuse a more excellent profession" (Mat. 15,7-8; 23.23; 22.18; 6.2, etc.; Luke 12.1)

Quest. 16. Does the holy state of heaven not require holiness in all that shall possess it? Can an unholy soul there see, love, praise, and delight in God forever, and in the holy society and employment of the saints? (Rev. 21.27) Is he not more like a Mahometan than a Christian if he looks for a sensual and unholy heaven?

Quest. 17. What is the difference between the church and the world? Is the church not a holy society of regenerate souls? Yes, the church visible is only those that in baptism vow holiness, and profess it. Look those hypocrites in the face, and see whether they blush when they repeat in the creed, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost. I believe in the holy catholic church, and the communion of saints,' who would have the 'forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting.' Ask them if they mean holy adulterers, holy worldlings, holy perjured persons? Ask them if they mean a communion of saints in a tavern, or in a playhouse, or in a gaming house, or in a whorehouse, or in a jesting,

¹³ Mat 15.9

¹⁴ Mat 23.23

sing-song, stage-play communion? If the church is holy, then be holy if you would be of the church. If it is a communion of saints, then do not make it a communion of swine, and do not make saints and their communion seem odious either for their infirmities, or for their crossness to your carnal interests or conceits.

Quest. 18. Ask them whether there is a heaven and a hell or not? If not, why do they pretend to be Christians? If there is, will God send one man to heaven, and another to hell, to so vast, so amazing a difference of states, if there is no great difference between them here? If holiness no more separates Christians from others than hearing a sermon, or repeating a prayer separates a Christian from an infidel, then where would the justice of God be in saving some, and damning others? And what would make Christianity better than the religion of Antonine, Plato, Socrates, Seneca, Cicero, Plutarch, if not much worse? Go into the streets of London, and when you have talked with living, prudent men, then go to the painter's shop and see a pretty picture; and to the looking-glass, and see the appearance of each passenger in a glass; and to the periwig-shops and set a wooden-head with a periwig upon the counter, and you have seen something like the difference between a holy soul, and a dead and dressed formal hypocrite. (Mat. 23.25)

Quest. 19. Ask them whether kings and all other men have a great difference between them? Or the loyal and perfidious;¹⁵ or the obedient and disobedient? And whether they differentiate between a friend and a foe, or between one that loves them, and one that robs, beats, or would kill them? And will not the most holy God differentiate even more between the righteous and the wicked? (Mal. 3.17-18)

Quest. 20. But if they are dead in every point except carnal interests, ask them why they are preachers or priests? And if conversion and holiness are unnecessary, then of what life are they? Why must the country be troubled by them, and pay them tithes, and give them reverence?

When these twenty questions are well-answered, can you conclude that you may be saved without conversion? But if, poor soul, you are fully convinced, and ask "What should I do to be converted?" then may the Lord make you willing, and save you from hypocrisy, and I will quickly tell you in a few words.

1. Do not give up sober thinking about these things till your heart is changed. (Psa. 119.59)
2. Come to Christ, and take him for your Saviour, your Teacher, your King, and he will pardon all that is past, and save you. (John 1.12; 3.16; 5.40; 1John 5.11-12)
3. Believe God's love, and the pardon of sin, and the everlasting joys of heaven, so you may feel that all the pleasure of the world and flesh are dung in comparison to the heavenly delight of faith, and hope, and holy love, and peace of conscience, and sincere obedience.
4. Do not wilfully sin any more, but forbear what you may forbear. (Isa 55.7)
5. Away from temptations, occasion of sin and evil company, and be a companion of the humble, holy, heavenly and sincere. (Psa. 119.115, 63)

¹⁵ *Perfidious*: Tending to betray; especially having a treacherous character.

6. Wait on God's Spirit in the diligent, constant use of his own means. Read, hear, meditate, and pray; pray hard for that grace that must convert you. Wait thus, and you will not wait in vain. (Psa. 25.3; 37.34; 69.6)

Pity, O Lord, and persuade the souls; do not let Christ's blood, his doctrine, his example, or his Spirit be lost to them, and so they be lost forever. Let heaven be as no heaven to them, while they dream and dote on the shadows in this world. And O save this land from the greater destruction than all our late plagues, and flames, and divisions, which our sins and your threatening makes us fear. O Lord, in you we have trusted; let us never be confounded.

R. BAXTER.