

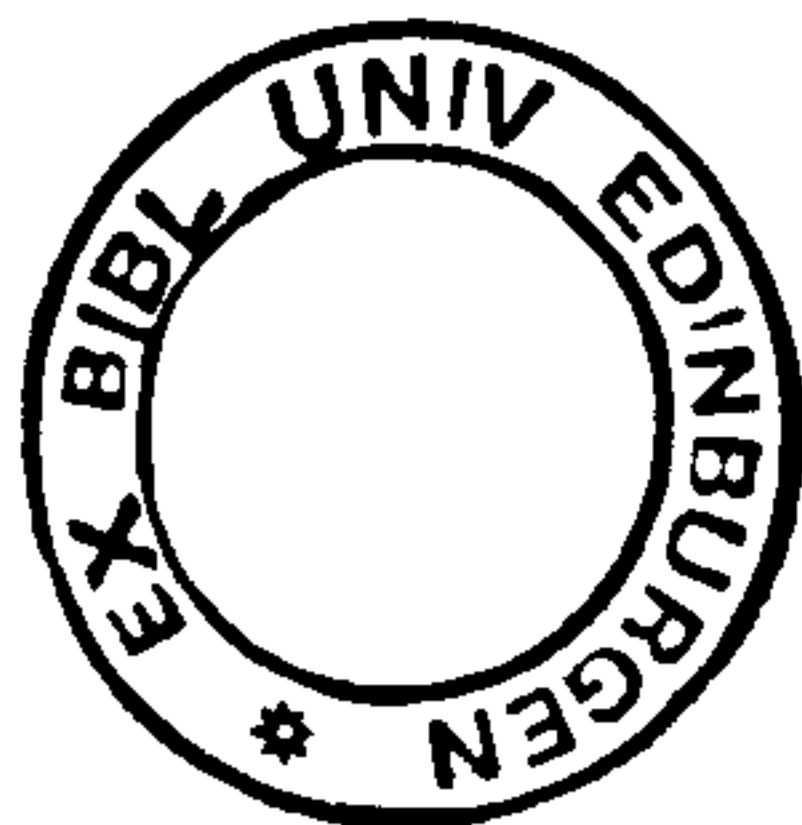
THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO DEATH
IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PURITANISM

by

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

The intent of this study is to examine the subject of death in seventeenth century Puritanism from a theological point of view. Other studies on this subject, made in the same or earlier periods, while not devoid of theological examination, have been primarily interested in its literary treatment. This study was undertaken because it was believed that the subject of death is basically theological and that a more specifically theological approach would be an aid to further literary and theological researches into the subject.

The larger field with which this thesis is concerned is Puritanism. Of perennial interest to scholars, Puritanism has been made the subject of an increasing amount of study in recent years; for it has been discovered that the Puritan spirit still continues. The subject of death is a vantage point from which to examine Puritan thought because death pervaded every sphere of that thought. This thesis demonstrates how closely the Puritan's view of life was tied to his view of death. It shows the relation between his attitude to death and his attitude to heaven. It reveals something of the Puritan's intimate personality by showing his primary concern for his own death, his reaction to the death of loved ones, and his lifelong struggle for a victorious death. Because death is a theological subject, an examination of it exposes the effect of covenant theology on Puritanism and reveals much of Puritan theological thought in general.

The English of this period is frequently made to conform

to modern usage. It is impossible, however, to change a style of punctuation that was rhetorical to one that is grammatical without subtly altering meaning. I have therefore retained the seventeenth century style of punctuation, as well as the use of italics, and the original spelling, in order that the Puritan's own hand may be seen in all quotations. (Apart from quotations, however, American usage has been followed.) The deviations from twentieth century usage have not been noted with a sic--the frequent use of which would have been worse than correction and modernization--except in a few cases of spelling where it seemed some real difficulty might have occurred without its use. To avoid confusion, all italics are those of the original writers. The Biblical references in the text are to that work of the seventeenth century, the Authorized Version.

I hope that those to whom I am indebted will accept this study itself as a certificate of my appreciation to them. To the Very Reverend Principal John Baillie and to the Reverend Principal C.S. Duthie I am indebted for inspiration and encouragement, for advice and patience. This thesis inadequately reflects all the wise counsel they have given.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. John Cameron who read over the manuscript; to my typists, Mrs. John Smallegan and Mrs. Francis Dykstra who typed with more than skill; to my faithful proofreaders, my parents and my wife; and to Him who inspires all theological study.

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PREPARATION FOR DEATH

The Puritan mind was dominated by three interwoven ideas--life, death, and heaven. These three thoughts rose up as spectres before him to chant in trio (as Paget imagined the voice of God): ". . . be wise, be wise, be wise; remember, remember, remember your latter end."¹

The Puritan seemed unable to think of life or heaven without being reminded of death. When he thought of life he was asked to 'live as if always dying',² and when he attempted to lift up his eyes beyond the horizons of this life, death 'stood in the way and darkened heaven' to him.³ "O what an enemy is death in this respect," exclaimed Baxter, "that standing between it darkeneth and affrighteth us from our joys!"⁴ Life and death and that which lay beyond death were concepts which formed a single thought. Life was a period of continuous preparation for heaven and death, and preparation for the one was often thought of as preparation for the other: ". . . that which prepares us for the future Happiness, that also prepares us for Death"⁵ Eternal death,

1 John Paget, Meditations of Death, Wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end (Dort, 1639), p. 3.

2 William Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn Coming in In its Season (London, 1654), p. 6.

3 Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death, in The Practical Works of The Rev. Richard Baxter, XVII (London, 1830), 535.

4 Idem, A True Believer's Choice and Pleasure, Works, XVIII, 113.

5 Edward Pearse, The Great Concern (19th ed.; London,

heaven's opposite, reinforced this conception of common preparation for the time of death and heaven because of its relation to physical death. These two deaths were often labeled 'first' and 'second'; physical death being an entrance to death and the other the accomplishment of it.¹ When the Puritan thought of physical death he thought of eternal death and prepared for the first in a way that prepared against the second. Since, therefore, "The kinds of death are two, as the kinds of life are, bodily and spirituall",² it was but natural to think of all when thinking of one and to prepare for all in preparing for one.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the frequency and the constancy with which the Puritan applied himself to the subject of death. The Puritan stands unsurpassed for sedulous devotion to this subject. The first thought of the morning and the last remembrance at night was to be death. Every day was to be considered as if it were the last day of one's life.

In the Morning when thou risest, think with thy self, this may be the last day; In the Evening, when thou liest down, think with thy self, this may be the last night I may ever have in this World.³

The father of Alexander is considered a figure to be emulated

1697), p. 102.

1 W. Perkins, A Salve for a Sioke Man (Cambridge, 1595), p. 7.

2 Ibid.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 65. Cf. Thomas Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote Against Sinful Contagion in Dying Times. A Cordial for Believers in Dying Times, with A Corrosive for Wicked Men in Dying Times (London, 1665), p. 69.

because ". . . he kept a boy on purpose, to come to him every morning and to bid him Remember he was a man. Let us be alwayes mindfull that we are but dust"1 Baxter sees everlasting life, judgment, and death all mingled together as reasons for preparation when he says:

Remember every morning, when you awake, that you must spend that day in preparation for your account, and that God doth give it to you for that end. When you go to bed, examine your hearts what you have done that day in preparation for your last day, and take that time as lost which doth nothing to this end.2

Perkins is not satisfied with morning and evening meditation on death. He indeed commends the practice, but feels it is necessary to ". . . esteeme of every day and houre as if it were the day and houre of death."3

It is true, of course, that others besides Puritans recommended constant meditation on death, but scarcely with the tenacious insistence of the Puritans. Walton says of Donne that he had studied death long, and to such perfection that he was ready to die whenever God determined.4 Bishop Ken (who had, however, something of Puritanism in him) commended constant thought of death in a poem called "Jesus Teaches to Die."

1 Edmund Calamy, The Saints Transfiguration (London, 1655), p. 13.

2 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 503.

3 Perkins, op. cit., p. 39.

4 Isaac Walton, The Lives of Dr. John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert, and Dr. Robt. Sanderson (London, 1847), p. 57.

Since Jesus you the art of Dying taught,
Said Conscience, keep Death always in your
Thought¹

To make a general statement about all the religious groups of the period, however, is dangerous. One writer² exaggerates a passage from Bellarmine's work in order to place it on a level with Puritan preoccupation with death. The passage cited is this: "Opportet igitur, si Christiani sumus, & si quid sanimus, de proximo morte assidue cogitare."³ However, while the words themselves are relevant, the context must be noted. It is significant that this citation is not found in the first book, which lays down rules for those in health and youth, but in the second book, which is specifically for those who are near death. The first chapter of this second book, from which the above quotation is taken, is titled: "De primo praesente arte bene moriendi, vicina iam morte, quod est de meditatione mortis."⁴ For the Puritans, however, constant meditation on death was a rule all through life. This was, in fact, the very point of the opposition which the recusant Richard Hopkins directed against the Puritans: that they were bringing about the ruin of the Church by abolishing the

¹ Thomas Ken, "Jesus Teaches to Die", The Works of the Right Reverend, Learned and Pious Thomas Ken (London, 1721), p. 87.

² Robert C. Collmer, "The Concept of Death in the Poetry of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1953) pp. 112f.

³ Roberti Bellarmini, De Arte Bene Moriendi, in Operum Roberti Bellarmini, Tomus Septimus (1617), col. 2066.

⁴ Ibid., col. 2065.

special occasions for such things as meditation on death
 ". . . because (saie theise) theise meditations shoulde be
 vsed continewallie euerie daie in the yeare"¹

Hopkins is grieved that they meditate on death individually
 at all times rather than corporately at the specific times
 arranged by the Church.

As an aid to induce this meditation, the Puritans
 occasionally recommended the ancient device of the memento
 mori. This practice, however, was probably not as popular
 among the seventeenth century Puritans as it had been in
 preceding generations--although Baxter's wife apparently had
 a death's head in her prayer closet.² Sir Thomas Browne³
 rejected the practice of meditating on a skull or skeleton
 because it did not provide the true theory of death; he
 preferred the abstractions 'Death', 'Judgment', 'Heaven', and
 'Hell'. Although the underlying motive for his rejection was
 quite possibly merely aesthetic, this preference was shared
 by many Puritans. On those occasions when they did refer to
 the memento mori, they commended not so much the symbols as
 the meditation they inspired. They thought of such devices
 as being admirable for 'The Ancients', but they felt they
 should advance beyond the meditations of pagan philosophers.

¹ Hopkins in the Dedication to his translation of Luis de Granada's work entitled Of Prayer, and Meditation. Cited by A. C. Southern, Elizabethan Recusant Prose 1559-1582 (London, [1950]), p. 199.

² Collmer, op. cit., p. 13.

³ Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, ed. W. A. Greenhill (London, 1881), p. 71.

This they did by making the subjects of their meditation more abstract, and by extending the memento mori to include more objects and so provide greater opportunity for meditation on death.

Heathen philosophers that never knew Christ, had many excellent meditations of death though not comfortable in regard of life euerlasting. Now we that haue known and beleueed in Christ, must go beyond them in this point, considering with our selues such things as they neuer thought of, namely, the cause of death, our sinne: the remedy therof the cursed death of Christ¹

They admired 'The Ancients' for remembering death in times and places of pleasure: "The Ancients had their sepulchers in their places of pleasure, their gardens: and (of old) some were wont to roll a dead-mans skull upon their table, after their greatest feasts."² They themselves, moreover, elaborated this idea so as not to be outdone by pagan antiquity.

. . . thy sleep should make thee think of the sleep of death; the Autumn should put thee in minde of the day of thy fading, falling leaf: the setting of the Sunne, should make thee forecast the setting of the sun of thy life; the harvest should make thee think of deaths reaping sickle; the dead creatures upon which thou daily feedest, should convince thee that the feeder cannot live alwayes³

Paget sees 'reminders' of death everywhere he turns:

. . . at the very sight of the Ministers, men haue cause to thinke of death, whose Heralds they behold

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 35.

2 Jenkyn, op. cit., p. 21.

3 Ibid. Vaughan [Collmer, op. cit., p. 255.] and Taylor [Robert J. Nossen, "A Critical Study of the Holy Dying of Jeremy Taylor" (Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1951), pp. 139f.] likewise conceived of nature as teaching lessons of death.

• • • • •
 The maydservant that takes the besome into her hand
 to sweepe the house, hath a memoriall of her
 mortality put into her hand of God; while the holy
 Ghost shewes that men shall be swept away with the
 besome of destruction. Esa. 14.23. As dust is
 swept out of the house, so death sweepes sinfull ma
 dayly into the grave.

• • • • •
 And in summe there is no corner of the house into
 which we can turne, no vessell of dishonour which
 we use, but the like remembrances are therein
 presented unto us.¹

The Puritan considered it excellent preparation for death
 to imagine that he was dying or to practice the act of dying
 by dying little preparatory deaths. Paget is anxious that
 the "hindrances" and "encumbrances" in death be fully prepared
 for by often considering them ". . . as if we were now upon
 our deathbed & lay presently a dying and gasping for breath
"2 To one in the twentieth century³ it might seem an
 unreasonable exaggeration of the significance of death to have
 to die all day every day, but the Puritan was convinced that
 death would seem greater to those who had to go through it
 all at once. Jenkyn commended Gouge as being one that

. . . chewed upon this morsel, death, every day: he
 did not go about to swallow it down all at once (as
 some foolish sinners do) when he came to die, for
 then he would have found this great morsel too big

1 Paget, op. cit., pp. 23, 32, et passim.

2 Ibid., p. 420.

3 One need not come to the twentieth century, however,
 to discover criticism of this approach to death. In the
 Puritans' own time, Bacon wrote of the Stoics: "Certainly the
 Stoics bestowed too much cost upon death, and by their great
 preparations made it appear more fearful." Francis Bacon,
 "Of Death", in Bacon's Essays, intro., annotations, notes
 and indexes, F. Stoer and C. H. Gibson (London, 1886), p. 10.

for him; but by holy Meditation he took it down daily piece by piece¹

If the lay Puritan followed the exhortation of his minister, he almost literally ate and slept death.

So often therefore as we eat the flesh of the dead creature, & make our bellies to be their grave; so often are we called to remember our owne death, & our owne grave in the belly of the earth.

[God] calleth us by consideration of our sleepe to consider our death; & by the sight of our bed to remember our grave²

The Puritan believed that the saints in the Old Testament promoted their spiritual strength by being ". . . much and frequent in the Thoughts and Meditations of Death" ³ He would not have believed that "The distinction important to them is that between this world with God and this world without Him" ⁴ He thought the Old Testament heroes were, like himself, preoccupied with the preparation for death. On the basis of what he considered to be the Old Testament experience, he could exhort his fellow Puritans to ". . . walk much among the Tombs, and converse much and frequently with the thoughts of a dying hour." ⁵ Moses' injunction to the people of Israel [Deuteronomy 32:29] is interpreted by Pearse in the same manner: "Be much and frequent in the Contemplation of Death

1 Jenkyn, op. cit., p. 27.

2 Paget, op. cit., pp. 51, 57.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 65.

4 Lewis A. Muirhead, The Terms Life and Death in the Old and New Testaments (London, 1908), p. 5.

5 Pearse, loc. cit.

and the Grave. This the Holy Ghost calls a Considering our latter End¹

The expressions used in advising meditation on death, imagining oneself dying, and contemplating death are reminiscent of the phrases of certain metaphysical poets. From his study of these poets, Collmer has discovered that in using this language, they frequently meant to describe or create a mystical experience. Imagining oneself in the grave or imagining death brought about a certain exaltation which Collmer describes as a temporary ecstasis.² Collmer alleges that in contemplation of death, the poets believed the soul was released from the body as it would be released at death. Thus, of Vaughan's "Ascension-Hymn", he says, "There is enough undertone of mystical thought . . . to make us conclude that he really believes that the soul is capable of freeing itself, from the body, at least partially, in contemplation and in anticipation."³ The metaphysical poets used the language of death as a spiritualized symbol to describe a state of absorption into the Being of God.⁴

Because some scholars have believed the Puritans were mystics, there is an obvious temptation to link the results of Collmer's findings concerning the metaphysical poets and their use of meditation on death with the Puritan use. Indeed, much

1 Ibid., p. 64.

2 Collmer, op. cit., p. 117.

3 Ibid., p. 121.

4 Ibid., p. 252.

of what is said in this chapter concerning the Puritan's attitude to life, his rejection of this miserable world and concentration on the 'real' world of heaven, his constant meditation on death, and his emphasis on the union of the soul with Christ, seems to confirm that the Puritan was a mystic. There are, however, specific reasons why these particular instances would not be wisely interpreted if they were used to prove that the Puritans were mystics. These instances must be seen as examples not of mysticism, but simply of the overwhelming Puritan anxiety to be ready to face death.

Calamy said of Baxter that he ". . . talked in the pulpit with great freedom about another world, like one that had been there",¹ and Baxter himself was concerned that his "conversation" should be in heaven, yet of mysticism's goal he said:

O had we but one moment's sense of the delights of the embraced soul that is newly received by Christ . . . but it must not be: earth must not be so happy as to have a moment's sense of the unconceivable pleasures of the received soul; that is the reward and crown, and therefore not fit for us here in our conflict.²

Thompson rightly perceives that Baxter ". . . meant to recommend no such extreme contemplation as the true mystic craves."³

The Puritan rejected this world, not to give his soul free

¹ Richard Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, Being the Reliquiae Baxterianae, ed. J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London, 1931), intro., p. xiii.

² Idem, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 19.

³ Elbert N. S. Thompson, "Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century English Literature", in Studies in Philology, XVIII (1921), 218.

flight to God in mystical experience, but in order that he might not cling to it too tightly and longingly when death came to take him from it. It was as preparation for death that he encouraged 'weanedness' from the world. In contrast to the Puritan's violent expressions of rejection of this world, the mystic ignores it altogether. To be constantly concerned with this world either positively or negatively is not the attitude of the mystic. In the words of Evelyn Underhill,¹ the mystic "brushes aside" the whole visible universe. According to Pfeleiderer's definition, the mystical experience is one ". . . in which self and the world are alike forgotten" ² The Puritan rejection of the world cannot be mistaken for the silent inattention of the mystics.

The Puritan's fear of death distinguishes him from the mystic to whom death makes no difference. Tennyson, for instance, describes a mystical trance ". . . where death was an almost laughable impossibility" ³ It is Bunyan's treatment of death that disturbs Thompson in his analysis of Pilgrim's Progress as a record of progress along the mystical way.⁴ He feels that Bunyan is not a mystic at this point. He

1 Evelyn Underhill, The Essentials of Mysticism (London, 1920), p. 96.

2 William Ralph Inge, Christian Mysticism (7th ed.; London, 1933), p. 339.

3 Inge, op. cit., pp. 14f.

4 "It is almost impossible elsewhere in the literature of the seventeenth century to find so complete a record of the mystic way." Thompson, op. cit., p. 213.

says:

The terrible plight of Ignorance as the dream ends, and the morbid fears of Christian himself at the fording, are in no wise consonant with the hope and the brotherly charity of the mystic faith.

In true mysticism neither death nor birth is regarded as effecting any profound change in man's spiritual life. Indeed, the mystic does not isolate this world from the next. Heaven is conceived not as a place remote and different from this world, but as a spiritual state or condition.¹

Meditation on death for the Puritan was neither the expression nor the creation of a mystical experience. He believed that meditating on death would prepare him for death. This thought is expressed in the very title of Paget's work: Meditations of Death Wherein a Christian is Taught How to Remember and Prepare for His Latter End.² More particularly, the Puritan believed that meditation on death would eradicate the fear of death. Daily meditation on death was believed to be a wise use of the proverb: "Familiarity breedeth contempt, and casteth out fear"³

Death is most terrible, especially to him that doth not die in his thoughts daily. Whenas a man in his meditations doth daily present death to himself, and looks upon it, then death is like the prevented basilisk, death hath lost the sting. It can do us no hurt; it proves like the brazen serpent looked upon.⁴

1 Ibid., p. 227.

2 Paget, op. cit.

3 Zachary Crofton, A Defence Against Dread of Death (1665), unpag. to the reader.

4 Richard Sibbes, The Vanitie of the Creatvre, in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D.D., VII (Edinburgh, 1864), 38f. Cf. Doolittle, op. cit., p. 25; Perkins, op. cit., pp. 63ff.

As a corollary, meditation on death acted as a restraint to evil and a spur to service.¹ When others died, one was to 'improve' their deaths by meditating on one's own death and being prompted to more and more service to God, ". . . being in daily expectation, to be taken away from all opportunities of service under the Sunne."² The promotion of a holy life through meditation on death was an idea prevalent in the Middle Ages and is found in the seventeenth century outside of the Puritan circle, notably in the writings of Jeremy Taylor. It is one of the most insistent emphases in his Holy Dying.³

Very early in life the Puritan began to meditate on, and prepare for, his 'latter end'. For many reasons he hastened to begin: death was swiftly approaching, constantly devouring a man's life; his eternal state was entirely decided in this life, and since repentance, as interpreted by covenant theology, was not a last minute affair, he could not begin too soon to make certain of it; the frightening possibility of sudden death reminded him that death was always imminent; and the dying hour itself needed careful study and preparation beforehand.

The principal reason for early preparation was that one's whole preparation for eternity had to be completed in this

1 Ibid., pp. 38f.

2 Simeon Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented (London, 1655), p. 24.

3 Robert Nossen, op. cit., pp. 128f.

life--and eternity might begin at any moment. Death was the dividing line between possible change and unalterable condition, between the fluidity of time and the fixity of eternity.

Death is so much its own metaphor denoting finality that it is difficult to emphasize the Puritan insistence on this point. Most men have thought of death as the end of man's earthly existence, but they have not always looked at it as equally definite as regards the next life. The Puritan believed that death held a man firmly fixed in whatever spiritual state was his when death came upon him. Death was the popular Puritan symbol of decisiveness which the preachers called to the minds of their listeners to persuade them to repentance. The rigor mortis that seized the body was symbolic of the soul's fixed state at death.

Most of the Puritans were convinced that the 'Papists' taught that men might depart this life in one state and be changed after death. ". . . they pacified them, that if they were the worst of men, yet there might be hope for them after death."¹ The Puritans were anxious to make their opposing position as clear as possible. The language they used to impress their hearers with the absolute permanence of the spiritual estate of the soul after death was, therefore, carefully chosen. They said it was a condition without any possibility of change. Death was a 'change' that left a man ". . . without any possibility of change or alteration for

¹ John Owen, The Christian's Work of Dying Daily, in The Works of John Owen, ed. William Gould, IX (London, 1851), 338.

ever . . . for its such a Change, as leaves the state of the Soul for ever unchangeable."¹ It was an "unalterable estate",² ". . . an unchangeable condition . . . without alteration or redemption."³ "You hang over the mouth of Hell by the single thred of a frail life; which if the Plague or Death by any disease snap asunder, you are lost irrecoverably."⁴ ". . . there may be changes and conversions from evill to good in this life, but after death there is no change at all. Therefore a preparation to death"⁵ Pearse explains a difficult passage [I Peter 3:19f.]:

. . . we read of Christ's preaching by the Spirit to the Spirits in Prison; that is, to Souls in Hell: But mark, when was it that he preached to them; Not when in Prison, but in the days of Noah, when they lived in the World. There is never an offer of Grace and Love made to Souls in the Grave⁶

Technically, it was the judgment that followed immediately after death that decided the soul's eternal state: death 'dragged sinners before the Bar of God'.⁷ God, in a first judgment, allotted a man his eternal condition immediately.

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 76.

2 Thomas Doolittle, A Call to Delaying Sinners (19th ed.; London, 1707), p. 20.

3 Idem, סדרת שאלות ותשובות, A Serious Enquiry for a Suitable Return, for Continued Life, in and after a Time of Great Mortality, by a Wasting Plague: (Anno 1665) (London, 1666), pp. 1f.

4 Idem, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 161.

5 Perkins, op. cit., p. 30.

6 Pearse, op. cit., p. 55.

7 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 143.

after death. "When a Man comes to die, that which is immediately before him, is the Judgment of God"1

Baxter sets forth the Puritan schema:

Before each man's particular judgment, he sendeth death to call away his soul . . . Then must the naked soul alone appear before its Judge, and be accountable for all that was done in the body, and be sent before till the final judgment, to remain in happiness or misery, till the body be raised again, and joined to it.

.
 . . . as soon as ever the soul is out of the body, it comes to its account before the God of spirits.2

The Puritan's sense of justice demanded that there be a judgment immediately after death before the body went 'from house to grave', and the soul 'to eternity of joy or torment'.3

It was not a temporary judgment, however, which could be reversed in the higher court of a final judgment; the final judgment simply restated the sentence of the first judgment, but this time the body came under the eternal sentence also.

Yet even the first judgment was only a formality: the soul's eternal state was settled at death. The judgment that followed immediately after death merely confirmed the spiritual state of the individual at his death. "The truth is, Death whenever, or where-ever it comes, is a determining thing, it concludes the Soul for ever under an unalterable [sic] state

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 16.

2 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 430.

3 Thomas Doolittle, The Mourner's Directory, Guiding him to the Middle Way betwixt the Two Extreams Defect Excess of Sorrow for his Dead (London, 1693), p. 68.

of Life or Death, of Happiness or Misery^{#1} The decree in the judgment could be spoken of as being in effect at death. "Now marke, as death leaues a man so shall the last iudgment find him; and therefore if death take him away unprepared, eternall damnation follows without recouery."²

The judgment, the changeless state after death, the awe inspiring thought that it was for eternity, all made preparation for death necessary; the principal reason for early preparation was the frightening possibility of being thrown into eternity at any moment by sudden death. The Puritans used the fear of death as a means to convert men, but the possible suddenness of death was a better weapon against man's indifference than the mere certainty of death. Becon combines these two in a simple but effective sentence. "For albeit nothing is more certain than death, yet is nothing more uncertain than the hour of death."³

The Puritan realized that sudden death was a most forceful argument against spiritual lethargy just because men seemed to have a natural abhorrence of it. He was not slow, therefore, to use it to his advantage. "Have you not seen many have been surprized by death; that those that thought they would repent hereafter, and talked how they would mend hereafter,

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 32.

2 Perkins, op. cit., p. 103; cf. p. 30.

3 Thomas Becon, The Sick Man's Salve, in Works of Thomas Becon, ed. John Ayre, Vol. III Prayers and Other Pieces of Thomas Becon (Cambridge, 1844), p. 92.

are gone down into the grave before that time was come?"¹
 The Puritan emphasized how brief the time left to a man might be. ". . . we know not whether we shall have one dayes respite" ²; ". . . we are not certain of our life one hour." ³
 Will you rest in your unregenerate condition, he asked,
 ". . . when thou art every hour uncertain whether thou shalt see another hour, and not be presently snatched away by death?" ⁴ In fact, men ". . . are never sure to live a moment longer." ⁵

To prepare men for death was the Puritan's great aim. He spoke to them about sudden death to get them to prepare for death in any form. He insisted that a general preparation was also a preparation for sudden death. Many men saw an ominous significance in sudden death, but the Puritan, for the most part, refused to make any distinctions. The only thing to fear about death, his theology told him, was not being prepared for it and the eternity it ushered in. Logically, therefore, there should be no dread of any kind of death as long as one was prepared; and no one death was worse than any other. Perkins answers the opinion that sudden death is a grievous curse and the most terrible of all evils that can befall a man by saying that sudden death is no more evil than

1 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 87.

2 Paget, op. cit., p. 94.

3 Becon, op. cit., p. 89, pref.

4 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, p. 504.

5 Idem, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 574.

death itself. "For it is not evill, because it is suddaine, but because it commonly takes men vnprepared"#1

Sudden death was simply the most dramatic way in which death could act. When the Puritan spoke about sudden death, therefore, it was to emphasize the necessity of making early and constant preparation for death of any kind. The only significance in sudden death was ". . . to the secure and unprovided; death may surprize these unawares."#2

Not every Puritan, it is true, could entirely free his thinking from the fears and superstitions that had long been connected with sudden death. For centuries, any unusual death had been considered a judgment from God. If a man's last hours were full of agony, if his body was racked by convulsions, if his body was in a peculiar condition after death (contorted face, body turned black), or if a man died a sudden or violent death, it was generally concluded that the man had fallen under Divine displeasure. The sudden death, particularly, fitted into this superstitious context because it seemed to demonstrate so emphatically God's furious wrath in cutting a man off without a chance to compose his mind or confess his sins.

It was because of this well-established tradition that Crofton acknowledged that the possible suddenness of death to those living under the threat of the plague made death to be

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 19.

2 J[ohn] F[airfax], The Dead Scint Speaking (London, 1679), p. 5.

more dreaded than if they faced a death 'in due course of nature'.¹ Some of the Puritans, and many of the more radical groups on their fringe, interpreted the sudden deaths of their opponents as being a judgment from God.² They could not emphasize the element of judgment in sudden death when it happened to their enemies, however, without feeling uneasy when it happened to any of their own group. To the extent that they considered it God's immediate judgment on anyone they feared it themselves.

Although the Puritan considered that by preparation he was adequately armed against sudden death, he preferred a little time at the end, a 'dying hour' in which to put the finishing touches on his preparation, utter his dying words, dispose of his worldly goods, repent of any sins outstanding and commit his spirit to Christ. For this reason he could sympathize with the thoughts of the man who concluded his talk with death:

Call when you please, I will await that call,
 And while I stand, make ready for my fall:
 In the mean time, my constant prayers shall be,
 From suddain, and from endless death
Good Lord deliver me.³

Time for repentance for late sins was Baxter's major reason

1 Crofton, op. cit., unpag. intro.

2 Narrative of the Condemnation and Execution of Mr. [John] James, (1662), p. 47, cited by Benjamin Brook, The Lives of the Puritans (London, 1813), III, 399. Cf. C.E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688 (New York, 1931), pp. 436f, 546f.

3 R[ichard] B[landfast], "A Dialogue Between a Blind Man and Death", [1610?], p. 8.

for wanting a slow death. A ". . . special repentance for some late or special sins . . ." for the man ". . . that hath truly repented heretofore . . ."1 There was to be a general preparation but ". . . besides this general preparation, there should also be a particular, special preparation . . ."2 A man ". . . shall certainly be saved, though death surprise him unexpectedly, without any more particular preparation",3 but it was more comfortable to have the particular preparation. One way to resolve the difficulty partially was to make that particular preparation every day. Even as men in the Middle Ages were encouraged to attend the Mass every morning in case sudden death should prevent them from opportunity for 'shrifft and housel', 4 so the Puritan encouraged particular preparation every morning in case sudden death should prevent it.

Apart from this one rather timid preference for a death that offered time for a well-ordered finish to life, most of the Puritans exhibited an impressive attitude toward sudden death. Although the thought of death brought a chill to their hearts, the thought of sudden death did not increase their apprehension. They stood, in this respect, head and shoulders above the men of the Middle Ages and most of their contemporaries. Luther, a hundred years earlier, with his roots immediately in

1 Baxter, The Life of Faith, XII, 576.

2 Idem, The Divine Life, XIII, 265.

3 Ibid.

4 Mary Christopher Pecheux, Aspects of the Treatment of Death in Middle English Poetry (Washington, 1951), p. 26.

medieval soil, had entered a monastery in fulfillment of a vow made in fear of sudden death. The Puritan's Anglican contemporaries insisted on retaining in the Book of Common Prayer a petition for deliverance from this dreaded way of dying. Hooker, the Anglican, noted that the Puritans objected to this petition because they felt that the godly should always be prepared to die;¹ but he contended that a "vortuous mind" would rather be "taken" than "snatched".² The Puritan, however, believed that the Christian must live and die in willing obedience to God's will. "Now to die in obedience is, when a man is willing and ready and desirous to goe out of this world whensoeuer God shall call him, and that without murmuring or repining, at what time, where, and when it shall [sic] please God."³

The attitude of the main body of the Puritans toward sudden death was so enlightened that some of them even asserted that sudden death was a better way to die than the slow, natural death. ". . . if a man be ready and prepared to die, suddain death is in effect no death, but a quick and speedy entrance to eternall life."⁴ These men did not consider

1 Richard Hooker, The Ecclesiastical Polity and Other Works of Richard Hooker: with His Life by Izaak Walton, and Strype's Interpolations, intro. and notes by Benjamin Hanbury, II (London, 1830), 49. It is interesting to discover that the modern Puritan within the Anglican Church, the 'Low' Anglican, feels exactly as his seventeenth century forebears did in this matter and reads "unprepared" as a gloss for "sudden".

2 Ibid., p. 151.

3 Perkins, op. cit., p. 96.

4 Ibid., p. 19.

sudden death to be a judgment. Ashe is indignant because
 ". . . some persons, through ignorance and passion, are apt
 to censure such to be under Divine displeasure, who are
 unexpectedly taken away by strokes of death."¹ The sudden
 death of Rev. Richard Vines, and the uncharitable remark of
 one aloof Churchman ". . . that since extempore prayer, he
 had observed there was more extempore death"²
 prompted Thomas Jacombe to respond: "His life was like Enoch's
 life, and his death very like to Enoch's Translation. He
 died suddenly He went warme from his work to his
 wages, That's a blessed thing, for a Minister to be found by
death about his Lord's business."³ In an elegy, Pool says,

And was it thine intent to verify
 What we thought false, that Seraphims may die?
 Sure could they die, just so they'd lose their breath,
 Nor would they pray against a sudden death!⁴

Even Baxter could bring himself to say to those who were members
 of Jesus Christ, 'Let death come when it will', 'Let it be by
 a lingering disease, or by an acute, by a natural or a violent
 death . . . [it] shall but send your souls to Christ.'⁵

Even if death did not come suddenly, however, it would
 come swiftly and so no time was to be lost before beginning

1 Ashe, op. cit., p. 6.

2 Tho. Jacombe, Enoch's Walk and Change (3rd ed.; London, 1657), unpag. epist. ded.

3 Ibid., p. 43.

4 Mat[thew] Pool, "To the Honourable Memory of Mr. Richard Vines", an elegy attached to T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 55.

5 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 32.

preparation. As man hastened along the road of life, death came swiftly from the other end to meet him. In his imagination the Puritan saw death leave its starting post at the same instant that life began its race. Jenkyn quotes Isidore of Pelusium:

Our dissolution, saith he, doth as it were run an equal pace with our framing, or making in the womb . . . as-soon as you light a Candle, it is melting and declining Every man as born, is a dying man¹

Baxter recommended as a 'special duty of children and youth towards God':

Remember that as soon as you begin to live, you are hasting towards the end of your lives; even as a candle as soon as it beginneth to burn . . . is wasting, and hasting to its end: so as soon as you begin to live, your lives are in a consumption, and posting towards your final hour.²

The Puritan was not the only one who had this conception of death's encroaching on life. As Collmer remarks, "All the metaphysicians except Crashaw discuss this phenomenon of physical death constantly devouring life."³ Bishop Hall, the Caroline divine, said, "Death borders vpon our birth and our cradle stands in our graue."⁴

As death came on, he sent messengers ahead to warn of his approach and to encourage preparation for his arrival. One popular way of illustrating this idea was to portray the deadening of one of the senses--particularly sight--as a herald

1 William Jenkyn, Exodus (London, 1675), p. 27.

2 Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 200.

3 Collmer, op. cit., p. 140.

4 Cited in ibid., p. 139.

of death.

. . . when the heralds of death approach; then is it time for us to lift our heads, knowing that our redemption is neere. When the eyes of the body, the windows, of our prospect into the world beginne to be dark, then must we so much the more open the eyes of our minds, the windows of the soule for our prospect into heaven, to see things otherwise invisible.¹

Sometimes, as here, this particular image was used to describe the more immediate approach of death on the deathbed, but it was not restricted to this use.² As the content of "A Dialogue Between a Blind Man and Death"³ reveals, blindness early in life was regarded as an harbinger of death. In the dialogue mentioned, Death says:

You may not call it posting, nor surprise;
For you had warning when you lost your eyes:
Nor could you hope your House should long be free,
After the Windows were posses'd by me.⁴

The little advance made by death each day was to be welcomed. It was the Puritan's opinion that "Having thus entertained the messengers of death, we shalbe the readier to welcome death it selfe."⁵

Since death came on relentlessly day by day, the Puritan resolved to die daily. When Paul said, "I die daily", [I Cor. 15:31] Owen believed he meant that he was 'continually preparing

1 Paget, op. cit., pp. 430f.

2 Sibbes, op. cit., pp. 41ff.

3 B[tandfast], op. cit.

4 Ibid., p. 3.

5 Paget, op. cit., p. 431. Cf., Perkins, op. cit., p. 47.

himself to die; always in a preparation to die'.¹ By dying a little each day, moreover, the Puritan practiced for the one great act of dying and believed he was diminishing the magnitude of that ultimate task.

The fourth dutie, is to exercise and inure our selues in dying by litle and litle so long as we liue here vpon earth, before we come to die indeed. And as men that are appointed to runne a race, exercise themselues before in running, that they may get the victory: so should we beginne to die now that we are liuing, that we might die well in the end . . . he that would be able to beare the crosse of all crosses, namely death it selfe, must first of all learne to beare small crosses, as sicknesses in body, & troubles in mind, with losses of goods and of friends, and of good name: which I may fitly tearme litle deaths, & the beginnings of death it self: & we must first of all acquaint our selues with these litle deaths, before we can well be able to beare the great death of all.²

The correct attitude to the inexorability of death was a continual reflection on the nearness of it. Like Moses, the Puritan prayed to be taught to number his days.

To number our Days . . . is not to cast up how many days the Life of Man consists of; that is easily done; but it is spiritually and practically to consider, and lay to heart, the shortness and uncertainty of our lives³

He looked upon himself as a "dying man"⁴ and preached ". . . as a dying man to dying men"⁵

A further reason for early preparation for death was that

1 Owen, op. cit., p. 352.

2 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 46f.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 88.

4 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 108.

5 Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, p. 26.

the dying moment itself (the fearful wrenching of the soul from the body, the pangs of dying, the accompanying temptations and fears) required more attention than could be given it in a few hours on the sick bed. As Collmer observes, "This practice of dying was . . . not a casual affair but an extended process to be developed over a period of years."¹ Even such an apparently simple rite as saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" [Acts 7:59] was

. . . a lesson not easy to be learned; for faith is weak, and doubts and fears will easily arise, and nature will be loth to think of dying; and we that have . . . been entangled in too much familiarity with the world, shall be apt to shrink when we should joyfully trust him with our departing souls. Oh! therefore, now set yourselves to overcome these difficulties in time . . . it is time this last important work were thoroughly learned, that our death may be both safe and comfortable.²

The Puritans were fond of stating this simple aphorism:

"'Tis a great saying of an holy Man; No one (saith he) can joyfully welcome Death, but he that has been long composing his Spirit, and making ready for it."³

Death urgently pressed upon one the need for early preparation; childhood was not too soon to begin. Perkins excuses himself to Lady Lucy, Countess of Bedford ". . . for writing vnto you of death whereas by the course of nature you are not yet neere death . . .", saying flatteringly, "If I be blamed . . . Salomon will excuse me, who saith that we must

1 Collmer, op. cit., p. 136.

2 Richard Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 44.

3 Pearse, op. cit., pp. 49f.

remember our creatour in the daies of our youth."¹ It was considered an excellent thing for very young children to prepare for death in an adult fashion. Precocious preparers were held up in several books for consideration and imitation by less solemn youngsters. One of the works written with this in mind was Henry Jessey's Looking-glass for Children, published in 1673. In this book it was related that a six year old wept because she was afraid her clothes would send her to hell. At the age of ten, when this same child lay on her deathbed, she was asked if she were willing to die and she replied, ". . . 'Aye, very willing, for then I shall sin no more'"² Bunyan desired to awaken an awareness of death in young lives and so began his poem "Upon Death" with these lines:

Death's a cold Comforter to Girls and Boys,
Who wedded are unto their Childish Toys:³

This desire to impress upon children the inexorable nature of death and the necessity of being prepared for it was something which the Puritans inherited from and shared with their fellow Anglo-Saxons. The earliest extant English lullaby croons that life is nothing but a pilgrimage toward death.⁴ George Herbert's "Mortification" would remind man at every

1 Perkins, op. cit., unpag. ded.

2 C. E. Whiting, op. cit., p. 567.

3 John Bunyan, A Book for Boys and Girls (London, 1889) p. 62.

4 Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century, ed. Carleton Brown (2nd ed.; revised G. V. Smithers, Oxford, 1952), p. 255.

stage of his existence to prepare for death. The opening stanza for the infant begins instructively:

How soon doth man decay!
 When clothes are taken from a chest of sweets
 To swaddle infants, whose young breath
 Scarce knows the way;
 Those clouts are little winding-sheets
 Which do consign and send them unto death.¹

In order to encourage himself to prepare for death, the Puritan depreciated this world--and the life lived in it--and emphasized heaven and the life there. The besetting danger all through life was that the world might claim the affections of the man and bring about his eternal undoing by dimming his view of heaven and drugging his sense of the necessity of preparation for death. To encourage a crepe-edged view of the world, therefore, the Puritans used any occasion and every invective. According to Epaphroditus, in Becon's The Sick Man's Salve, this world is a "vale of misery",² and Perkins's A Salve for a Sicke Man, echoes identically the condemnation.³ This world is such a "stinking sink of evils"⁴ that it is better to leave the world at death than to come into the world at birth. Becon cites with approval the example of the Thracians: ". . . when any child is born and cometh into the world, they weep, lament, and mourn; but when it goeth out of

¹ George Herbert, The Poetical Works of George Herbert, life, crit. diss., and explanatory notes George Gilfillan (Edinburgh, 1853), p. 98.

² Becon, op. cit., p. 120.

³ Perkins, op. cit., p. 11

⁴ Becon, op. cit., p. 148.

the world, they rejoice and are merry."¹ Again Perkins is in agreement:

. . . the reasons and respects are to be considered that make the day of death to surpass the day of mans birth: and they may all be reduced to this one, namely that the birth day is an entrance into all woe and miserie; whereas the day of death ioyned with godly and reformed life, is an entrance or degree to eternall life.²

But the all-encompassing description was given by Edward Pearse. This world

. . . is an angry World, a frowning, a dirty, a bewitching, ensnaring World: 'Tis a Waste, howling Wilderness, a strange Land, an House of Bondage, a troublesome tempestuous Sea, an Aceldama, a Field of Blood

.
 . . . a Prison, a Dungeon, an House of Bondage to thee, the Land of thy Captivity³

The Puritan believed the Bible to teach that this was an utterly wasting world. He was convinced that this was immediately observable in the world itself by those who did not deliberately close their eyes to the evidence of the times in which they lived. The century was strewn with events and circumstances well calculated to impress the mind with the misery of the world. Those happenings which brought about death in a dramatic way, such as war and its unrest, political and ecclesiastical animosity, spectacular phenomena such as earthquakes and great fires, were particularly cited as evidences of the treachery of this world. The Plague of London,

1 Ibid., p. 123.

2 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 19f.

3 Pearse , op. cit., pp. 69, 153.

coming thirty years after the previous outbreak and in a time of greater civilization, fired the imagination.¹ Doolittle wrote:

You have seen the Destroying Angel entering the City, and Death riding upon the Pale Horse Triumphant in the streets, Arrows flying, the sword bathed, Garments rouling [sic] in blood, and this grim Conqueror breaking in upon Houses without resistance, taking Captive, Men, Women and Children, and clapping them up in the Prison of the Grave²

This evidence relating to the state of the world had, however, to be measured by Puritan standards to reach the conclusion that the world was so miserable. Even when there were neither plagues nor wars, the Puritans were anxious concerning "future feared dangers."³ Set in its own context, the seventeenth century can be viewed quite differently.

If some writers were troubled by the belief that they were living near the end of the world, in a time of general deterioration, the mass of men, from politicians, merchants, and colonizers down to the ploughmen, were far too busy to be melancholy Altogether, one could make out a strong argument for the Elizabethan age as one of pessimistic gloom and the earlier seventeenth century as one of optimistic recovery.⁴

Sir John Reresby wrote of the great fire of London in 1666, "The dreadful effects of the fire were not so strange as the rebuilding of this great city"⁵

1 G. M. Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History, II (London, 1950), 145f.

2 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, unpag. intro.

3 T. Jacombe, op. cit., unpag. to the reader.

4 Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660 (Oxford, 1945), p. 4.

5 Cited in Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 147.

The Puritan did not wish to see this world in its best light. Instead he deliberately emphasized its grimmer aspects in order to deliver his mind from a possible fatal attachment to it. For this reason he welcomed afflictions. They supplied him with constant evidence that this was a wretched world, and reminded him to prepare for death and for heaven. Whatever turned him from this life and this world, turned him to preparing for death and heaven; it was all part of the same process. Jenkyn confesses quite frankly that ". . . we should not be willing to be cut down by the sickle of death, nor long to be taken into the barn (laid up in a quiet grave,) were not the field stormy and rainy, the world boisterous and unquiet."¹ Likewise Baxter: "He is most likely to die quietly, patiently, and joyfully, that can first be poor, be neglected, be scorned, be wronged, be slandered, be imprisoned, quietly, patiently, and joyfully."² Elsewhere Baxter says,

It will somewhat abate the fears of death, to consider the restlessness and troubles of this life, and the manifold evils that end at death. And because this consideration is little available with men in prosperity, it pleaseth God to exercise us with adversity, that when we find there is no hope of rest on earth, we may look after it where it is, and venture on death by the impulse of necessity. Here we are continually burdened with ourselves, annoyed by our corruptions, and pained by the diseases of our souls; or endangered most when pained least.³

This idea that afflictions are so necessary that no affliction at all is the greatest affliction, is carried to its

1 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 16.

2 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 8.

3 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 569.

ultimate in Becon's The Sick Man's Salve. Christopher, Philemon, and Eusebius relate stories to prove this point. One story commends a man who wept because his annual sickness did not come. They agree that ". . . corporal affliction is a certain persuasion . . . of God's singular good-will and fatherly favour . . ."1 Another story is about a rich man who suffered no adversity at all; one day the earth suddenly opened and swallowed him, thus proving that ". . . it is a most certain sign of everlasting damnation, where a life is led without affliction."2

The Puritan considered afflictions a blessing, not because they were desirable in themselves, but because they were useful to him for keeping his attention riveted on death and heaven.

Againe the afflictions, sicknesses & dangers, wherein death is threatened unto men, are likewise means of death, and by them also we are called of God to remember our latter end.3

Perhaps Paget was familiar with Perkins' words on the subject:

Again, the afflictions and calamities of this life are as it were the harbingers & purviers of death: & we are first to learn how to intertain these messengers, that when death the lord himselfe shall come, we may in better manner intertain him.4

Afflictions were to be 'sanctified and improved'. They were to be used to "wean" the Puritan from the world.5 If God's

1 Becon, op. cit., p. 104.

2 Ibid., p. 103.

3 Paget, op. cit., p. 60.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 47.

5 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 55.

people feared death, it showed that they had failed to 'improve' these "Providences of God" intended to "wean" them from this world.¹ This belief that the mature Christian should not be dependent upon the world for any sustenance was carried forward by Jenkyn who combined the 'weaning' idea with the metaphor of 'the traveler in a strange land'.

Wean thy self from the world; an empty traveller, will sing when he meets with the thief; he who looks upon himself as possessing nothing in the world, fears not a stripping by death²

The reiterated theme of Pearse's Great Concern is: ". . . as ever you would be ready for a Dying Hour, sit loose from all, die to all; the more dead we are to the World, the more ready we are to go out of the world."³ The absence of this world's goods was regarded as a good thing because it eliminated the necessity of painfully casting the goods aside. Doolittle wrote:

Consider, if you had more of the World, you would be more unwilling to leave the World; and that you need not be; you are loth enough to die already, and need not wish for more to make you more unwilling: Usually mens love to the World doth encrease, as the enjoyments of it do encrease; the more men have of it, the more loth they are to leave it.⁴

Those who speak solely of the Puritan's failure to appreciate the goodness of the world--however true that may be--fail to see his intention. To rebut this criticism,

1 Ibid., pp. 22f.

2 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 12.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 112.

4 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 93.

however, it is not enough to instance isolated favorable comments about the world made by a few Puritans. To do this would be to ignore the Puritan's whole perspective. Scholars in recent years have performed a distinct service in showing that Puritan thought was not totally pessimistic, but these exceptions seem to prove the rule. Some Puritans were capable of valuing life in this world according to certain relative standards, but, when death and that which followed death were discussed, all the relative merit of this life was forgotten. To discuss the relative merit of things in this life when life as a whole was being considered, would have seemed to the Puritan the grossest vanity. The fact remains, moreover, that the average seventeenth century Puritan spent no time on subtle distinctions but chose to maintain an unvarying attitude toward all life and all things in this world. The struggle was between life and death; the average Puritan could not afford to make subtle distinctions.

As the Puritan saw it, man had only two choices: he could either enjoy this world or prepare for the next. In order to make the right choice more obvious, he set the two in complete opposition. He disparaged the world in order that the contrast with heaven might be more severe. The Kingdom of Heaven was not to be like the kingdom of this world: ". . . not a narrow, empty, envied, distracted, divided, shaken, sinful, transient, and temporal Kingdom; not a Kingdom subject to wars, tumults, fire, famine, pestilence, ruine and desolation" ¹ It was the Puritan's intention, in

¹ Crofton, op. cit., p. 79.

so describing the world, to cast a shadow over it in order to accentuate the brilliancy of heaven. (The status of death was thereby incidentally raised: it was the end of darkness and the beginning of light.)¹

The Puritan set heaven over against this world because he had difficulty in describing it. Heaven was too wonderful to be described adequately, so he preferred to present a verbal picture of this miserable world and say simply, 'heaven is the opposite of this.' "This World is a Wilderness," said Doolittle--and the Puritan felt qualified to describe a wilderness--"but Heaven is our Canaan"² Milton, who portrayed Satan as magnificently as a Rubens satyr but was deficient in describing God, was likewise ". . . magnificent and memorable in his treatment of hell"³ but reduced to the plain truth of scripture when describing heaven.⁴

This world was regarded as thin and shadowy, without final reality, without durability. True happiness exists only in heaven; here there is but a "seeming happiness."⁵ The Puritan was exhorted to ". . . prefer the least believing thought of the everlasting joys, before all the defiled transitory pleasures of the deluded, dreaming, miserable

1 Ibid., p. 54.

2 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 30.

3 B. Rajan, Paradise Lost & the Seventeenth Century Reader (London, 1947), p. 129.

4 Ibid.

5 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 37.

world."¹ Mrs. Jane Ratcliffe looked forward to heaven
 ". . . because nothing in this world can give me solid and
 durable contentment" ² With a view of this world
 reminiscent of Platonic thought, Doolittle says, "To set the
Heart upon this World, it is to set the heart upon that
which is not. To love a shadow, to love vanity" ³

A popular way of expressing the unreal nature of this
 world was to speak of it as a "strange country" and man a
 pilgrim merely traveling through it.⁴ Continuing in the
 medieval tradition, which regarded all of life as ". . . a
 journey overshadowed by its inevitable conclusion",⁵
 the Puritan likewise spoke of life as ". . . nothing else but
a journey towards Death and the Grave"⁶ (This metaphor
 is particularly reminiscent of the Ars moriendi in which the
 comparison is frequently repeated.⁷) More frequently in

1 Idem, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, v.

2 Samuel Clarke, The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines, Famous in their Generations for Learning and Piety, And most of them Sufferers in the Cause of Christ (3rd ed. cor. and enlarged; London, 1677), p. 385.

3 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, pp. 63f.

4 F[airfax], op. cit., p. 10. Cf. David Clarkson, Of Living as Strangers, in The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., I (Edinburgh, 1864-5), 246.

5 Pecheux, op. cit., p. 30.

6 Pearse, op. cit., p. 38. Cf. Thomas Doolittle, A Call to Delaying Sinners (9th ed.; London, 1704), p. 21; Herbert, "The Temple:--Repentance", op. cit., 1st st., p. 43.

7 Mary Catherine O'Connor, The Art of Dying Well The Development of the Ars moriendi (New York, 1942), p. 25. The Ars moriendi was written before the sixteenth century as

Puritan thought, however, this journey through a strange land was a journey not to death, but to heaven. The distinction between the medieval tradition and Puritan thought, when both use the same illustration, is that in the medieval view it was a descending journey; in the Puritan view an ascending one. "The Saints of God are travellers in a strange Countrey, they are travellers in a way towards their home, which is in Heaven"¹ Clarkson, in a discourse entitled "Of Living as Strangers", gives the same interpretation of the journey's end. It is their ". . . home, their Father's house; till they come there they are strangers."² Death, replaced by heaven as the end of the journey, came to be regarded as the sleep of the weary traveler, the last step before heaven.³

In keeping with their conception of heaven as the real world was their desire to have their "conversation" there. This word was used in two ways that have since become archaic. It sometimes meant 'conduct'; it is so used when Bragg says of Wadsworth: ". . . that Spirit of Heavenly-mindedness that he liv'd in continually: He had his heart and conversation in

a guide to the business of dying. Its writer was not interested (as the Puritans were) in preparing the reader for death early in life, but in presenting complete instructions for the preparation to be begun at the dying hour. It was to be memorized before the hour of death as an alternative to the ministrations of clergy if this should be unavailable at death. It assumes leisurely dying.

1 F[airfax], op. cit., p. 10.

2 Clarkson, op. cit., p. 244. Cf. Doolittle, Spiritual Antidote, p. 63.

3 Clarkson, op. cit., p. 246.

Heaven¹ The meaning particularly valuable for observation here, however, is that defined by Baxter.

When is [sic] is said, that our "conversation is in heaven," it signifieth that our burghship is there, and our interest and great concerns are there, and our dwelling is there, and our trading and thriving business is there, and for it; and our friends and fellow-citizens, and those that we daily trade and converse with, in love and familiarity, are there; even as our God, and our Head, and our inheritance are there.²

And after contrasting this world with heaven, he says,

Will not now and then a walk in heaven, be a great refreshing to the mind Will not some converse with the most wise, and holy, and peaceable society, whose life is love, be a great recreation to your minds, when such sights as these have made them sad?³

The Puritan was eager to possess in advance ". . . such converse as we can here attain, with God in Christ"⁴ He wanted to live as much as possible in the real world before death: ". . . in the meane time before our bodies can come there, to send our mindes before, to have our conversation in heaven"⁵ The Christian's home and business were located in heaven and the Puritan insisted that "His conversation must be there, his affection is there. He himself while he is on earth must be out of the earth, and raise

1 Robert Bragg, The Life and Death of the Godly Man (London, 1677), p. 23.

2 Richard Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 558-559.

3 Ibid., p. 563; cf. p. 561f.

4 Idem, The Divine Life, XIII, v.

5 Paget, op. cit., p. 153.

himself from earth to heaven every day.¹

This world was regarded as the bleak valley between two mountain peaks; the life lived here was the decline between two golden ages. Paradise and heaven were each regarded as perfect (although Paradise was considered inferior to heaven²) and death was regarded as the intruder that disrupted perfection. Spiritual death marked the end of Paradise; physical death opened the boundary of heaven; and the outstanding characteristic of all that lay between was death.

There was a tree of life in the garden of Eden; and so there will be in the paradise of God, Rev. xxii.2 But since man was cast out of paradise, a tree of death . . . has grown in every soul . . . and every leaf, every bud, tends to the death of mankind.³

Indeed, this whole world, is dead:

Reason, Authority, Example, Experience convince us that all things below are empty Vanities; it is restless folly to seek for Happiness here, and to borrow the Language of the Angel, to seek the living among the dead.⁴

What made Paradise enviable was the easy accessibility to heaven without the necessity of dying.⁵ Possessors of Paradise possessed immortality.

. . . if we respect that grace and blessing which

1 Sibbes, op. cit., p. 40.

2 Paget, op. cit., pp. 112 et seq.

3 David Clarkson, Of Original Sin, Works, I, 8.

4 William Bates, The Great Duty of Resignation to the Divine Will in Afflictions, Enforced from the Example of Our Suffering Saviour (London, 1684), p. 165.

5 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 532f; cf. 550.

God did vouchsafe mans body in his creation, it was unchangeable and immortall, and so by the same blessing should have continued, if man had not fallen¹

What made heaven desirable was the permanent recovery of this same condition of immortality.

When the Bodies of the Saints shall be Raised, they shall Commence, take the Degree of Souls; that is, they shall be Immortal; they shall be more secur'd from Death in Heaven, than our first Parents, while Innocent, were secure from Death in Paradise²

In imposing Latin, one author intones the outstanding distinction between this world and heaven: "Here 'tis appointed for all [*sic*] once to dye: But there, Statutum est non mori; It's a statute Law in Heaven, there shall be death no more"³

Owing to the corrupt and dying nature of this world, the degree of eternal life available in this life was limited. The fragments of eternal life that could be enjoyed in this world were almost negligible compared with the fulness to be enjoyed after death. Eternal life was incompatible with the transience of this life. "Expect not eternity in this life", advised Jenkyn,⁴ for to do so is to ignore the fact of death. Spiritual life, the beginning of eternal life, could be enjoyed

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 6.

2 David Clarkson, A Funeral Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Late Reverend and Learned Divine John Owen, D.D. (London, 1720), p. lxiv. Cf. Calamy, op. cit., p. 13.

3 Samuel Lee, 'Ελεος αβος or The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise (London, 1677), pp. 168f.

4 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 6.

here, but eternal life was ". . . the life which hath no end; which we are here but learning, and beginning to practice, and which we must hereafter live (in another manner and degree) with God for ever."¹ In his large work on this subject, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Baxter states, in a footnote, that although the subject probably includes 'the whole estate of reconciliation, peace, and happiness,' yet, because the beginnings of it in this life are very small compared with the fulness of it in glory, he does not 'purpose the handling of the beginnings here'.² Eternal life here was not the same as eternal life there because of death.

Preparation for death and what lay beyond it was so much the Puritan's major concern in life that he was willing to let all things serve that end. Particularly at those times when the fact of death struck him most obviously and poignantly, the Puritan wondered why he had not spent much more of his time in preparation for death; he wondered how he had let anything take precedence over this preparation; he resolved anew to utilize every opportunity to consider and prepare. Baxter says: ". . . to prepare for death . . . is so much the business of our whole life, that all the rest is but a vain show, and foolish trifling, or much worse."³

The echoes of Baxter's word "business" are heard in this

¹ Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, epist. ded., vi.

² Idem, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 30n.

³ Idem, A True Believer's Choice and Pleasure, Works, XVIII, 117.

connection all through Puritan literature. In the age in which capitalism began, it is all the more significant that the Puritan illustration of the absorbing and pressing nature of preparation was that it was one's 'business'. If a man had ". . . some great Business, a Business of more than ordinary importance to be done",¹ it was obvious that he would devote all of his energies to the task. "But Friends, let me ask you, if there be any business to be dispatched like the business of your Souls, and Eternity?"² The day of death and all that it signified in terms of judgment, heaven, and hell, was of such importance that the Puritan was urged to ". . . take it as the very business of your lives to make ready for that day."³

"Christianity," said Baxter, "is a practical religion; it is a devoted seeking for another life, by the improvement and contempt of this."⁴ The Puritan attitude to this life is neatly summarized in that statement. That which could not be utilized in preparation for death and heaven was to be rejected. This world and the things it could provide were simply not to be indulged in. All that this world could provide was comfort and pleasure for the body, and the Puritans were agreed that this life was for the soul and in the next

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 61.

2 Ibid., p. 79.

3 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 503. Cf. Idem, Faithful Souls Shall Be With Christ, Works, XVIII, 135.

4 Idem, The Crucifying of the World, Works, IX, ccxcviii.

life God would provide for the body. The body was to be sustained only to allow the soul to prepare for everlasting life.¹ Calamy says flatly, "This present life is not the time for thy body"² and Baxter works out an equation that shows that the soul ('much more precious') is to the body as everlasting life is to this transitory life.³

However it may reflect on his appreciation of this life and this world, the Puritan wished to subordinate all interests to that which had permanent significance. He believed that ". . . the whole frame and tendency of the Spirit's sanctifying work on souls, is to prepare them for a life to come"⁴ and that it was part of the Spirit's task to cause the believer to ". . . part with any thing to obtain it."⁵ What was not parted with was to be used for death and heaven, and it was notorious that worldly goods were useless for this purpose.⁶

The chief check to any interpretation which proclaims the Puritans to be mystics, is the fact that they employed as means that which the true mystic regards as an end in itself. The motive power of mysticism is love and ". . . the intrusion of alien motives is at once fatal to it."⁷

1 Idem, The Sermon of the Absolute Sovereignty of Christ, Works, XVII, 503.

2 Calamy, op. cit., p. 23.

3 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 452-454.

4 Idem, Faithful Souls, Works, XVIII, 139.

5 Ibid., p. 40.

6 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 30.

7 Récojac, cited in Inge, op. cit. p. 341

The mystic's communion with God ". . . kills all lesser cravings."¹ The Puritan, however, so desired to be able to welcome death that he was willing to subordinate whatever inclinations towards mysticism there may have been in his thinking--including that of union with the divine--to that end.

No one . . . can joyfully welcome Death, but he that has been long composing his Spirit, and making ready for it. . . . Believe it, this is a great thing, and great things are requisite thereunto. This calls for a near Union with Christ . . . much Weanedness from this World²

Baxter encouraged walking with God because that created the desire to be in heaven with Him, which, in turn, was 'a happy preparation for death'.³ The difference between mystic terminology and the language of the Puritans is that the mystic spoke of "dying" to enter into communion with God,⁴ whereas the Puritan spoke of entering into communion with God in order to die.

Moreover, take this for a sure rule, that the more you are versed in Communion with God, and do maintain an holy Intimacy and Correspondence with him, the more boldness and comfort you will have when you come to die⁵

The union of the soul with God, which is a basic absolute in mysticism, was subordinated by the Puritans to the larger purpose

1 Underhill, op. cit., p. 100.

2 Pearse, op. cit., pp. 49f.

3 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 268.

4 Inge, op. cit., p. 31.

5 Pearse, op. cit., p. 132.

of conquering their fear of death and their dread of the separation between the body and the soul in the intermediate state. The extent of this subordination is seen in the fact that the Puritans insisted on the union of both the soul and the body with Christ. Even when the body lay in the grave it was believed to be united with Christ.¹ Such a doctrine would be inconceivable to the mystic.

Like so much else in the Puritan Weltanschauung, where death was concerned, even prayer was scarcely valued in itself but prized for its usefulness in preparation for death. Prayer was an aid to meditation on death.

The second thing which we are to practise that we may come to a serious meditation of our own ends, is, to make praier unto God that we might be inabled to resoluue our selues of death cōtinually.²

Prayer was also a way through which the Puritan sought God's help both for advance preparation and also for strength at the hour of death.³ Paget confesses quite candidly that "The comfort of a happy end is worthy a speciall prayer every day for that particular benefit."⁴ The use of prayer as preparation for death was not permitted to depend upon the individual's mood of the moment. As the pressure of advancing death was unceasing, so was the need for such prayer.

Remember Death is at your back; and it might be the

1 Cf. Chapter IV.

2 Perkins, op. cit., p. 38.

3 Paget, op. cit., pp. 395ff.

4 Ibid., p. 396.

last time, you might ever have to speak and plead with God in behalf of your Soul. Tell me, Would you pray so slothfully, if you were to die when your Prayer is done? . . . Thoughts of Death would enliven you in your duty; especially now in this time of great Mortality, when so many thousands in a week go down into their Graves; and for ought you know, Death might arrest you on your knees, What, and with a sleepy prayer in your mouth?¹

In view of this attitude to prayer, it is not surprising to find that Doolittle sees heaven as desirable because he will not have to pray there.

. . . Heaven is a resting place . . . This is your place of work and labor; here is various work for you to do, Civil and Religious; here you have praying work and heart-searching work to do; and humbling work, and sin-mortifying work to do.²

The skeptic might be tempted to ask whether the Puritans really enjoyed praying or were only interested in its usefulness. The answer must be that the demand for preparation legitimated the subordination of many things that had worth in themselves to that end.

In their practical appreciation of the things of this life, time itself derived its meaning from the fact that it provided the interval for preparation. Speaking of time in the abstract Baxter can say: ". . . what a nothing is time, and how little difference between to-day and to-morrow, this year, and next! That which hath been, that which is, and that which will be!³ Yet when he later considers time

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 39.

2 Ibid., p. 135.

3 Richard Baxter, A Sermon, Preached at the Funeral of That Holy, Painful and Fruitful Minister of Christ, Mr. Henry Stubbs, Works, XVIII, 70.

concretely, as affording opportunity for preparation, he says: "O sirs! time is precious, short, and hasty. This race is for all eternity, and is to be run but once. Heaven will be quickly won or lost for ever."¹ When a man is conscious that time is short, death will possess his thoughts and he will 'mind nothing else but dying'.² To this end Pearse encouraged his reader to consider each day as an additional dispensation from God to be used in preparation. "God spares you time after time, when he might cast you off the next moment. And this he doth, that you may pursue the work of your Souls and Eternity"³

The chief significance of life was its use as an interval allowing for preparation for death and for the next life. "God has set us in this World to make preparation for another; God has set us in this Life that we may make ready for another."⁴ It was, perhaps, not life that was to be lived at all, but death--in prospect--that was to be lived all through life.⁵ "Let us live," said Jenkyn, "as if we were always dying"⁶ Life was to be lived at the brink of the grave. Baxter speaks approvingly in a funeral sermon:

1 Ibid., p. 83.

2 Sibbes, op. cit., p. 37.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 84.

4 Doolittle, A Call to Delaying Sinners, pp. 21f.

5 The foreknowledge and anticipation of the terrors of death caused Baxter to speak of life as "a continual death." A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 531.

6 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 6.

. . . she daily learned to die, so the expectation and preparation for death was her continual work and state. She lived, and heard, and prayed, and wrote her letters to her children as at the brink of the grave, and the door of eternity.¹

The Puritans were critical of the use of time for pursuits less serious than preparation. Although Miller asserts that 'no seventeenth century Puritan ever said that recreation was inherently sinful'² it must be admitted that the Puritan was inherently suspicious that it might be. As Grierson says, ". . . every form of pastime was in the nature of sin, tempting Christian to linger by the wayside when shades of night were already falling."³ Baxter commended the life of Mary Hanmer: "She was a stranger to pastimes, and no companion for timewasters, as knowing that persons so near eternity, that have so short a life, and so great a work, have no time to spare."⁴ Crofton considers the fact that death will deprive him of the pleasures of this life (by which he seems to mean anything other than purely spiritual joys) and concludes that he is not sorry: ". . . they have eaten into, and eaten up too much of my precious time . . . they have been baits and snares, whereby I have been enticed unto, and entangled in sin"⁵

1 Baxter, A True Believer's Choice, Works, XVIII, 105.

2 Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (New York, 1939), p. 41.

3 H. J. C. Grierson, Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century (London, 1929), p. 80.

4 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 48.

5 Crofton, op. cit., p. 56.

Even in conversation with others one's time was to be redeemed from ". . . idle and unnecessary visits",¹ for friends should discourse with one another concerning death and the necessity of preparation for it.

I could wish all persons of worth and excellency in their mutual converse, in their contribution of assistance for the promoting of the most pious interests, would sometimes entertain one another with a discourse about their decease, for that would pluck up the weeds of vain hopes, and fond imaginations which are apt to grow in the hearts of good men.²

Puritanism was ". . . intransigent in its attitude towards any acceptance of the world as an end in itself, as something to be enjoyed"³ and the world was therefore either to be rejected, or used to prepare for death and that which lay beyond death.

Follow the flattering world no further; come off from all expectations of felicity below; enjoy nothing under the sun, but only use it in order to your enjoyment of the real, sure delight . . . and remember you have another work to do.⁴

The way in which the Puritans contrasted the world to come with the present world led them to ". . . a faulty appreciation of the divine purpose of this earthly life."⁵ The Puritans

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 71.

2 Samuel Jacombe, Moses His Death (London, 1657), p. 17.

3 Grierson, op. cit., p. 12.

4 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 7. The Sweet Singers of Israel, a seventeenth century sect, favored the opposite attitude: "The blessed will be employed in singing praises in the New Jerusalem, therefore the best preparation for death consists in singing, eating, drinking, and making merry." Whiting, op. cit., p. 291.

5 Garth W. Legge, "The Element of Christian Asceticism in

might have developed a greater appreciation of life in this world, and of the things legitimately to be enjoyed therein, and they might have had a fuller enjoyment of the eternal life in the present, if it had not been for their constant awareness and fear of the fact of death.

English Puritanism and French Jansenism in the Seventeenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1951) pp. 362f.



DEVIATIONS FROM CALVIN'S THEOLOGY

It may be said that Puritanism and Calvinism never were identical, that Puritanism was not a creed but a spirit, that it is a mistake to think of Puritanism and Calvinism as indissolubly bound together;¹ and these are legitimate warnings against making statements that are too sweeping. In the sixteenth century, however, both the Puritans and their opponents were doctrinally Reformed: they were divided principally on polity. It was in the seventeenth century that parties on both sides began to move away from the thinking of Calvin.

A study of the Puritan attitude to death reveals that the seventeenth century Puritans diverged from the Calvinism with which, for the most part, their predecessors had begun, and that they moved to a new theological position. This breach with Calvin is found in the 'federal' or 'covenant' theology. Death--always a prominent subject in Puritan theology--did not escape the influence of this movement of thought. The effect can be seen at three observable points: the relation between sin and death, the deathbed repentance, and the meritorious significance of death. These three facets of death, when seen in the light of covenant theology, are particularly significant, for they show covenant theology to be no mere development or enlargement of Calvinism, but a

¹ J. Gregory, Puritanism in the Old World and the New From Its Inception in the Reign of Elizabeth to the Establishment of the Puritan Theocracy in New England (London, 1895), p. 383.

distortion of it and a weakening of some of its basic tenets.

Covenant theology was an adroit maneuver intended to quell a civil war within the ranks of Puritanism. There had arisen two camps of thought at once hostile to the Calvinism in Puritanism, and to each other. One, Antinomianism, embodied a principle to which the rigid Puritan way of life was strongly opposed long before it received the name "Antinomianism"; the other, Arminianism, was an adaptation of an old error, but not one the Puritans had been compelled to meet in open combat. Antinomianism seized the doctrine of grace for its own and declared its freedom from the law and from any necessity of moral living. Arminianism, convinced that the Antinomian position was the logical fruit of Calvinism, demanded greater ethical sanctions, and found them by making man both responsible and free. Covenant theology was a tacit admission to the Arminians that Calvinistic thought contained an implicit error which could lead to Antinomianism, the error most dreadful in Puritan eyes. Covenant theology, incorporating the Covenant of Works into the Covenant of Grace, was an adequate answer to Antinomianism, but a concession to Arminianism; a stout rebuke to those who denied the necessity of works, but a compromise with those who denied the complete and irresistible efficacy of God's grace. Covenant theology became, for some of its interpreters, a theologically acceptable way of borrowing from the tenets of Arminianism.

The early nurture of covenant theology was accomplished by such men as Ames, Preston, and Sibbes. From Ames it spread

to the Netherlands, where it was fostered by Cocceius and Witsius. It sailed to New England with many English Puritans and there formed the cornerstone of the New England political, sociological, and theological structure. In England it was not actively promulgated by the entire Puritan body, but the idea was so insidious that it permeated that body to a greater extent than scholars have hitherto realized.

For instance, covenant theology altered the relation between sin and death. The covenant Puritans (in contrast to Calvin) were unwilling to lay all the stress on original sin. They agreed that death--spiritual, physical, eternal--was the result of sin, but not principally of original sin. The nature of a covenant demanded for its basis that both parties be free and able to enter into agreement with one another. Unconsciously the covenant theologians knew that if they agreed with Calvin that man was unequivocally dead in Adam's sin, their elaborate covenant system would fall to the ground. In an effort to find man somewhat more intact than Calvin left him, therefore, they weakened the concept of original sin to a point where it was no longer able to bear alone the responsibility for death.

The word 'covenant' was good Biblical terminology and the covenant theologian knew it. He insisted that his theology was determined by Scripture, but under the guiding hand of his exegesis the covenant idea lost its solidarity aspect and became adult and personal. The demand for man's consent was in the very nature of the word 'covenant', he said, and not merely a theologian's private interpretation. "In a covenant,

both parties must agree."¹ He found it necessary to insist that there must be something in man capable of responding to the demand of the covenant, but he asserted that the Biblical idea of the covenant, not he, had to assume the responsibility for insisting on this.

There must be something in us before we can make use of what good is in God or Christ.

.
The reason is partly from the nature of the covenant. There must be consent on both sides²

Man's consent was faith. This was his prior obligation to the obtaining of status in the covenant. The condition laid upon Abraham and the condition laid upon us is the same, and

. . . the Condition that God required of Abraham, it was this, Thou shalt believe this For the Faith he reckoned him a man fit to make a Covenant withall, hee accounted him a righteous person; that is, hee was willing to enter Covenant with him, because he beleaved him.³

The covenant was no mere addendum to the Christian's life: the covenant was salvation. For Calvin, salvation, from beginning to end, including faith and works, was all one grand movement of grace. For the covenant Puritans, salvation came in stages: God set the will free; then man accepted the covenant which was salvation. (Furthermore, in the covenant he performed good works in order to attain salvation.) The covenant theologian thus split salvation into two: God, he said,

¹ Richard Sibbes, The Demand of a Good Conscience, in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D.D., ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, VII (Edinburgh, 1864), 482.

² Ibid.

³ John Preston, The New Covenant (8th ed., cor.; London, 1634), pp. 357f.

having laid down the condition of salvation, first enabled man, by grace, to perform the condition; then rewarded him for performing the condition by giving him all the saving benefits of the covenant. This progression is set forth in an important work by Daniel Williams entitled Gospel-Truth Stated and Vindicated. To this work nearly fifty Puritans subscribed their names as agreeing that the content was 'fully and rightly stated'. A "great number of Countrymen" besides the fifty were ready to subscribe but ". . . forbear it onely from prudentiall considerations."¹ The conditions of the covenant, faith, repentance--and, later, works--are required before the saving benefits of the covenant are received,² but God 'effectually enables the elect to obey the condition'.³ This is referred to as ". . . the first Grace, by which we are enabled to perform the Condition" ⁴ Then God bestows the saving benefits of the covenant.⁵ This progression, intended to resolve any conflict between Calvinism and Arminianism, actually left salvation hanging in the balance, after God had initially acted, until man added his consent. The idea of a first grace of God enabling man to will effectually implied, moreover, that man aspired after good but

¹ Daniel Williams, Gospel-Truth Stated and Vindicated (London, 1692), written in the flyleaf.

² Ibid., p. 54; cf. p. 62.

³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

⁵ Ibid., p. 62; cf. p. 55.

was merely too weak to pursue it. For this reason Calvin had condemned the idea.

Those who attribute it to the first grace of God, that we are able to will effectually, seem, on the contrary, to imply that the soul has a faculty of spontaneously aspiring to what is good, but that it is too weak to rise into a solid affection, or to excite any endeavour.¹

Ignoring this antecedent rebuke from the Institutes, the covenant theologians continued to assert both that salvation lay in the covenant, and that man must assent to it in order to receive it. Grace was the proffer of covenant terms and conversion was ". . . synonymous with taking a covenant."² Preston emphatically declared that there was no other ground to believe that one was saved, no other ground to believe that any of God's promises would be made good to him, than the ground of the covenant. In short, ". . . the ground upon which we expect salvation, and the fulfilling of all the promises; The ground of all is this Covenant."³ Salvation was to be found in the covenant and man's entrance into the covenant depended on his accepting the condition of faith, and being declared 'righteous'. Man was not as spiritually dead as Calvin had declared him to be.

The covenant theologian insisted that his doctrine was still salvation by grace, but he added a clause that led him

¹ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, I (8th Am. ed., rev. and cor.; Grand Rapids, 1949), 309.

² Perry Miller, The New England Mind The Seventeenth Century (New York, 1939), p. 385; cf. p. 393.

³ Preston, op. cit., p. 350.

away from Calvin: "Though God's grace do all, yet we must give our consent"1 He asserted, it is true, that the 'something in us' that made man capable of contracting with God had to be wrought by God, but his emphasis did not lie on God. By taking this new position he could only weaken the emphasis on God's activity in salvation. Even as the attempt to make more reasonable the sinless nature of Christ by asserting the sinless nature of Mary places the emphasis not on Christ but on Mary, so the attempt to make more reasonable the activity of God's grace in salvation by making it work on the will but with the will, placed the emphasis on the will and not on grace.

The will that was so emphasized was not to be found in the dead man that Calvin declared the descendant of Adam to be. Instead, by a steady diminution of emphasis on the doctrine of original sin and its effects, the will of natural man was allowed to become both alive and free. Ames believed that man's will was under bondage to sin, but he insisted that ". . . freedom of the will remains; which is essential to mans nature"2 Calvin warned against calling a will 'free' that served only evil simply because it served evil voluntarily and not by constraint: ". . . what end could it answer to decorate a thing so diminutive with a title so

1 Richard Sibbes, The Faithful Covenanter, Works, VI, 8.

2 William Ames, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Drawne Out Of The holy Scriptures, and the Interpreters thereof, and brought into Method (London, [n.d.]), p. 57.

superb?"¹ He knew instinctively what the covenant Puritans chose to ignore: as soon as the term 'free will' is spoken, man thinks that he ". . . is able by his innate power to incline himself to whatever he pleases".² Calvin was skeptical of man's ability to observe the careful definition of a will that was free yet served only evil. The human mind, he said, ". . . will sooner imbibe error from one single expression, than truth from a prolix oration . . .".³ He went on to say that because the abolition of the term would be beneficial to the church, ". . . I would neither use it myself, nor wish it to be used by others who may consult my opinion."⁴

At first, the covenant theologian seemed to have done no more than fail to consult Calvin's opinion. He spoke of a free will, but it was bound to sin. Although it was a suspicious move, it was in itself no real distortion of Calvin. But, whereas Calvin believed man to be so dead because of the sin of Adam, with his will so bound by depraved desires ". . . that it cannot aspire after any thing that is good",⁵ and his Divine image "obliterated";⁶ the covenant theologian maintained that the image of God remained in the will to a sufficient

1 Calvin, op. cit., I, 287.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 288.

5 Ibid., p. 293.

6 Ibid., p. 270.

extent to incline it to good.

In the will those remainders [of God's image] appears by a certaine inclination unto good knowen in that manner: which although it be vanishing, and dead, yet it is found in all in some measure: whence also it is that at least the shaddowes of vertuss, are allowed and embraced of all.¹

The section of Ames' Marrow where this quotation appears is highly revealing. It is in his chapter "Of Actual Sinne" that he discovers man has this native ability yet within him. This doctrine of actual sin, a theological innovation unknown to Calvin, was borrowed by the covenant theologians from the Arminians in order to account for the abundance of sinful acts performed by man, and the death to which he was inevitably prone, without stressing original sin. This allowed them to leave man more intact than Calvin's radical concept of original sin permitted. They could admit to the causal relationship between sin and death; they need not deny that man would die eternally because of sin if he did not repent; but they were speaking of another kind of sin than Calvin spoke of; for Calvin spoke only of original sin.

For the covenant theologian, "Actual sins are nothing but . . . native corruption multiplied";² for Calvin, sins were original sin manifested. Calvin was obviously reluctant to speak of sinful acts as 'sins', and more reluctant still to speak of them as 'sin'. He preferred "works of the flesh"

¹ Ames, op. cit., p. 63.

² David Clarkson, Of Original Sin, in The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., I (Edinburgh, 1864-5), 9. Cf. Ames, op. cit., p. 57.

or "fruits of sin".¹ For Calvin, original sin was radical and complete. It was a privation of the Divine image and all the associated virtues; it was a state in which the virtues had been succeeded by their opposites.² For the covenant theologian, original sin was an almost neutral state, or, at most, something which merely hindered man from doing what he really wanted to do. Original sin was first of all a punishment and only derivatively a sin.

Original sin, seeing it is formally a privation of originall righteousness, and this privation doth follow the first sin as a punishment, hence it hath the respect of a punishment in order of nature, before it hath the respect of a sinne. As by the Justice of God that originall righteousness is denied, so far forth it is a punishment: As it ought to be in us, and yet through mans fault is wanting, so far forth it is a sin.³

Calvin's reaction does not have to be imagined:

. . . those who have defined original sin as a privation of the original righteousness . . . have not used language sufficiently expressive of its operation and influence. For our nature is not only destitute of all good, but is so fertile in all evils that it cannot remain inactive. . . . man is of himself nothing else but concupiscence.⁴

As Miller colorfully expresses the departure from Calvin:

"Original sin is such disability as a criminal suffers under sentence for embezzlement, not the stench of a corpse."⁵

1 Calvin, op. cit., I, 274.

2 Ibid., p. 270.

3 Ames, op. cit., p. 67.

4 Calvin, op. cit., I, 275.

5 Miller, op. cit., p. 400.

Calvin believed that man, through Adam, was utterly dead in his whole estate. He was not preoccupied with physical death like the Puritans, but the deadness man inherited from Adam included his spiritual death, and his liability to physical death and eternal death. Calvin was content to speak of man's general deadness because of original sin. He scarcely ever neglected an opportunity to stress man's complete subjection to death because of original sin, and went out of his way in his Biblical exegesis to find proof for it, while the covenant Puritans went out of their way to avoid it and ignored even obvious occasions to remark on the relationship. If they did make a casual reference to it, they went on to speak of the relation of death to 'sins' in a way that vitiated the orthodox statement.

Calvin interprets Paul's words [Romans 5:12] in his Institutes in a manner that precludes any connection between death and sin other than original sin. "And the Apostle himself expressly declares, that 'death has therefore passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;' that is, have been involved in original sin, and defiled with its blemishes."¹ In his commentary on Romans, he is even more explicit.

Sin entered into the world, &c. Mark here what order he useth. For he saith sin was first, and of [from] that death followed. . . . Paul affirmeth plainly, that sin hath entered [in omnes propagatum esse] into all which suffer the punishment of sin. And that he urgeth more strictly, when, a little after, he setteth down the reason why all the posterity of Adam is subject to the power of death, namely,

¹ Calvin, op. cit., I, 275.

(quoth he,) because we have all sinned. Furthermore, this same, to sin, is to be corrupt and faulty. For that natural pravity which we bring out of our mother's womb, although it do not so soon show forth his fruits, yet, nevertheless, it is sin before the Lord, and deserveth his vengeance: And this is that sin they call original.¹

The covenant theologian, on the other hand, interpreted the very verse that speaks of the Fall as though it were an actual sin repeated by every man. His interpretation does not speak of death falling on all men infallibly because of the sin of Adam; rather, God is still "threatening" every man to warn him not to sin. He implies that if a man could refrain from sins he would not die.

God hath been teaching you the Infallible verity of divine threatnings. God threatned our first Parents, Gen.2.17. That if they sinned, they should certainly dye, they and their posterity. This threatning was made some thousands of years since, and it hath been made good in all generations. Length of time makes not voide the threatnings of God; men read Gods threatnings, but do not believe them, nor fear them, nor tremble at them. Many will not practically believe that they shall dye, though they sin, and will not at all believe they shall be damned, though they sin; but we see that men that have sinned must dye, and wicked men shall feel that they shall be damned according to Gods threatnings²

For physical death, as well as for complete spiritual death and ultimate eternal death, covenant theology blamed actual sin. There was little else it could do. A more modern

¹ John Calvin, Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 134f.

² Thomas Doolittle, תשובה ל'פחד' או, A Serious Enquiry for a Suitable Return, for Continued Life, in and after a Time of Great Mortality, by a Wasting Plague: (Anno 1665.) Answered in XIII Directions (London, 1666), pp. 80f.

system of theology would perhaps be permitted to ignore physical death if it dealt successfully with spiritual death, but physical death was too close to the forefront of the Puritan's mind to allow it to be ignored.

The covenant theologians could have viewed physical death as natural and taken it out of the doctrine of sin altogether, but this would have been regarded as an incredible suggestion. All death was the result of sin. About this fundamental fact there was no question. No one in the seventeenth century regarded death as natural--other than in the sense that it was common and certain: ". . . as men, born, living, we are mortal, death is natural and necessary: We must die, not because we are sick, but because we live, moreris non quia aegrotas, sed quia vivis."¹ Physical death was not to be detached from other kinds of death. It was simply the most grotesque and visible illustration of the wages of sin. It was an important proof of the truth with which their evangelism was concerned. Precisely because physical death was such a gruesome thing the covenant Puritans were unwilling to devise any explanation for it other than sin. They were altogether certain that something as horrible as physical death was a wretched punishment and only sin could have deserved so bitter a reward. ". . . you have seen with your eyes the dreadful heaps of dead Corpse [sic], that it hath made in every Churchyard. Have you not seen that God is displeased with

¹ William Jenkyn, Exodus (London, 1675), p. 28.

sin . . . ?¹ Not only the evidence of the church yard, but the evidence of the death pangs demonstrated that sin was thoroughly vile.

. . . one would think that any considering minde, that shall see the tears of them that are in misery, hear the groans of them that lye on sick-beds; observe the sighs of consuming persons, who decay by little and little, as a garment that is Moth-eaten, or that shall surveigh the tossings of men in feavers, who are never at rest . . . I say, one would think, a very weak head, that will but seriously consider, might easily from those premises conclude, that sin is a thing odious and abominable²

Crofton considers death so odious that he wonders if even sin is sufficient cause for it. "Death is the wages of sin; the witness of Gods wrath; and the curse of Law, and by its circumstances made such with an emphasis"³

Covenant theology could have divided the honors and said that while physical death was the outcome of Adam's sin, final spiritual and eternal death were the result of actual sin; but this would have brought into the open the defection from Calvin. Besides, it was impossible for a writer heartily to endorse the view that physical death was the result of original sin without suggesting to his reader the total spiritual deadness that went with such a view. The covenant theologians, therefore, included physical death as the result, ultimately, of actual sin.

Use sin, therefore, as it will use you . . . Kill it

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 55.

2 Samuel Jacobbe, Moses His Death (London, 1657), p. 12.

3 Zachary Crofton, A Defence Against Dread of Death (1665), p. 5.

before it kills you; and then, though it kill your bodies, it shall not be able to kill your souls
 Hearken to every temptation to sin, as you would
 hearken to a temptation to self-murder; and as you
 would do if the devil brought you a knife, and
 tempted you to cut your throat with it You
 love not death, love not the cause of death.¹

They continued to do formal obeisance to the association of
 original sin and death, but the emphasis was on the doctrine
 they had created. Overtly they said only that actual sins
 ". . . further the Death of man",² but it is no
 accident that Perkins glides with such ease from sin, the
 Biblical singular, to sins, the covenant theology plural.

Death is the "wages of sinne" . . . Hence it seems
 to follow that in and by death, men receiue their
 wages & paiement for their sinnes

.
 the word of God . . . teacheth vs plainly where the
 strength of death consists, namely in our sins, as
 Paul saith, "the sting of death is sinne."³

The accent is no longer on the idea that all men die because
 they are partakers in original sin, but on the idea that they
 die because they commit actual sin. No longer content with
 saying that the 'wages of sin is death' they say that ". . .
the wages of every sin is death temporal and eternal."⁴

Doolittle asks slyly--but maintaining his covenant emphasis--

1 Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death, in The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, XVII (London, 1830), p. 549.

2 Ames, op. cit., p. 57.

3 W. Perkins, A Salve for a Sicke Man (Cambridge, 1595), pp. 10, 40.

4 Thomas Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, Guiding him to the Middle Way betwixt the Two Extreame Defect Excess of Sorrow for his Dead (London, 1693), p. 121.

"And if you have not sinned so much as we, yet have not you so much Sin, as might call Death into your Houses?"¹

Actual sin had become more meaningful to them than original sin. Even apart from logical necessity, therefore, it was natural that they should connect physical death also with actual sin. Besides, the emphasis on actual sin had another advantage in keeping with covenant theology's increasing stress on works: man could do something about actual sin; he could eliminate it.

. . . every mā must daily indeauor to take away frō his own death the power & strēngth [sic] therof.

.
we must with speed cut off this Samsons locks, and bereaus him of his power, disarm him, & make him altogither unable to preuaile against vs.

.
Well then, we knowing certenly that the power & force of euery mans particular death lies in his owne sinnes, must spend our time & study in using good means that our sinnes may be remoued & pardoned.²

A second deviation from Calvin for which the only sufficient explanation is covenant theology is the attitude that the seventeenth century Puritans began to take towards the deathbed repentance. It was not Calvin's attitude. It was an attitude that developed in Puritan thought as part of the total answer to Arminianism and Antinomianism; and it brought them back, by a profound paradox, to a theological basis that had much in common with the Roman theology they so vigorously denounced.

Both the Antinomian and the Arminian could fit the

1 Ibid., p. 3.

2 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 39f.

deathbed repentance into their thought patterns quite easily: the Antinomian could not place on grace restrictions that did not exist at any other time; the Arminian could not deny man's will the ability to act at any time. Any problem which the deathbed repentance created for the Arminian, with his stress on good works, was resolved by saying that good works could be done before salvation. Indeed, they even prepared a man to receive salvation. ". . . he that is largehearted and open handed, in mercy, kindness, and goodness unto men, hath space and roomth (as it were) within him to receive and give entertainment unto that great Salvation, which the Gospel brings and offers unto the world"1 The covenant theologians were anxious to refute Arminianism, but not in any way that would suggest that they were conciliatory to Antinomianism. They did not, therefore, really repudiate the Arminian insistence on man's activity in salvation, but, because they were more anti-Antinomian than anti-Arminian, only insisted that it must be done earlier in life to permit time for salvation to be 'evidenced' by works.

In disparaging the deathbed repentance it might seem, at first glance, as though the covenant Puritan was reaffirming his Calvinism; as though he thereby repudiated the arrogance of any Pelagian implication that man can save himself whenever he will, and thus drew close to Calvin. But Calvin accepted the validity of the deathbed repentance. He did not accept

1 John Goodwin, Mercy in Her Exaltation (London, 1655), p. 23.

it in order to leave man free to delay or because he did not believe that God ordinarily brings believers through a life of faith, but because he insisted that God must be free to act with His saving grace at any time in a man's life.

The departure of the covenant Puritans from Calvin's position on this matter is vividly illustrated by their contrasting attitudes to the eleventh hour repentance of the thief on the cross. Whereas the thief is an embarrassment to the covenant theologians, he is, in Calvin's estimation, an example. The covenant theologians would have been happier if this Biblical incident had not occurred, while Calvin, who cannot cease marvelling at this 'remarkable example of faith and grace', loudly publishes it, calling the thief a ". . . teacher . . . for the more eagerly any man follows him, so much the more nearly will he approach to Christ."¹ Calvin is satisfied that Christ willingly received the thief and will as readily receive any others in a like situation.

There is therefore no room to doubt that he is prepared to admit into his kingdom all, without exception, who shall apply to him.

Whoever then in dying shall commit to Christ, in true faith, the keeping of his soul, will not be long detained or allowed to languish in suspense; but Christ will meet his prayer with the same kindness which he exercised towards the robber.²

The covenant theologian could not deny the incident--

¹ John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, trans. William Pringle, III (Edinburgh, 1846), 312.

² Ibid., pp. 312f.

although it was painful to him--without denying the authority of the Bible. The only course open to him, therefore, was to limit the application of the incident as much as possible. Some men attached their own qualifications to the repentance and accepted it somewhat dubiously. Because the necessity of works had crept back into their theology, they decreed that such a repentance would be considered acceptable if it could be assumed it would have brought about a 'holy' life if the person had lived.¹ Other men denied that the incident exemplified a truth which could be applied generally. They interpreted the thief's repentance as being the only one of its kind, in a class with the other miracles of Christ.

Therefore his conversion was altogether miraculous and extraordinary: & there was a special reason why Christ wolud [sic] haue him to be called then, that while he was in suffering he might shew forth the vertue of his passion; that all which saw the one, might also acknowledge the other. Now it is not good for men to make an ordinary rule of an extraordinary [sic] example.²

In seeking to discredit the deathbed repentance, the covenant Puritans advanced many arguments which half concealed the real reason for their attitude toward the deathbed repentance. Some of their arguments were in no way different from the arguments that other schools of thought for other reasons brought against the deathbed repentance, but one argument sounded particularly Calvinistic. In refuting those who equated a deathbed repentance with any other repentance,

¹ Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 412; cf. Idem, The Divine Life, XIII, 265.

² Perkins, op. cit., p. 34.

the covenant theologians spoke of grace. This gave them the appearance of being true Calvinists, but they spoke of grace in such a way that it sounded more like man's will, which, however, like his reason, probably would be too ill to act on the deathbed.

. . . it doth likewise appeare how unwise they are that deferre the time of their repentance unto the time of death, when it is uncertaine whether they shall be masters of their owne wits, & naturall understanding, not to speake of supernaturall grace which is further above the reach of man, & yet necessary to salvation.¹

They interpreted the 'day of salvation' as having an individual application: as though each person had his own particular day. Death was no longer the last boundary of man's opportunity for salvation. It had been superseded by the 'day of grace' which might be passed long before the day of death. Because there could be no salvation without grace and grace might not persevere until death, 'awakened sinners' on their deathbeds ". . . find God to be irreconcilably angry with them, and that the day of grace is over, the door of mercy shut, and that pardon and salvation (which before they slighted) is now unattainable"² The text with which they chiefly supported this position [" . . . behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." II Cor. 6:2b] speaks of "day" in the sense of time generally, meaning, the

¹ John Paget, Meditations of Death, Wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end (Dort, 1639), p. 78.

² T. Vincent, Gods Terrible Voice in the City (reprint of cor. 5th ed., 1667; London, 1831), p. 36.

age of salvation. The covenant theologians, interpreting it in a personal and individual sense, made grace a volatile substance that could vanish the moment before it was going to be used. The sermon that recalled Thomas Goodwin

. . . shew'd also that every Man had a time, in which Grace was offer'd him; and if he neglected it, 'twas just with God, that it should be hidden from his Eyes.

if he did not turn to God in that day, the Day of Grace and Salvation, it might be eternally hid from his Eyes.¹

Perkins brings forward a passage of Scripture that referred to the time beyond death and makes it relevant to the deathbed: "And Christ saith, that many shall seeke to enter into heauen & shal [sic] not be able. But why so? because they seek whē it is too late, namely whē the time of grace is past."²

Grace became a resistible commodity.

And if you will not hear him when he calleth on you, and beseecheth you to repent and to prepare, as sure as Christ is Christ, he will not hear you when you cry and call for mercy too late in your extremity . . . This is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Refuse it now, and it is lost for ever.³

God, after death, ". . . will awaken them with his vengeance, that would not be awaked by his grace."⁴ It was left to man to decide whether he would make use of this grace or not, and

¹ Thomas Goodwin, "The Life of Dr. Thomas Goodwin; Compos'd out of his own Papers and Memoirs", in The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D., V (London, 1704), vii.

² Perkins, op. cit., p. 33.

³ Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 23.

⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

the covenant theologian exhorted him to do so on the ground that grace, having been resisted, might vanish. The divergence from Calvin was not in the sense of urgency they maintained, but in the conception of grace as a volatile ingredient in the proper formula of salvation: ". . . further above the reach of man, and yet necessary to salvation."¹ Because the covenant theologians began to conceive of repentance as an activity of man for which grace only provided a necessary condition, they could not destroy the delayer's concept of repentance without destroying their own. Calvin would have questioned the sincerity of an intention to repent and exposed it as grounded on a false conception: real repentance could not be formally delayed. The covenant Puritans, however, questioned the time and conditions.

The covenant theologians evidently believed that if they continued to state that grace was necessary to salvation, they stayed within the Calvinist fold. But the emphasis was on man; not on grace. Grace was merely one more thing that a man had to have for salvation. He could prepare the way, but if grace was not present, there could be no salvation. Man was considered able to perform certain 'preparatory acts' which would predispose him to be a recipient of saving grace but which by no means guaranteed that he would receive it. Man was deemed capable, before

¹ Paget, op. cit., p. 78.

any grace moved him, of preparing himself for grace by such things as ". . . Diligent Attendance on the Word and Means [of] Grace, Conviction of Sin, legal Sorrow for it, Sense of Wrath and Misery"1 misery for sin, ". . . and some Humblings of Soul"2 Yet, because these things could be done before and apart from grace, they could be present but the man not saved: ". . . these preparatory Acts have been in many, who were never truly Converted and Regenerated"3

It is evident that covenant theology ascribed far more to man's ability than Calvin had done. Calvin was certain that no will preceded grace and stated that this was true even in the believer: ". . . although the faithful sometimes petition that their hearts may be conformed to the Divine law . . . even this desire of praying originates from God."4 For the covenant Puritans, however, even the unregenerate man had will enough to pray. Because this was so, man could pray, beseeching God for pardon, and yet be rejected by God if grace had ceased to function in his case. It was inconceivable to Calvin that man might desire what was no

1 David Clarkson, A Discourse of the Saving Grace of God (London, 1688), pp. 132f.

2 Williams, op. cit., p. 81

3 Clarkson, A Discourse of the Saving Grace of God, p. 133, Cf. Williams, loc. cit.

4 Calvin, Institutes, I, 310f.

longer offered, for the mere desire, he believed, came from God. Yet so anxious were the covenant theologians to discourage deathbed repenting that they vividly described precisely such a distressing situation.

A Man in his Natural condition shall have no gracious audience of his Prayers; no, not in his worst condition, nor in his sorest affliction: Nay, in his great distress, his praying shall be but a howling in the ears of God. . . . If you lie a dying in your Natural condition; and pray for pardon of sin, God will not hear you. If you lie a dying, and pray for Heaven in an unregenerate estate, though it may be the last Prayer you are to make, God will not hear you.

.
Because an unregenerate Man cannot pray for any thing for a right end. Not for Grace, for a right end: Without Grace, no man can pray aright for Grace. He may pray, that he may be delivered from Hell and Misery, which is selfish, and not that he may be like to God, and bring glory to him¹

The distinction which they developed was between 'prayer' and 'acceptable prayer'.

Can you imagine that you shall then at last be taught the art of acceptable prayer merely by horror, and the natural sense of pain and danger, as seamen in a storm, or a malefactor by the rack, when in your health and leisure you will not be persuaded to the daily use of serious prayer. . . .²

As is clear from these last two citations, the covenant Puritans disparaged the deathbed repentance because they believed it to be a product of fear. They ridiculed the sincerity of a repentance that proceeded from such a base motive. Since the added stimulus of fear was the only change in a

¹ Thomas Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote Against Sinful Contagion in Dying Times. A Cordial for Believers in Dying Times, with a Corrosive for Wicked Men in Dying Times (London, 1665), pp. 168f.

² Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, XVIII, 54f.

man's situation at death that they could see, they denounced the deathbed repentance as having been produced by fear. Baxter laments that when the unrepentant ('who have not turned the key for heaven or hell') finally send for a minister, he finds them overwhelmed with fear.¹ In the Middle Ages it had been considered advantageous to introduce the "fruyte of hele" into the sickroom lest the person die in his wretched spiritual state, deluded by hopes of recovery;² but the covenant Puritans frowned upon such a practice. They felt that anyone who waited so late before repenting would deservedly fear the approach of God's wrath and judgment. To be terrified by the approach of judgment was not 'true fear'. "If this be repentance, the damned in hell have it", exclaimed Sibbes.³

The sudden terror at the realization that death was almost upon one would cause anyone to profess a repentance.

The prophane men, which in health neglect and despise Gods Ministers, and cannot endure to hear of death, or Jesus Christ; can on a sick bed send for them, gladly hear the Doctrines of Mortality; and cry out I must die, O Christ save me! O Christ save me! Nor is it marvell for every Balaam ready to curse Gods Israel on the sense of deaths approach [sic], cannot but wish to die the death of the righteous.⁴

1 Baxter, Faithful Souls Shall Be With Christ, Works, XVIII, 128f.

2 Mary Catherine O'Connor, The Art of Dying Well The Development of the Ars moriendi (New York, 1942), pp. 37f, citing Gerson and Suso.

3 Richard Sibbes, The Sun of Righteousness, Works, VII, 168.

4 Crofton, op. cit., unpag. to the reader. Cf. Baxter, The Vain Religion of the Formal Hypocrite, Works, XVII, 74, citing Robert Bolton.

To believe that everyone who asked for repentance at death was sincere was tantamount to universalism.

. . . novv the most notorious and wicked person that euer was, when he is dying wil pray and desire others to pray for him, and promise amendment of life; protesting that if he might liue, he would become a practitioner in all the good duties of faith, repentance, and reformation of life.¹

They did not, therefore, respect the efforts of contemporary Balaams to seek the death of the righteous. Late repentance was usually constrained by fear of hell and therefore false.

. . . repentance taken up in sicknesse, is usually constrained and extorted by the feare of hell, and other iudgements of God: for crosses, afflictions, and sicknesse will cause the grossest hypocrite that euer was, to stoop and buckle under the hand of God, and to dissemble faith and repentance and euery grace of God as though he had them as fully as any of the true seruants of God: wheras indeed he wants them altogither. Wherfore such repentance commonly is but counterfeit.²

The covenant Puritans scorned the deathbed repentance because it was the product of fear. If they had steadfastly maintained this position, their argument would have been more convincing. However, they were not consistent, for they did not reject fear as a legitimate tool of conversion at any earlier time in life. It was their haste to expose the deathbed repentance as 'commonly but counterfeit' that prompted them to seize upon this argument without regard for the consistency of their whole theological position. The

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 42.

2 Ibid., pp. 33f.

very same men who wished to reject the deathbed repentance because it generally proceeded from fear used the very same fear--of death, of judgment, of hell--as a legitimate instrument in seeking to bring men to repentance earlier in life. On this matter the thinking of the covenant theologians is one with that of all the rest of the Puritans for whom fear was a legitimate and natural instrument. It was not the only implement with which they sought to drive men to repentance, but it is no accident that later generations remember them as preachers of hell-fire and brimstone.

So highly did the Puritans value the use of fear as an instrument of conversion that they thought of it as being God's own instrument. God did more than mark the instrument with favor: He created it and used it Himself. The Puritans simply pointed out the uses God made of it. It was God who sent His 'Word of Threatning' to awe the heart;¹ God who awakened the sleeping conscience so that it 'accuseth, condemneth, and affrighteth the guilty sinner!';² God who sent the plague, His 'dreadful Providence', in order that men might be effectually persuaded to repentance;³ God who called men to reflect on the 'torment and loathsome estate of the souls in hell in order that they might repent and

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 43.

2 Simeon Ashe, The Efficiency of Gods Grace in Bringing Gain-Saving Sinners to Christ (London, 1654), p. 25.

3 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, unpag. intro.

leave the company of the reprobates.¹ Paget found illustration after illustration of the 'visible signs of memorials of hell' which he believed God had created for the purpose of frightening men away from damnation. To his mind Greenland served no better purpose.

If Hell be described by the gnawing of teeth, Matt. 13.42.50. then this frozen climate where there is such continuall cause of the teeth hacking in the head for cold may well serve for remembrance of the latter end of reprobates in Hell.²

The Puritan felt free to use fear as a tool not only because God approved it and provided the illustrations of it, but because he was convinced that the dangers of which he warned were real dangers. Death, the judgment that followed it, and the hell that followed the judgment were not possibilities but certainties for the man who refused to be awakened to their reality by fear. The Puritan did not feel he was degrading his message by using fear as a tool: one half of his message concerned fearsome things. Fear was a God-given emotion equal with love, and the Puritan, with an insight substantiated by modern psychology, resolved to speak of both reward and punishment. The Church Fathers followed this method, he said, and "The doctrine and example of Christ require us to stir up in men both love and fear."³ The unregenerate man had 'reale cause to be filled with the fears of death' because he was liable to death's sting;

1 Paget, op. cit., pp. 155f.

2 Ibid., pp. 217f.

3 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 36ln.

therefore, to fear death in such a way as to prepare for it was to have a "holy fear of Death".¹ To those who deluded themselves that they had nothing to fear, the Puritans said: ". . . it is but the senselessness of your dead condition that keepeth you from the terrors of damnation."²

Convinced as they were of the dangers that lay before the unregenerate man--and therefore of the legitimacy of using fear as a tool--it amazed the Puritans to discover what meagre success they had with it. Convinced that ". . . the thought of death serves to urge & admonish us of seeking the way of life",³ the Puritans seized the occasion of the funeral and other opportunities to persuade men through fear of death to repent. Yet they discovered that men remained unpersuaded. "What," said one, "doe you dare to be wicked, when Death looks you in the face, and doth compass you about on every side?"⁴ The Puritan was certain that when he led men to the brink of hell and showed them the 'Lake of Brimstone' and let them hear the shrieks and bitter groans of the damned souls, they would repent. Incredulously he asked, "How can you, without amazement and fear, forthink of the Torments of the Damned, when you cannot see your

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 171.

2 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 562f.
Cf. Idem, Faithful Souls, Works, XVIII, 128.

3 Paget, op. cit., p. 230.

4 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 143. Cf. Idem, A Call to Delaying Sinners, p. 20.

deliverance from them?"¹ Perhaps Rajan was right in saying that ". . . no one in seventeenth century England seriously considered himself as damned."² The Puritan was not negligent in portraying the horrors of the grave and judgment beyond, but men could not believe they were realities for them. Baxter, who was a little reluctant to use these harsh weapons, noted sadly,

. . . we draw back the curtains to let in the light, and show them that judgment is at hand, and use those true but terrible arguments from wrath and hell, which we are afraid should too much frighten many tender hearts, and yet they sleep on . . .³

Closely associated with the argument of fear was another which the covenant Puritans adopted from the Middle Ages.⁴ This was the argument that a dying person would probably be overcome with pain. Pain was only another form of duress like fear. Besides, a dying person preoccupied with pain would not be able to give repentance the attention it required. The bodily disorder at the time of death would render the rational faculties incapable of acting properly. If, therefore, contemporary heresies argued on the one hand that grace acted irrespectively of man and as well at death as any other time, and on the other hand that as long as man was alive he was free to act for salvation; then having shown

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 16.

2 B. Rajan, Paradise Lost & the Seventeenth Century Reader (London, 1947), p. 89.

3 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 17.

4 Mary Christopher Pecheux, Aspects of the Treatment of Death in Middle English Poetry (Washington, 1951), p. 19.

in answer to the first that grace may not persist until death, the covenant Puritans proceeded to show that a man may be incapable of acting at death.

But some will say, it shall suffice if I prepare my selfe to death when I begin to be sick. . . . These men greatly deceive themselves, for the time is most unfit to begin a preparation, because all the senses and powers of the body are occupied about the paines and troubles of the disease¹

They complained that such men were not in possession of the all-important faculty of reason. ". . . they are usually so weakened in body and spirit, that they are rendered unfit for such cogitations" ² ". . . unfit to try and judge themselves, and to do so great a work as is here described, if not unable to hear much discourse of it." ³ Any repentance that a dying man could accomplish would be a sick and dying repentance. ". . . late repentance is seldome or neuer true repentance. it is sicke like the party himselfe, commonly languishing and dying together with him." ⁴

As a final argument against the deathbed repentance, the covenant Puritans said that even if a given deathbed repentance were valid, it could give no assurance. They were anxious to substantiate this argument in order to bring to a climax their attempts to bring the deathbed repentance into disgrace. Not to have assurance was almost as bad as

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 32.

2 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, unpag. intro.

3 Baxter, Faithful Souls, Works, XVIII, 129.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 33.

having no repentance; death was horrible and the only thing which would still the anticipatory fears at death would be the assurance of salvation. "It is unspeakably terrible to die, without a confidence that Christ will receive us" ¹ By proving that a deathbed repentance could give no assurance, the covenant Puritans expected to be able to silence any remaining opposition to their view of the deathbed repentance.

Assurance, said the covenant theologian, does not come from hearing the voice of the spirit say 'thy sins are forgiven thee' and believing thereupon that the sins are forgiven, but from seeing the infallible signs of regeneration. ² ". . . prove that you do believe, and you may be sure that you are chosen." ³ To be assured of being certainly joined to Christ, ". . . we must shewe our selues to be members of his mystical body by the daily fruits of righteousnessse and true repentance." ⁴ To have assurance at death, an 'evidenced' repentance was needed. It was a 'strict and holy life' that would bring a man to a 'happy and comfortable death'. ⁵

. . . do all the good you can in the world . . . and your consciences' testimony of this will abundantly take off the terrors of death (whatever any erroneous ones may say to the contrary, for fear of being guilty of the conceits of merit). A

1 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 7, to the reader.

2 Williams, op. cit., pp. 160f.

3 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 112.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 28.

5 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 35.

fruitful life, is a great preparative for death¹

All of this was not far removed from what the Arminian, John Goodwin, was saying: "A rich and blessed assurance of salvation is the genuine and proper result, or fruit, of much mercy. . . . A person rich in works of mercy, is, or readily may be, joyfully secure"²

As the argument about assurance implies, the real reason for seeking to bring the deathbed repentance into disgrace was that it allowed no time for works. Puritan theology, under the impetus of the covenant idea, had become a theology of works to such an extent that it might have rejected the deathbed repentance entirely if it had not been for the simple Biblical example of the thief on the cross. As the deathbed repentance could not be rejected altogether, the covenant Puritans sought to discredit it as much as possible in all practical instances in order to make their theology of works meaningful. They did not believe in a state after death in which works could be done, and so they were forced to move a credible repentance back from the point of death far enough to permit time for works. Perhaps ecclesiastical struggles and suffering were outside influences encouraging the Puritans to demand an 'evidenced' repentance: the real confessor suffered for his belief and was a martyr in life if not in death. The Puritans solaced themselves for their

1 Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 575.

2 John Goodwin, op. cit., p. 11.

trials in life with the assurance that when death came it would vindicate them. A comfortable death and the reward that followed would prove worth all the suffering and persecution they endured. They were unwilling, therefore, that any should escape the rigors of life and yet reap the reward. It was the preconceived pattern of the 'covenant', however, more than any other influence, which began to shape their theology, demanding evidence of repentance. The integral nature of the covenant, that which distinguished it from a promise or testament or law was that ". . . there must be consent on both sides, or else the covenant cannot hold. . . ."¹ From this mutual engagement flowed salvation and all good things from God; repentance, faith, and good works from man.

The Puritan, it is true, had a predisposition to a theology of works before covenant theology originated. Almost from the very beginning of Puritanism, the Puritan was identified, first by his enemies and then by himself, by his insistence on living a 'holy' life. Cartwright repudiated the name "Puritan" and repelled the charge that his party manifested a peculiar straitness of life,² but the pure life with its attendant evidences was a major part of the Puritan's definition of a Christian. It is important to admit once again this prominent characteristic of the

1 Sibbes, The Demand of a Good Conscience, Works, VII, 482.

2 A. F. Scott Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603 (Cambridge, 1925), p. 89.

Puritan in order to appreciate the fertile soil which Puritanism afforded to covenant theology. Covenant theology merely confirmed the importance of works and raised their status.

Works, in covenant theology, played an increasingly prominent role. At first their importance was as 'evidence' of faith and repentance which were the 'conditions' of the covenant; then works achieved status of their own as one of the covenantal conditions alongside faith and repentance; and finally faith and repentance became works. Repentance and faith were intimately joined: each confirmed the other; but both needed 'evidence' in the life of the believer. Repentance, by definition, was a demonstrable condition: it 'included reformation';¹ it consisted in "External Reformation" and a "Fruitful Life".² In those few cases where the possibility of a valid deathbed repentance was accepted, it was on the understanding that ". . . this repentance and change be such as will hold, if God should recover you, and would show itself in a new, and holy, and self-denying life"³

Faith, too, had to be 'manifested'. The answer man made to the covenant offer was faith, ". . . and from faith, sanctified obedience. . . . When the promise is made, we

1 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 363.

2 Williams, op. cit., p. 113.

3 Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 412.

engage ourselves to believe, and to live as Christians."¹

The evidence of works came to be regarded as part of the very nature of faith. Covenant theology ". . . aimed throughout to prove that faith without performance was impossible, a contradiction in terms . . ."² By including works within the definition of faith, covenant theology could continue to hold formally to the doctrine of justification by faith and yet not allow grounds for Antinomian thinking. Holiness, obedience, good works, all received status in the definition of faith: "It is not saving Faith which is not operative to these Effects."³ By definition, therefore, faith without works and repentance without works were incomplete. The deathbed repentance allowed no time for works and was for that reason regarded with extreme suspicion. "Some it may be, will say, that it shall suffice for them to call upon God when they are dying, and to die by faith: I answer, that we must not only die and be saved, but also live in this world by our faith."⁴

With mounting intensity, stress was laid on the necessity for works, making a valid deathbed repentance almost impossible. The demand for works with faith and repentance became

1 Sibbes, The Demand of a Good Conscience, Works, VII, 482f.

2 Miller, op. cit., p. 396.

3 Williams, op. cit., p. 132.

4 W. Perkins, How To Live and That Well, in Palmer's Select Pocket Divinity, ed. Ebenezer Palmer, I (London, 1827), 72.

greater. Not content with speaking of works as the 'evidence' of faith and repentance, the 'manifestation' of salvation, they elevated them to a position of necessity. Without works, there could be no salvation. ". . . you cannot be saved, if your belief . . . prevail not to engage you in a holy life, and conquer not the flesh, the world, and the devil."¹ It was considered "arrogant presumption" to hope for heaven and salvation before conscience was able to answer all God's commands.² It was bluntly stated that good works were necessary to salvation. "True Holiness, sincere Obedience, or good Works, and Perseverance, are the Way to Heaven, and so necessary to the Salvation of a Believer, that without them he cannot be saved, and continuing in them he shall be saved."³

Even faith and repentance became works: performed by man for salvation.⁴ Although the covenant Puritans said that all these things were the result of grace; they also said that they were required from man. ". . . It's not Christ repents, or believes in a Saviour," they said, "but Men themselves."⁵ The fact that the covenant Puritans did not cease saying that those taken into the covenant received

1 Baxter, Faithful Souls, Works, XVIII, 137.

2 Sibbes, The Demand of a Good Conscience, Works, VII, 483.

3 Williams, op. cit., p. 132; cf. pp. 133, 137, 126, et passim.

4 Williams, op. cit., p. 57.

5 Ibid., p. 55.

grace to enable them to fulfill the conditions could not hide their real emphasis. The Arminians, too, spoke of grace: "If in the mean time your hearts through the Grace of God, will serve you so to live, as that you may be counted worthy to stand . . . in the great day" ¹

The part played by grace only became confusing in covenant theology. ". . . Faith . . . hath power to obtaine all grace, and so that grace whereby obedience is performed." ²

The emphasis was on man's activity rather than God's. Williams sums up all that is 'required' of a sinner for salvation:

Reader, To summ up all, I appeal to thee, 1. Whether God doth require any more of any Sinners for Salvation, than that they believe in Christ, repent of Sin, persevere in true Holiness, sincere Obedience, or good Works internal and external; and if we do so, can we perish? hath not Christ provided all else? and doth not the Promise secure Life upon doing these? ³

Christ had provided 'all else'; man had only to be concerned with the provision of those things which were required of him for salvation.

Let us not so much search what Christ hath done, but search our own hearts how we have engaged ourselves to God in Christ, that we believe and witness our believing, that we lead a life answerable to our faith ⁴

1 John Goodwin, op. cit., unpag. epist. ded.

2 Ames, op. cit., p. 192.

3 Williams, op. cit., p. 146.

4 Sibbes, The Demand of a Good Conscience, Works, VII, 483.

For each of the things in salvation that God supplied, there was to be a corresponding provision on man's part: ". . . No Justification without Faith, no Salvation without Holiness, no Glory without Perseverance" #1

The Reformation watchword of sola gratia, sola fide had suffered an eclipse and the Puritans inadvertently returned to the Roman position they had so vigorously denounced. The metanoia that Rome translated as 'penance' and the covenant theologians understood as 'repentance' had become for both something that could be measured in the container of works. The later covenant Puritans naively attempted to show that the 'conditions' could not be criticized as claims of merit because of the lack of proportion between what was required from man and what God gave in return for it. Conditions or terms could not prevent a promise from being free--"If the Condition be Inconsiderable, compared with what is promised" #2

. . . It is of Favour, not of Merit, if the promised Blessing exceed the worth of the Condition. To make this plain; suppose the worth of a days Work be twelve Pence, a Man Promises another a thousand Crowns for a days Labour; it cannot in any reason be imagined that his days Labour deserves so much; if he receive so much, he has it of Favour not of Merit. Now the Disproportion is far greater betwixt Salvation, and all that is required of us in order thereto" #3

1 Clarkson, A Discourse of the Saving Grace of God, p. 135. Cf. Williams, op. cit., p. 137.

2 Clarkson, ibid., p. 123.

3 Ibid., p. 137.

To this last statement doubtless Calvin would have responded, ". . . we have no right to arrogate to ourselves the smallest particle of our good works."¹

Even works of supererogation were not denied in principle. If a man had accomplished enough good works and made sufficient 'Dorcas's coats to be seen after his death', he could reach a point where he need do no more: "In this sense Elijah saith (according to some) It is enough."² There were degrees of holiness and ". . . the more Holy we are, the more we are suited to, and prepared for the future Happiness, and so for Death and Judgment"³ Sibbes presents the strange suggestion that parents who want to leave the best for their children will leave God in covenant with them: this the parents do by being good. They can do this even though, apparently, they care nothing for their own salvation. Speaking of God being a God to their children, he says,

This should be an encouragement to parents to be good, if not for love of themselves and their own souls, yet for their children and posterity's sake, that God may do good to their children for them. They cannot deserve worse of their children than to be naught themselves.⁴

It was not their faith which passed on the covenant but their

1 Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, II, 33.

2 William Jenkyn, A Shock of Cern Coming in In its Season (London, 1654), p. 13.

3 Edward Pearse, The Great Concern (19th ed.; London, 1697), p. 102.

4 Sibbes, The Faithful Covenanter, Works, VI, 22f.

works.

Although Rome had a theology of works, it accepted the validity of the deathbed repentance; the covenant Puritans, despite their return to a position spiritually akin to that of Rome, spoke slightingly of the deathbed repentance. The difference between them lay in the doctrine of Purgatory: Purgatory was an extension of the Roman doctrine of penance. Last minute penitents passed into a state in which they could spend an indefinite amount of time accomplishing that satisfaction which death had prevented them from doing in this life. The Puritans had rejected the rather superficial doctrine of Purgatory but had returned to a theology of works closely akin to Rome's. They had returned to the theological position from which, earlier, the doctrine of Purgatory had come. Because there was no Purgatory in Puritan thought, however, the covenant theologians were forced to move a credible repentance to a point in time early enough before death to permit the accomplishment of a reasonable amount of works.

A third departure from Calvin which can be seen in the attitude to death attests to this growing emphasis on works: the exaltation of the individual's own death to a position of merit. This exaltation of the significance of one's own death was probably caused as much by the overwhelming awe with which the Puritans contemplated physical death as by any theological movement, but it gives a remarkable illustration of the importance that covenant theology was placing on works.

A meritorious death is one of the most significant marks of a theology of works.

What most sharply evidences the meritorious significance these men attached to their own death is the frequent reference to death as a sacrifice. Their use of this term in relation to their own death is all the more striking when it is remembered that they were very dependent upon the Old Testament for their thought patterns, and that this term expressed for them the chief significance of Christ's atonement.

Baxter uses the term more narrowly than most. He exalts death to the status of a sacrifice when he is thinking primarily of martyrdom: being ". . . offered to death for Christ" ¹ In a context in which he speaks of Christ humbling Himself to the death of the cross and the necessity of men being likewise obedient, he says,

As Abraham's faith and obedience were tried in the offering up of his son to death at God's command, so the children of Abraham . . . must follow him in offering up themselves, if God require it, and in submitting to our natural death (for that he doth require of all). ²

Yet the matter may not be easily dismissed even in those cases where it referred to martyrdom. The desire for a martyr's death may be merely an evidence of zeal; but it easily and imperceptibly turns into a longing for merit. This strong tendency to assume meritorious status is the

1 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 509.

2 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 552.

danger that is always present in the desire for martyrdom;¹ and the Puritan strongly inclined toward making martyrdom a sort of summum bonum. Books on martyrdom were avidly read. John Foxe's Book of Martyrs went through nine editions between 1641 and 1684;² Samuel Clarke's A General Martyrologie went through three editions between 1651 and 1677.³ Crofton, who expected a martyr's death, called it ". . . the glorious crown of a Minister" ⁴ ". . . Death in, and for this cause, is not more my duty than my dignity; the more ignominious it is, the more glorious" ⁵ He believed the nature of death was changed to those who are in Christ ". . . and to such who die for Christ" ⁶ Whitaker, who died in his bed, had proclaimed: "It would be everlasting honour, and it is a thousand times better to dye for Christ, to be hanged, to be burnt for Christ, then to dye in our beds." ⁷ Throughout eternity martyrs were set off from the rest of men. There

1 In T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral [London, 1950] the Fourth Tempter says to Thomas Becket: "Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest/ On earth, to be high in heaven." [p. 39.] Concerning this temptation Thomas says, "The last temptation is the greatest treason:/ To do the right deed for the wrong reason." [p. 44.]

2 Short-Title Catalogue, compiled Donald Wing, II (New York, 1945), 76.

3 Ibid., I, 340.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 38.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 31.

7 Simeon Ashe, Living Loves Betwixt Christ and Dying Christians (London, 1654), p. 58.

was an observable distinction in heaven between the saint who died a martyr's death and the one who did not.

The martyr here is known from him
 Who peaceably did die,
 Both by the place he sitteth in,
 And by his dignity.¹

Other men went beyond the confines of martyrdom and considered any manner of death a sacrifice. The Gortinians believed that "What was meant by Christ's death and suffering was nothing else than the dying and suffering of the saints."² All atoning merit, therefore, was necessarily in the individual's own death. The Gortinians were a radical sect: a product of the religious excitement of the age, and while it is not suggested that such groups were any more than minor eddies in the seventeenth century stream, they are historically useful for demonstrating the heretical tendencies of the main movement of thought.

But even responsible writers allowed themselves the liberty of speaking of man's death as a sacrifice. Paget, who speaks of Christ's death as a sacrifice,³ does not reserve the term to that use. The very fact that he uses it

¹ John Bunyan, "One Thing is Needful; or, Serious Meditations upon the four last things; Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell", in The Works Of that eminent servant of Christ, Mr. John Bunyan. . . ., IV (4th ed., Edinburgh, 1769), 88.

² C. E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688 (London, 1931), p. 294.

³ Paget, op. cit., p. 279.

for both Christ and man increases the significance of the term when applied to man.

If upon remembrance that our brother hath ought against us we should dayly lay downe our gift at the altar, to goe our way and first be reconciled to our brother & then offer our gift: Matt.5.23.24. how much more are we to doe it whē we see ourselves approaching [sic] as it were to the altar of Death, there to offer up our last sacrifice on earth, to commend our soules into the hand of God?¹

As on other occasions, Perkins may have influenced Paget's thinking, for Perkins says,

In the olde Testament when a man was to offer a bullocke or lambe in sacrifice to God, he must leaue his offering at the altar, and first goe and be reconciled to his brethren, if they had ought against him; much more then must this be done, when wee are in death to offer vp our selues, our bodies, and soules, as an acceptable sacrifice vnto God.²

In a poetical dialogue commemorating the death of the Puritan Robert Wild (who died of apoplexy), Wild is made to say,

In Sacrifice
(An Eucharist) Lord, take this Soul to Thee³

This conception of death as a sacrifice has roots in rabbinic thought where the meritorious significance of such a conception is clearly exhibited. For the greatest sin--profaning the name of God--many means of atonement were considered necessary. Of these means, one's death satisfied a full third of the atonement required. ". . . Busse und Versöhnungstag sühnen ein Drittel, und Leiden an den übrigen

1 Ibid., p. 399.

2 Perkins, A Salve for a Sicke Man, p. 80.

3 "A Dialogue Between Death and Doctor Wyld Who Dyed lately of an Apoplexy [sic]" (London, 1679).

Tagen des Jahres sühnen ein Drittel, und der Todestag sühnt
vollig Die sühnende Kraft des Todes galt also als
besonders gross."¹

The application of a concept with such specific meritorious significance to their own death demonstrates both the enormous concern with which the covenant Puritans contemplated their own death, and the extent of their defection from Calvin at this point. For Calvin, the distinction was clear: there could not be merit in man's death without diminishing the merit in Christ's death; in death there was ". . . no benefit, if Christ alone be the propitiator, if he alone died for our sins, if he alone was offered for our redemption."²

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Dritter Band (Stuttgart, 1938), p. 313. Cf. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch Erster (doppel-) Band (München, 1922), p. 169.

² Calvin, Institutes, I, 732; cf. 730-736 passim.

DEATH OF LOVED ONES

The Puritan's response to the death of a loved one shows that he possessed a tender heart. He seemed to have an instinctive insight into the emotional confusion created by the death of a friend or relative and the proper comfort of the bereaved absorbed much of his thought and attention. In Becon's The Sick Man's Salve, after Epaphroditus' friends have seen him safely through his dying hour, Philemon says, "Rise, let us go and comfort our friends, that they do not too much sorrow for the departure of this our most dear brother" ¹ The Puritan was not one to allow uninhibited rein to his passions, but it is important to note that he did admit he had such feelings. Yet he was a Puritan even at the time of the death of a loved one: he was not without a certain tendency to Stoicism in the face of affliction; his intended alleviations of bereavement were frequently appeals to reason; his constant self-examination led him to accuse himself as responsible for the death of another, because of his sin; and his pious practicality made him 'profit' by and 'use' the death of another.

Bereavement is such a difficult problem that there are few who would encourage mourning, because of its ready tendency to lead to excess. Yet there were Puritans who asserted that the first approach to the problem must assume,

¹ Thomas Becon, The Sick Man's Salve, in Works of Thomas Becon, ed. John Ayre, III (Cambridge, 1844), 191.

and insist upon, sorrow for the loss. In some instances this was to be used to bring about sorrow for sin and preparation for one's own death, but even these were to be rooted in a genuine sense of personal loss. It is Doolittle's contention that grace does not abolish natural affections, but keeps them in proportion, ". . . that as they should not be excessive, so not defective in their measure."¹ He sets for himself the difficult task of dealing with both the excessive and the deficient in order to help his reader carry out the theme of his work: "While you are allowed to mourn as Men, do not exceed the bounds and limits becoming Christian Men."²

Samuel Faireclough underlined the legitimacy of sorrow on the death of a friend when he said, "I know where hearts have been knit together, they cannot be rent asunder without pain. I find no fault with naturall affection . . ."³ Absence of sorrow was taken to indicate absence of love. "Want of Sorrow, when they are taken from us, doth argue want of love while they were continued with us."⁴ It was only too painfully apparent that ". . . the sweeter they were to us in their lives, the bitterer to us is their death."⁵

1 Thomas Doolittle, The Mourners Directory Guiding him to the Middle Way betwixt the Two Extreame Defect Excess of Sorrow for his Dead (London, 1693), p. 22.

2 Ibid., p. 7.

3 Samuel Faireclough, Άγιος Άγιος On The Saints worthinesse and The world's worthlesnesse (London, 1653), p. 24.

4 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 23.

5 Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death, in The Practical Works of The Rev. Richard Baxter, XVII (London, 1830), 575.

Although the counsel to moderate sorrow for the dead was more usual, some sorrow was to be encouraged.

And tho the Natural Affections of many need rather a Bridle to hold them in, than a Spur to put them forwards, yet it cannot be denied, that some have so little sense and feeling of the death of near Relations, that they are a shame to Humane Nature¹

Clarkson, in an outburst that includes an extreme criticism of Stoicism--which was not frequent in Puritanism--questions not only the humanity but the Christianity of those who feel no grief: ". . . some Sorrow is allow'd; they are reckoned among the worst of Sinners that are without Natural Affection, of a Stoical Senselessness; it's inhuman, far from being Christian" ² Crofton speaks even more strongly: ". . . it is equally monstrous in nature, and a judgment from the Lord not to fear to die; and not to mourn for the dead." ³

Not only was it a 'judgment from the Lord' not to mourn, but, more positively, God caused friends to mourn over the body of a loved one. ⁴ It was not only their privilege but their "duty." ⁵ The Puritan strengthened the

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 30.

2 David Clarkson, A Funeral Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Late Reverend and Learned Divine John Owen, D. D. (London, 1720), p. lxx. Cf. Doolittle, op. cit., p. 35.

3 Zachary Crofton, A Defence Against Dread of Death (1665), unpag. to the reader.

4 Ibid., p. 100.

5 Ibid., p. 7.

authority for mourning by quoting several pages of Scriptural examples,¹ and by citing Jesus' precedent:

The Holy Jesus, that great exemplar of piety . . . by his practice, shewed how much our nature was liable to be afflicted with the loss of Friends, for hee who wept but twice (that I remember) wept once for impenitent Jerusalem, dead in sins and trespasses, and another time when the beloved Lazarus lay in the grave²

Convincing expressions of real grief occurred frequently in Puritanism. Cromwell confessed that when his eldest son died, it 'went as a dagger to my heart'.³ Sympathetic Baxter observed that on the death of a 'pure, dear, faithful friend' we are left almost lifeless, "melted in tears", with ". . . nothing but grief to tell us that we live" ⁴

It was not asked of the sorrowing that they receive the loss with dry eyes. Weeping was such a common occurrence that it was observed to be the accepted behavior: "You look upon their dead Bodies in the Coffin, before they are nailed up; and your Eye is filled with tears, and your Heart with sorrow."⁵ Men were not ashamed to confess that tears streamed from their eyes like rivers;⁶ and tears, not words, were

1 Doolittle, op. cit., pp. 13ff.

2 Samuel Jacobbe, Moses his Death (London, 1657), unpag. ded.

3 J. St. Loe Strachey, From Grave to Gay (London, 1897), p. 161.

4 Baxter, op. cit., p. 573.

5 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 173.

6 Guill. Jenkyn, "An Elegy upon the much lamented death of my late dear and reverend Friend Mr. Jeremiah Whitaker",

considered the most effective oratory at funerals.¹

Typical of the sorrow spoken of in the versified dirges which were written by friends of the deceased and attached to the published funeral sermon is the following by Nathaniell Fairclough, "To the Memory of the Highly Noble, and Religious Knight Sir Nath. Barnardiston". It reads, in part,

I cannot write, Tears make my Paper sink;
My Pen weeps too, its proper tears of Ink.
These, whil'st I strive to Checker my white sheet,
Correct my Error, and tell me 'tis meet
That all be black, that every part should mourn,
And so my sheet into a pall they turn.²

In some instances, however, the sorrow became so immoderate as to lead the bereaved to question God's sovereignty. Baxter, while maintaining that God will allow moderate sorrow, warns against the extreme: ". . . flesh must be silent and not contend, and dust must not dare to question God" ^{#3} But in spite of these warnings and the assurance that we shall 'censure our censurings' of the works of God when we see the place to which God has taken our loved ones,⁴ even ministers confessed they were tempted to mistrust God in their bereavement.

I hope all of you, by your piety and prudence secured your selves from discontent, when you heard of the

attached to Simeon Ashe, Living Loves Betwixt Christ and Dying Christians (London, 1654), pp. 73f.

1 S. Fairclough, op. cit., p. 11.

2 Attached to S. Fairclough, op. cit., pp. 23f.

3 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 11.

4 Idem, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, iv, epist. ded.

sickness and death of our dear and truly honoured Friend. But I for my part must confess, that few Providences in my life, have hitherto been made such arguments to it, by the tempter to mee, as this was¹

Fairfax, addressing the deceased, complains that the wicked live and he is dead.

Verily thou art the tryal of our faith. Thou art the exercise of our patience and contentation. How hardly do we restrain our reasonings and complainings to the Almighty? What a multitude is the wicked, ungodly, violent, intemperate, prophane, blasphemous generation? The very curse and pest, and burden of the earth they tread upon; the very earth groaneth under them; hell gapeth for them; and heaven is darkened by them. And shall these live, and thou dye?

Bates, who respected the Stoics, took a far less liberal attitude towards excessive mourning.

This obstinate grief is inconsistent with a resigned frame of Spirit.

.
The meer desire of exemption from his over-ruling Will, is a heinous Sin, and a stubborn uncompliance with it in the issues of things, is direct Rebellion, mixt with ingratitude³

Doolittle carefully fences in the problem with twelve replies to the question, 'When is our sorrow for our dead, excessive and immoderate?'⁴ One answer contains the observation that excessive grief is often the cause of death,

1 S. Jacombe, op. cit., unpag. ded.

2 J[ohn] F[airfax], The Dead Saint Speaking (London, 1679), pp. 14f.

3 William Bates, The Great Duty of Resignation to the Divine Will in Afflictions, Enforced from the Example of Our Suffering Saviour (London, 1684), pp. 27, 30.

4 Doolittle, op. cit., pp. 116ff.

so he asks,

Is your sorrow for your Dead so much, as in the degrees of it, tends to the shortning of your own Life; and is it not then too much? Is your Relation dead, and will you therefore kill your self? hath death broken the Relation you had in the Fifth Commandment, and will you go on to transgress the Sixth? . . . or do you not know that excessive grief often is the cause of death?¹

Bates, while he does not go so far as to consider excessive grief a form of suicide, does observe that some ". . . are so dejected and broken with Afflictions, that their continuance in the World is but a Living Death. . . ." ²

In the involved fashion, peculiar to the age, the Puritan pointed out that sorrow was 'spiritually defective' when it did not include sorrow for excessive sorrow.³ Speaking of sorrow for the unrepentant, he warned of sinning in sorrow.

I say the third time, take heed of sinning in your sorrow, for such sinful sorrow must be sorrowed for, and when you have by sinful, excessive, turbulent sorrow, contracted guilt upon your own Soul, you must bitterly bewail such Sin; and sorrow for your own Sin, added to the sorrow for his damnation, will make you a Man, a Woman of such sorrow that will be indeed an heavy load, and a burden that will bow you down.⁴

Clarkson concurred reprovngly: ". . . immoderate Sorrow hath it's Rise from Self-Love."⁵

On no account was grief to be allowed to interfere with

1 Ibid., pp. 120, 121.

2 Bates, op. cit., p. 90.

3 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 81.

4 Ibid., p. 99.

5 Clarkson, op. cit., p. lxx.

the pressing need to prepare for death. If that work had to stand still while the bereaved spent his time in mourning, then his sorrow was considered immoderate. "Let us so order the matter, that no occasion of grief, of sorrow, of comfort, of joy . . . may divert our thoughts, and turn them aside from thinking about death."¹ Doolittle, addressing believers, exhorts: ". . . let us now spend our little time rather in preparation for our own, than in lamentation of others' Death"² Indeed, the death of a friend was to be 'improved' to advantage in this direction. The Puritan did not think of himself as standing in an 'I-Thou' relationship with his friend, for he felt he was to 'use' him. Frequently this was meant in a spiritual sense, but even then the idea is present that friends are stepping stones. In life, loved ones were to be used; at death, their expiration was to be watched for instructional benefit; and the loss itself was to be 'improved'. Crofton, speaking of his wife and children, says:

. . . so kind hath God been to me, he hath let me possess them, whilst they could do me good, and I had need of them; when I am dead they cannot minister to me; I shall have neither need nor use of any, or all these comforts: I may well be content to leave what I shall not lack, what I cannot use³

1 Richard Sibbes, The Vanitie of the Creatvre, in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D. D., VII (Edinburgh, 1864), p. 37. Cf. Doolittle, op. cit., p. 136.

2 Thomas Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote Against Sinful Contagion in Dying Times. A Cordial for Believers in Dying Times. with A Corrosive for Wicked Men in Dying Times (London, 1665), p. 107.

3 Crofton, op. cit., p. 59.

In a spirit altogether unlike that of Martin Buber, Baxter asks: "Did you improve your friends while you had them? or did you only love them, while you made but little use of them for your souls?"¹ Moreover, a primary motive for mourning for the deceased, particularly if they had been ministers, was the loss of their great "usefulness".²

The death, with the loss it occasioned, was an event to be 'improved'. That is, it was to awaken the realization of the necessity of loving God more and the creature less; and call to mind the sin that separates the soul from God as death separates friends.³ It was to be considered an affliction sent by God for a purpose.

The loss of a Relation is a great loss, but the loss of a sanctified Improvement of it for your Spiritual and Eternal good, is a greater loss, because the one might be a Penal Evil, the other is a Sinful Evil. The one an Affliction, the other a Transgression; the one is a stroke of God upon you, the other is a Sin in you against God.⁴

To fail to 'profit' by the affliction in the death of loved ones was to break the third commandment and take the Lord's name in vain, for "Every providence of God holdeth forth much of Gods Name, which must not be passed over without consideration and improvement" ⁵

1 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 315.

2 John Collinges, Elisha's Lamentation for Elijah (London, 1657), p. 6.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, pp. 79f.

4 Ibid., p. 37.

5 Simeon Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented (London, 1655), p. 22.

As remedies to sorrow, the Puritans brought forward many ideas containing comforting assurance for those who mourned. Since the essential verities of Puritan faith were intimately concerned with death, the time of bereavement was most propitious for presenting a review of some of the cardinal doctrines in the Puritan creed.

Of supreme comfort was assurance of resurrection. As the Puritan saw the body of his loved one go down into the grave and he thought of the corruption that was about to take place, he was urged to look beyond the coffin and the grave to 'a joyful, glorious resurrection'.¹ As it was a doctrine ". . . comfortable in reference to our selves, being in daily expectation of nature's dissolution, so is it a cordial unto mourners" ² Pierce could have been speaking for the Puritans when he said that failure to believe in the resurrection ". . . makes us obstinate in our Sorrow for the Death of dear Friends" ³

In harmony with the doctrine of resurrection, the Puritans spoke of the sojourn in the grave as sleep. If Christian friends had only fallen asleep, then mourning for them was not to be immoderate, because the very idea of sleep implied that the grave was not the end. "Death as a sleep,

1 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 227.

2 Simson Ashe, The Efficiency of Gods Grace in Bringing Gain-Saying Sinners to Christ (London, 1654), p. 38.

3 [Thos. Pierce], Death consider'd as a Door to a Life of Glory (London, [1690?]), p. 14.

tho it be a deep sleep, helps us to the Thoughts how easie it will be for God to awaken them¹ Calamy has in mind the belief in the resurrection, and in death as sleep when he says, "Let this comfort you against the death of your godly friends; for when a godly man dies, nothing dies totally and finally in him but sinne"²

Another doctrine of comfort at the center of Puritan faith was the blessed state of the souls in heaven. This doctrine was basic to the Puritan understanding of Christianity. Its significance for Puritan belief is clearly seen when Baxter says, "If you do not believe that the dead are blessed that die in the Lord, and rest from their labours, and are with Christ in Paradise, why do you seem Christians?"³

Because heaven was such a happy place, death was to be considered a favorable happening for the deceased. Not only did they enter a world of happiness and perfection, they left behind a world of misery and sin. They were saved from sinning, from seeing others sin, and from receiving the consequences of both. Baxter asks "Whether the protraction of the life of your noble husband, to have seen our sins and their effects and consequents, would have afforded him greater joy or sorrow?"⁴ A release from such unhappiness could not

1 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 147; et passim pp. 137-151. Cf. Ashe, Living Loves, p. 46.

2 Edmund Calamy, B. D., The Saints Transfiguration (London, 1655), p. 20.

3 Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 572.

4 Idem, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, iv, epist. ded.

be called untimely.

How many of my friends have I lamented as if they had died unseasonably, concerning whom some following providence quickly shewed me, that it would have been a greivous misery to them to have lived longer! Little know you what calamities were imminent on his person, his family, kindred, neighbours, country, that would have broke his heart.¹

Men die because of sin and God's determination to hold a judgment after death, but there are special reasons why Christ's friends die: "Sometimes that they may be secured from common calamities coming upon the world"² One writer pictures the men in the ministry being saved from imminent calamity as God saved Noah:

See, with speed they haste
To get into their Ark, before the cloud
(That gathers thick) poure down in showers of blood.³

Because the dead were enjoying a state of bliss, many Puritans recommended that there be rejoicing on their behalf. They had attained that which all believers were seeking and it was a matter of logic that one does not lament when a friend attains what one also desires for oneself. ". . . shall we make that the matter of our lamentation as to her, which we make the matter of our hopes as to ourselves?"⁴

1 Ibid., p. 312.

2 Ashe, Living Loves, p. 40.

3 Thomas Playre, "Upon the never enough to be lamented Death of the learned Mr. Richard Vines", attached to Tho. Jacombe, Enoch's Walk and Change (3rd ed.; London, 1657), p. 60.

4 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, p. 45.

"Will you account him a Friend," said Clarkson, "who grieves at your Preferment?"¹

Puritan thought covered a progression that began with the rather negative allegation that death was not a disadvantage,² and proceeded to the vigorous assertion that ". . . you must rejoice much more for their felicity, than you did whilst they were on earth; because they are incomparably more happy than they were."³ Bacon, in his best teaching fashion, introduces a dialogue concerning mourners:

Epaph[roditus] For whom should they mourn?
 Eus[ebius] For you.
 Epaph[roditus] Why for me? Because good things have chanced unto me? Because I have passed over the dangerous sea, and am come unto the haven of quietness? Or because I am delivered from all evil, and set in a blessed and joyful state? I think that at the burials of the faithful there should rather be joy and gladness than mourning and sadness; rather pleasant songs of thanksgiving than lamentable and doleful diriges [sic].⁴

Watson reminds his hearers that the Ancients had a funeral banquet for the dead because they were believed to have entered a felicitous state and asks, "Why should you be swallowed up of grief for them who are swallowed up of joy? . . . Why then should any macerate, and even intomb themselves in sorrow for their relations?"⁵ A joyful text was not

¹ Clarkson, op. cit., p. lxx. Cf. Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, v, epist. ded.; Tho. Watson, The Fight of Faith Crowned (London, 1678), p. 18.

² Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 7.

³ Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 572.

⁴ Bacon, op. cit., p. 120.

⁵ Watson, op. cit., pp. 18, 19.

unfitting for a funeral sermon.

A text that speaketh of rejoicing . . . may seem unsuitable to a mournful funeral; but it was chosen by our deceased friend, and not without justifiable reason. That which was a day of sorrow to us, was a day of rest and joy to her, and it was meet that she should foresee that joy, and, tasting it in the first-fruits, should commend to us that which she had found so sweet¹

Mourning was considered unreasonable because the deceased had merely gone on ahead to prepare the way for the loved ones to follow.² 'If it is their company you desire,' said Baxter, "in reason you should be glad that they are gone to dwell where you must dwell for ever" ³ Baxter elsewhere points out that the mourners probably have lost less of the deceased's company by his dying than they would have if he had lived on earth a long time, for they themselves must soon be going on. He adds, "When you are almost leaving the world yourselves, would you not send your treasure before you to the place where you must abide?"⁴

The departure of their friends to heaven was expected to arouse in them greater desires to withdraw from the world and be with the souls in heaven. This was the inevitable 'use'.

Thus this missing of friends & separation from them, both is to some & ought to be unto more an effectually

¹ Baxter, A True Believer's Choice and Pleasure Instanced in the Exemplary Life of Mrs. Mary Coxe, Works, XVIII, 91.

² Bacon, op. cit., p. 121.

³ Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 45.

⁴ Idem, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 316.

meanes to separate their mindes from the earth, to loosen their hearts from the love of this life, and make them to aspire after that perfect & indissoluble communion, into which their friends are gone before.¹

If the loved ones were particularly worthy, then the desire to withdraw from this world was supposed to be increased because the world's store of holiness was diminished by their death, making it an even less desirable place.²

In their effort to alleviate sorrow in the time of bereavement, the Puritans used several further arguments. Because these were directed to the intellect rather than the emotions, they are harsh sounding, and more properly considered arguments than comforts.

One of the arguments was that God had a better title to the deceased than even the closest relative. By excessive sorrow, therefore, one might seem to question God's sovereignty. The Puritan felt that if the bereaved saw their excessive sorrow in this awesome perspective, it would properly subdue them.

If the Afflicted would for a while suspend their Tears and Sighs, and with free Reason consider, that what relation soever they had in their dearest Loss, whether of a Father, a Son, of a Husband or Wife, or any other Amiable and Passionate terms, yet God hath a nearer right and juster claim in those Persons, being his by the best Titles of Creation, and Redemption, it would silence murmurings and impatience, and stop the scope of inordinate

¹ John Paget, Meditations of Death, wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end (Dort, 1639), p. 92. Cf. Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 320; Idem, Life of Faith, Works, XII, 555.

² William Jenkyn, Exodus (London, 1675), p. 38.

Sorrow.¹

Baxter strengthened the argument by reflecting upon further attributes of God.

Who was it that deprived you of your friend? Was it not God? . . . Will you not give him leave to do as he list with his own? Dare you think that there was wanting either wisdom, or goodness, justice or mercy, in God's disposal of your friend?²

Earlier in the same work he says rather brusquely, "Undoubtedly as God had a better title to your husband and children, and friends than you had, so it is much better to be with him, than to be with you"³

Some Puritans were able to derive comfort from the argument. In his detached fashion Crofton says,-

Death will deprive me of . . . Wife, Children and Servants which ministered to me; Be it so; it is Gods mercy I have enjoyed them for so long a time; I am in the possession of them a tenant at Gods will, he doth not the least wrong to take them from me⁴

Lee relates the following anecdote to his hearers:

It should not be lost what Hobson, the late noted Carrier of Cambridge, said to a young Student receiving a Letter of the sad tidings of his Uncles decease (who maintain'd him at the University) and weeping bitterly, and reciting the cause of his grief, he reply'd, Who gave you that Friend? Which saying did greatly comfort him, and was a sweet support to him afterward in his Ministry.⁵

1 Bates, op. cit., p. 31.

2 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 311.

3 Ibid., iv, epist. ded.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 59.

5 Samuel Lee, Ελεοςείαβας Or the Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise (London, 1677), pp. 103f.

Doolittle, however, recognizes that this declaration that one's claim to the deceased ceases at death is not comforting. He uses, in contrast to it, an idea of comfort: namely, that union with Christ continues through death, even though relation and title to loved ones ceases then.

You cannot look upon your Children, and say, these are for ever mine; nor upon the Wife of your bosome, and say, this is for ever mine; for our relation and our title to these, doth cease at death: But because this union is inseparable, you may say, this God and Christ is for ever mine.¹

Of even less consolation, perhaps, was the idea put forth by Becon. He believed that it would ease the sorrow of separation from a friend to reflect that he might not have remained a friend if he had lived.² Baxter is of the same opinion: "How know you what unkindness to yourself your dearest friend might have been guilty of? Alas! there is greater frailty and inconstancy in man, than you are aware of."³

Another attempt at consolation through reason was to persuade the bereaved that he really did not want the deceased back in this world because of the happy state in heaven, the misery of this world, and the necessity of dying again if they returned. The dead, he was told, would not be enthusiastic about being brought back into this unhappy life.

One seventeenth century writer discouraged the 'childish whining' at funerals saying, "If we could houl them back againe,

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 118.

2 Becon, op. cit., p. 151.

3 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 311.

our Lamentations were to some purpose; but as they are, they are vaine and in vain."¹ This was not the Puritan approach. The Puritan discouraged mourning for their return, not because it was profitless, but because it was an erroneous desire. It was improper to ". . . covet them again which be dead" ² because it was preferring one's own happiness to the deceased's glory.³

Particularly interesting was the plea against desiring their return as presented from the deceased's point of view.

Do you think they would wish themselves again to be on earth? Or would they take it kindly of you if you could bring them down again into this world, though it were to reign in wealth and honour?⁴

Doolittle asks if they would like to see them die a second time and mourn for them again,⁵ and cause them to endure the pains of dying twice.

Were you grieved for them on their dying Beds, to see what they endured, and what cold Sweats the Pangs of Death did put them to? and yet would you have them live again, that they may die again? Do you sorrow that they have died once, and will you sorrow on, except you could have them live again, that they may die twice? would you have them have two deaths for one? Is this your Love to them?⁶

1 Anthony Stafford, Meditations and Resolutions (1612), cited in Shakespeare's England, An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age, ed. Charles T. Onions, II (Oxford, 1916), 151.

2 Bacon, op. cit., p. 121.

3 B. Faireclough, op. cit., p. 26.

4 Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 574.

5 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 204.

6 Ibid., p. 203.

Since it was Puritan doctrine that ". . . your souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but . . . Christ will be their company . . . heaven will be their residence",¹ the miracles that Jesus performed in raising the dead presented a delicate problem to the Puritans. It would seem as though Jesus did Lazarus a great disservice. Baxter, probably because he suddenly remembers these miracles, rather weakly concludes what begins as an emphatic statement on this subject. "O! how would they disdain or abhor the motion, unless the commanding will of God did make it a part of their obedience."² Owen boldly suggests that the souls of such people did not follow the normal course directly to heaven but were supported in a special state of suspension.

. . . the souls of them departed, who have died and lived again, as the soul of Lazarus, I doubt not but God supported in their being, but restrained all their operations. For if a separate soul had one natural, intuitive view of God, it would be the greatest misery in the world to send it back into a dying body.³

Still another device used to calm the sorrow of the bereaved was shame. The heathen, who had not the Christian knowledge, were held up as examples for their Stoical endurance in affliction. There was, however, a little difference of opinion concerning what the heathen really believed and whether

1 Richard Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 355.

2 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 574.

3 John Owen, The Christian's Work of Dying Daily, in The Works of John Owen, ed. William H. Gould (London, 1851), IX, 337.

their fortitude was to be admired. Doolittle was not attracted to Stoic thought. He was displeased that there were 'many Stoics in practice that were not so in opinion.'¹ He felt that "Stoical Apathy" was a sub-Christian affectation.²

"Want of sorrow, and sense of Gods Afflicting Hand, is not Patience but Stupidity; not Submission but Rebellion; not Heroical Fortitude of Mind, but a Sottishness of Spirit."³

As for the heathen other than Stoics, he felt they sorrowed only as men for the breach in their relationship of love with the deceased, whereas Christians could sorrow for the sins of neglect committed in that relationship.⁴

Doolittle, however, spoke for a minority opinion; the prevailing view held up the pagan achievement as a goal for Christians to equal and surpass. Philemon seeks to quiet Epaphroditus' fears that he will never see his friends again by telling him he will see them and know them again in heaven. Eusebius adds reproachfully:

I marvel that any man should doubt of this doctrine, being so clearly set forth both by the authority of the holy scriptures, and by the testimonies of the godly writers; seeing that the very heathen which knew not God aright, being persuaded of the immortality of the soul, never doubted of it⁵

Samuel Faireclough encouraged a bereaved family to be like

1 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 10.

2 Ibid., p. 11.

3 Ibid., p. 35.

4 Ibid., pp. 69-74.

5 Bacon, op. cit., p. 154.

Xenophon who took off his crown and wept when he heard of his son's death, but who ceased weeping and returned to his task when he heard how valiantly he had died.¹ Bates is embarrassed for Christians who cannot equal philosophers.

Consider also what a reproach is cast upon Christianity, that so many virtuous Heathens in great Afflictions, were in some measure supported by the Precepts of Humane Wisdom; and that Christians, to whom there is revealed from Heaven, that an Eternal State of Glory and Joy shall be the reward of their patient Sufferings, remain utterly disconsolate.²

He endorses the example of the philosopher Stilpon who lost his family in a fire. Being asked if he had lost anything, he replied, "All my Treasures are with me, Justice, Vertue, Temperance, Prudence, and this inviolable Principle, not to esteem any thing as my proper Good, that can be ravish't from me"³

Sorrow for the death of two classes of people merited special attention: loved ones who died unrepentant, and ministers. The first was a knotty problem; particularly for the Puritans, who believed that knowing loved ones again in heaven was essential to happiness there. It must be noted to their credit that they faced the problem with their unrelenting reason. Baxter is most severe when he says, "Your teachers, yea, your own parents, will not mourn in heaven for all the torments that you undergo in hell, nor consent to ease you by

1 Faireclough, op. cit., pp. 24f.

2 Bates, op. cit., p. 93.

3 Ibid., p. 94.

a drop of water.¹ In heaven, their love of righteousness would displace their love for the person and they would approve the sentence of condemnation. Doolittle, asking several questions of those sorrowing excessively for the impenitent dead inquires,

[Q.4.] . . . if the Father of Mercies, and the Saviour of Sinners do approve of the Damnation of your impenitent Husband, or Wife, Father, or Mother, Son, or Daughter, why should you be filled with turbulent disquieting sorrow?

[Q.6.] Do saved Souls above sorrow there because they do not find the Souls of others there whom they knew on Earth, and were Related to, that died before them? . . . And will you pretend to be more Compassionate and Merciful than Angels and Saints in a perfect state of Bliss and Glory?

Q.7. Shall not you yourself, being a Penitent Believer, approve the Righteous Sentence of Damnation upon those that . . . died impenitently in their sins?²

The approval of the sentence of condemnation began even before heaven. In a dialogue placed 'between the grave and the bar', the unrepentant sinner begs the good minister, known for his pity for sinners while on earth, to intercede for him so that he might have one hour to plead his cause. The minister replies,

. . . I must tell you, those that are most compassionate cannot now pity you. Those that with tears and importunities beg'd mercy for you as for themselves, now praise God for his most terrible vengeance; and God himself will laugh at your destruction . . .³

¹ Baxter, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of That Holy, Painful and Fruitful Minister of Christ, Mr. Henry Stubbs, Works, XVIII, 78.

² Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, pp. 105, 107.

³ Samuel Annesley, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Reverend Mr. Will. Whitaker (London, 1673), pp. 22f.

It was commonly agreed, however, that the believer still on earth would mourn for the impenitent. To see a relative go into an eternity of suffering was admittedly a sore trial. Doolittle thought that anyone (who considered the worth of the souls damned for sin) would mourn.¹ If the deceased was a relative, the mourning was increased.

Neither may any please themselves with Stoical Apathy, or want of grief and sorrow for the Death of Relations, because they were wicked and ungodly, lived and died in Sin, which should rather increase than diminish their mourning for them²

Pearse came to the same conclusion. Speaking to the unrepentant, he says,

Truly thou, and such as thou, are the only Persons whose Death will be truly lamentable. I remember a saying I have read in one of the Antients; They (saith he) are to be bewailed in their Death, whom the Devils drag away to the Torments of the Infernal Pit³

There was greater cause for mourning for the unrepentant sinner than for the repentant Christian: ". . . nor is it fit you should mourn for an eminent Saint, as if you were mourning for an eminent sinner"⁴

There was another special category for ministers. If one's sorrow was not merely excessive self-love, but sorrow because of the spiritual implications of death, then

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 54.

2 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 11.

3 Edward Pearse, The Great Concern (19th ed.; London, 1697), p. 58.

4 Collinges, op. cit., p. 34.

a gradation of sorrow was expected to become evident. Since the loss to individual, church, and nation was greatest in the death of a minister, it followed that mourning must be greatest for him. This scale of sorrow was called a "rationall gradation."¹ The ultimate in this scale was to be experienced ". . . when pious, publick persons and neerly related unto our selves are snatched away, while young" ² The Puritan recommended greater sorrow for young ministers than for those who die 'full of days'³ and likewise provided for a difference in degree of 'rational sorrow' between the death of a man in public service and the private death of a relative.

Sorrow for Godly, Religious, Zealous Magistrates, for Able, Holy and Laborious Ministers when taken away by Death should be more extensive and intensive than for others that did only live a private Life; that is, there should be more Mourners in number, and all these should mourn with greater degrees (at least) of Rational sorrow for publick Persons than for private.⁴

The main body of Puritanism was under constant pressure from the fringe elements which tended to destroy the equilibrium of its doctrine of church and ministry. Thus the frequent exhortation to greater sorrow for the death of ministers than for others was part of a larger effort to raise the status of its ministry and also, perhaps, of the gospel which that ministry represented. Collinges, in a funeral sermon for

1 Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 14.

2 Ibid., p. 15.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 110.

4 Ibid., p. 112.

Carter, rages,

Let Socinians & Anabaptists, and Quakers, vilifie and revile this great Ordinance of Christ, as much as they please: there is a worth in it: let them load the persons of those, who labour in the work of the Gospel, with as much Odium as they can. . . . If these wretches were any members of the flock of Christ, they would value the Principles of it, if they understood the value of peace with God, the feet of them who bring glad tidings of peace, would be beautiful to them¹

Moreover, because there were, apparently, those who rejoiced when a minister died,² there was a strong inclination to go to the other extreme. Calamy says of Whitaker's death:

It was no small delight to me to behold the tears that were shed at his Funeral. Not that I was glad that there was such cause of sorrow, but to see (in these dayes, especially wherein the godly Ministry is so much undervalued) a Minister that neither lived undesired, nor died unlamented³

The death of a righteous person was said to have spiritual significance for the individual, the church, and the state. While this might be said of the death of any righteous person, it was particularly true in the case of a minister's death. "The death of [a] private Christian is sad, the death of a good Minister is more sad, but the death of a godly and able Minister . . . is very sad indeed."⁴ The capacity for and practice of piety among ministers was almost invariably held to be unequalled by the laity. Laymen were earthly parents;

1 Collinges, op. cit., pp. 19f.

2 Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 18.

3 Edmund Calamy, B. D., "Licenser's Epistle to the Reader", in Ashe, Living Loves, unpag.

4 T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 44.

but ministers were 'spiritual fathers'. So Doolittle's rhetorical question is: "Is a Spiritual Birth a greater Mercy than our Natural Birth, And shall our Natural Parents be lamented when they die, and no sorrow for the other, when they can Preach to us, and Pray with us, and for us no more?"¹ The efficacious praying of a righteous person was of great value and the loss of that prayer through the death of that person was grievous whether he was a clergyman or not; but the loss sustained in the death of a private praying Christian was multiplied in the loss of a praying minister.

Oh! It is a sad losse to lose a praying friend; but a praying Minister is more then an ordinary praying friend: We indeed live in an age, when the Ministry of the Gospel is counted useless, and there is no difference will be owned betwixt the prayers of a godly Christian, and of a godly Minister; but the word of God seems to make a difference.²

Mourning was to be greater for ministers than for others because, "By the Life and Labours of such . . . the Kingdom of Christ is encreased and carried on . . ."³; and, of course, because of their unique office in preparing one for death and eternity.

The Labours of Godly Ministers in their Life, have immediate reference to your holy Living, to your happy Dying, and to your Well-being to all Eternity. Is there any thing in this World concerns you more . . . ?⁴

1 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 113. Cf. Collinges, op. cit., pp. 9, 22.

2 Collinges, op. cit., p. 16. Cf. Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, pp. 112f.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 114.

4 Ibid., pp. 114f.

Another implication of the death of a minister was that it indicated a coming judgment. Not only was the death itself often considered a sad judgment because of the sins of the people, but it was also significant as a portent of future judgment. The deaths of righteous laymen were not entirely excluded from such an interpretation, but, as in the other spiritual implications of death, the conviction was more intense in the case of a minister's death.

Bragg, Thomas Jacombe, and Ashe all have in mind this indefinite, future visitation of wrath. Bragg says sibilantly, ". . . when faithful and pious Ministers are going off so fast from us, 'tis a sad sign of some severe judgment that is coming on apace" ¹ Jacombe agrees: ". . . there cannot be a sadder presage of approaching judgments to a Nation, than the death of such." ² Ashe has in mind all faithful servants: ". . . their departure out of the world, doth more then whisper, the approach of some common judgment." ³ Both Bragg and Ashe deduce that a judgment is imminent from their common text [Isaiah 57:1], "The righteous perisheth . . . and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

For the most part, the exact nature of this judgment is

¹ Robert Bragg, The Life and Death of the Godly Man (London, 1677), p. 27.

² T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 44. Cf. Calamy, in Ashe, Living Loves, unpag.

³ Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 22.

left to the imagination--or to whatever subsequent events would seem to demonstrate the prophecy. Words like 'the consequences of it' or 'what this threatens'¹ or 'approaching judgments' hinted darkly at this calamity without naming it. Collinges, however, enlarges on this 'prognostication to the people.'

1. It sounds, as if Gods work were done, as to treating of souls in that place.
2. It speaks God angry with his own people, either for abusing his Ministers, or sitting unprofitably under the means of grace
3. It speaks as if God would take no further care of his Vineyard
4. And lastly, It speaks some temporal judgment, comming upon the place. God usually takes away his righteous Ministers from an evil to come. . . . I have observed it more than once in my little experience, that the death of a faithful Minister, in a place where he hath done God much service, hath bin attended with a great mortality amongst other persons in that place.²

Even Collinges, it will be observed, masks the judgment under vague words in the first three illustrations; only in the fourth does he offer something more specific and measurable.

Part of the extant evidence illustrating the special treatment accorded the death of ministers, is the number of funeral sermons, often richly laden with eulogy, that were published in their honor. On those occasions when a sermon did not suffice to do honor to the merit of the man, several ministers, and interested laymen of eminent position, contributed elegies which were appended to the published sermon. These

1 Clarkson, op. cit., p. lxxv.

2 Collinges, op. cit., pp. 17f.

elegies included such varying styles as anagrams, acrostics, and epitaphs; and they often added, when printed, several pages to the length of the sermon.¹

A Puritan preacher was most at ease when conducting the funeral of a fellow minister. The lives of such men were well known and the preacher seldom had to fear that undesirable qualities or actions in the deceased would be known to his auditors but not to himself. Even if the man himself had not been perfect, the discharge of his office was sufficient ground for commendation. If he was a minister, he had served Christ, he had preached the Word, he had certainly prayed, he had visited the sick. All of these commendable Christian virtues he discharged as an office bearer. Calamy was confident enough to say, "If I should enter upon his commendation, I might truly say what Nazianzense doth of his sister Gorgonia, That I have more cause to fear least [sic] I should speake below, then above the truth"² Another Puritan concluded a funeral sermon by saying,

I now draw to a conclusion: Some will say, I have not commended him enough: I confess it, nor can I. Others that I have in his commendation said too much, I confess it, but my meaning is, too much perhaps for their liking, too much (I fear) for

1 The elegies published in honor of Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, sixty-six pages in length, put to shame the thirty-two page length of his funeral sermon [S. Faireclough, The Saints Worthinesse] and were published as a separate unit under the title Suffolks Tears: or Elegies on That Renowned Knight Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston (London, 1653).

2 This historical illustration impressed Calamy so much that he used it on at least two occasions. In Ashe, Living Loves, unpag.; and in The Saint's Transfiguration, p. 24.

their imitation.¹

The question of preaching funeral sermons produced six days of vexing disagreement at the Westminster Assembly. The Puritans defended the use of them and, according to Davies,² were thus 'truer sons of Calvin' than their Scottish brethren. Baillie, one of the Scottish representatives, wrote from the Assembly: "Our difference about funerall sermons seems irreconcilable: as it has been here and everywhere preached, it is nothing but ane abuse of preaching, to serve the humours of rich people only for a reward"³ As the practice was open to certain abuses, this charge was not without some justification. The only claim to the attention of posterity, in the case of some ministers, lay in a single funeral sermon published through the financial interest of the wealthy family of the deceased. If this did not constitute a temptation in itself, it did perhaps invite a flattery for the deceased which in life would have been given more stintingly by the exacting Puritan preachers. At any rate, the relief expressed on those occasions when the deceased was obviously of honorable character, suggests that at other times there may have been

1 William Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn Coming in In its Season (London, 1654), p. 37.

2 Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans (Glasgow, 1948), p. 46.

3 George W. Sprott and Thomas Leishman, eds., The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland Commonly Known as John Knox's Liturgy and the Directory for the Public Worship of God Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster (Edinburgh, 1868), p. 362.

some compromise with the full truth. William Jenkyn, declaring himself insufficient for the task of preaching Goudge's funeral sermon, stated that his greatest encouragement for the task lay in the fact that he could be sure he would not be praising an unworthy person.

. . . were I either to commend some prophane person, or some professor whose worth and unworthinesse did hang in aequillibrio, and appear so evenly ballanc'd, that none could tell which of them outweigh'd the other, I might wound my conscience, blast my reputation, or (at least) torture my invention, either to finde out matter of commendation, or a fit manner of expressing thereof. 1

Samuel Reyner said in an elegy for Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston:

None need to stretch his conscience, here to tell
Officious lies for one, that burns in hell;

And thereby make even Boyes and Girls to point,
And say, The Preachers conscience's out of joynt.²

Regardless of possible abuses, it was the accepted practice to deliver a funeral sermon and to devote a portion of it to an exposition of the finer qualities of the deceased; both for his honor and as an example to the living. Because this was the custom, at least one minister forbade the preaching of a sermon at his funeral, ". . . fearing the Preacher should discover a better Opinion of him, then ever he could entertain of himself."³ The manner in which this section of the sermon was introduced shows clearly that it was customary: "This

1 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 1, pref.

2 Samuel Reyner, "An Elegie on that ever honoured Knight, Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston", Suffolks Tears, p. 28.

3 Collingew, op. cit., unpag. epist. ded.

leadeth me to that which you all look for",¹ ". . . .
I know it is expected"²

It would have seemed gross neglect, to the Puritans, to make no reference to the life and death of a man whom God had clearly honored.

. . . since he who thought that seventy nine years on earth were not, nay that eternity in heaven, is not too much to serve and praise his and our Lord, let us not think that half an hour is too much to scatter a few flowers on his Herse³

In fact, the Puritans considered it a "duty" to perform this honor.⁴ It was probably through the efforts of the English Puritans that a clause in the Directory prepared by the Westminster Assembly stated that the restricting nature of the office for the burial of the dead, ". . . shall not extend to deny any civil respects or differences at the Burial, suitable to the rank and condition of the party deceased while he was living."⁵

The words of Paul [Romans 13:7] were construed so that they imposed a duty on men that extended to the funeral service.

Render to every man his due, honour to whom honour is due.

All which being considered, I conclude that it is

1 Ashe, Living Loves, p. 49.

2 Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 25. Introduced in the identical way in Gray Hayres Crowned with Grace (London, 1655), p. 38.

3 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 37.

4 Faireclough, op. cit., p. 10.

5 Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p. 319.

barbarous inhumanity in Nature, injurious detraction in Morality, & Wilfull disobedience in Divinity, to bury the memory and reputation of those in silence and obscurity, whom the Lord, by the manifestation of his grace in them, hath raised to eminencie, and exalted above the standard of the worlds worth and value.¹

The minister was a public person entitled to civil respects. As in the Old Testament theocracy, so in the Puritan commonwealth, the death of godly men was lamented because it was believed that the public safety depended to a large extent on their interest.² The Christian citizen mourned the loss for both church and state. "The Death of such publick Persons is a publick loss" and sorrow for their death ". . . argueth our selves to be of a publick spirit."³

Davies says of the Puritan preacher that "He could not afford to trick out his discourses with the flowers of rhetoric or scholarship. His aim was not to delight his hearers but to strike for a verdict in their souls."⁴ Miss Levy, speaking of the 'English-bred' ministers who preached to the New England congregations in the seventeenth century, is in essential agreement with Davies: "Grandiloquence he never indulged in, and any parade of human learning was felt to be definitely out-of-place."⁵ Little quarrel can be made with these state-

1 Faireclough, op. cit., p. 2.

2 Ashe, Living Loves, p. 49.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, pp. 112, 114.

4 Davies, op. cit., pp. 202f.

5 Babette May Levy, Preaching in the First Half Century of New England History (Hartford, 1945), p. 133.

ments outside of the funeral sermons; but the funeral occasion offered the opportunity to exhibit both eloquence and scholarship. The published sermon was frequently sprinkled with words and phrases from the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, with the margins full of additional Scripture references, both canonical and apocryphal, words from the original languages, and citations, with sources, from the church fathers and classical writers. It was common for the elegies that were often appended to the sermon to be written in Latin, and examples composed in Greek can also be found. The titles of the sermons themselves were sometimes in Greek.

Examples of rhetoric and oratory abound. Even ignoring the elegies, which had the faults of lavish praise that so often accompany the emotional poetry of the amateur, we find that few funeral sermons fail to attempt some eloquence.

Fairfax says of Newcomen:

Thou whose natural gifts and abilities were like
Aarons Plate of pure gold upon the breast, whereon
holiness to the Lord was engrave Thou a
 glistering, glorious star in the right hand of God
 Thou whose tongue was as choice silver . . .
 Whose life shined as the light.¹

Thomas Jacombe praises Vines: "He was a burning and a shining light; An Interpreter, one of a thousand"² Calamy repeats this popular metaphor and goes on to praise Bolton with Greek and Latin tributes.³ George Bound, too, presents

1 F[airfax], op. cit., pp. 13, 14.

2 T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 41.

3 Calamy, The Saints Transfiguration, pp. 24ff.

a variant of the 'light' metaphor:

Your Town of Brentwood is famous for its, situation upon an Hill, but its eminency of late years was much from Mr. Goodwins Ministry in that place: Your Hill seemed to be the Candlestick, whereon this burning and shining light was set: He was a Tower, a Beacon, on this Hill.¹

At least one minister earned a reputation by the accomplished rhetoric of his funeral preaching, for Thomas Jacombe says of Richard Vines: "His Sermon preached at the Funeral of the Right Honourable the Earl of Essex, doth prove him to be an excellent Rhetorican [sic], and eloquent Oratour."² Yet few men aspired to such a reputation--or at least most protested their inability to perform the task, which is not quite the same thing--and had to be importuned to prepare the sermon for the press. "This must be the work of some divine Apelles, and not mine; for how can the Sun be inlightned by a starre, or the fountain be watered by its own stream?"³

Funeral sermons for exemplary men had a dual purpose: ". . . that it might speak somewhat of his worth, and become serviceable to the publick."⁴ Although funeral sermons were preached for the due honor of the dead, they were for the

1 G[eorge] B[ownd, or Bound], A Voyce from Heaven, Speaking Good words and Comfortable words, concerning Saints departed (London, 1659), unpag. epist. ded.

2 T. Jacombe, op. cit., unpag. to the reader.

3 S. Faireclough, op. cit., p. 11. Ashe, Robinson, Thomas Jacombe, and Collinges, all recite the proper protestations.

4 Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, unpag. ded.

benefit of the living.¹ Epaphroditus gives the following directions for the sermon at his own funeral:

At the time of my burial, when the people be gathered together, I would gladly have some learned man to make a sermon, wherein the people may be admonished of their mortality, and be taught how they ought to dispose themselves in this life, that, when the time come, they may yield up a good soul into the hands of the living God. For his pains I appoint ten shillings to be given him.²

Ashe would have his hearers make up the 'breach' caused by the death of Robert Strange by coming to Christ, and expresses the hope that his sermon may prove profitable to that end.³

The opportunity to sound a clarion call for repentance, holier living, and preparation for death, was not neglected; neither was the call without results. One of Baxter's auditors acknowledged that she had been 'much taken with' a funeral sermon preached by him and Baxter was persuaded that it 'did her much good.'⁴ It was a funeral sermon preached by Dr. Bambridge that awakened Thomas Goodwin. Goodwin had given himself over to the 'strength of his lusts' and had ". . . resolved to follow the World . . .",⁵ when

1 Richard Baxter, A True Believer's Choice, Works, XVIII, 117.

2 Bacon, op. cit., p. 119. Perhaps such financial remuneration as is here recommended is the occasion for Baillie's sneer at the Puritan defense of funeral sermons: ". . . it's here a good part of the minister's livelyhood; therefore they will not quit it." [Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p. 362.]

3 Ashe, The Efficiency of Gods Grace, p. 41.

4 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 4, to the reader.

5 Thomas Goodwin, The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D., V (London, 1704), vi.

a companion urged him to attend a funeral service. Dr. Bambridge's sermon is, unfortunately, lost to posterity, but Goodwin remembered its essence and impact years later.¹ He said of it, in part,

The matter of the Sermon was vehemently urged on the Hearer (whoever he was that deferr'd his Repentance) not to let slip the Opportunity of that day, but immediately to turn to God, and defer no longer; being edged with that direful Threatening, lest if he did not turn to God in that day, the Day of Grace and Salvation, it might be eternally hid from his Eyes.

I thought my self to be as one struck down by a mighty Power.²

As the Puritan employed it, the funeral sermon was also useful as an extension of the 'spectacle method'. It had been the practice--as its name suggests--for people to crowd around the dying person during his expiring moments in order to watch how it was done. Thus, for instance, did the mother of Henry VII learn to die: "And when it pleased god to call any of them out of this wretched worlde she wolde be presente to se theym departe and to lerne to deye."³ Collmer⁴ notes, however, that by the seventeenth century, the spectacle method was no longer generally practiced. The reason for

1 He states parenthetically that he had heard the sermon once before which doubtless aided his memory. [Ibid., p. vii.]

2 Ibid.

3 John Fisher, The English Works of John Fisher, collected by John Mayor (London, 1876), p. 297.

4 Robert Collmer, "The Concept of Death in the Poetry of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1953), p. 94.

the decline in the popularity of this method is that the last sixty minutes in this world had ceased to be a man's sole concern. The business of dying concerned not just an hour, but eternity; and demanded not just a formula, but a life. The church of the Middle Ages had made no distinction between the repentant and the unrepentant in directing them in the way to die, but the Puritans approved this "altogether post-Reformation"¹ distinction and went on to assert that a comfortable death required a long life of preparation. Combined with distrust of the deathbed repentance, this demand for a whole life of preparation diminished the emphasis on dying as a technique.

Yet, even apart from the funeral sermon, vestiges of the spectacle method certainly remained. Baxter urged, as an aid to crucifying the world, ". . . be much in the house of mourning, and see the end of all the living" ² He approved of the way Elizabeth Baker 'improved' the deaths in her family.

As at the death of her son, who died with sighs and groans, she recorded her sense of the special necessity of holy armour, and great preparation, for encounter, when her turn should come to be so removed to the everlasting habitation.³

Paget has a particularly interesting passage recommending

¹ Mary Catherine O'Connor, The Art of Dying Well The Development of the Ars Moriendi (New York, 1942), p. 211.

² Baxter, The Crucifying of the World, Works, IX, 496.

³ Idem, Some Imitable Passages of the Life of Elizabeth, Late Wife of Mr. Joseph Baker, Works, XVII, 601.

the spectacle method. So highly does he value the practice that he compares it with the double portion of Elijah's spirit which Elisha received when he saw him being taken up.

Though we may not inquire at the dead, Deut.18.11. yet at the dying we may learne many wholesome lessons, as of repentance from their complaints of their sins bewailed, of faith from their joyfull professions of their hope & the examples of their constancy, and of our owne mortality & frailty . . . all the symptomes of death are so many warn-ings unto the living to watch and prepare for their end. Whosoever would be well prepared for death, let them often repaire to such mourning houses, let them so visit others in these cases that withall they see & learne themselves that which God doth there so plainly teach them. That which Elias sayd unto Elisha, wh^{ch} he had prayed for a double portion of his spirit, If thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee: 2.Kin.2.9.10. may in some measure in another respect be sayd unto us, wh^{ch} seeing others taken away, that very act with the circumstances of their departure is a meanes to increase the spirit in us, yea, to double our care & comfort in looking for our end.¹

Moreover, if, as Collmer suggests, wherever the expression 'learn to die' is used, ". . . the spectacle method lurks in the background. . . ."² then a large body of Puritan literature on death has kinship with the spectacle method.

But there are more immediate evidences of relation to the spectacle method in Puritan funeral sermons than the expression 'learn to die'. The last illness of the deceased, his dying day and hour, his last words of advice and triumph, the closing scene, were all faithfully presented in the funeral sermon when they were of a type worth imitating.

1 Paget, op. cit., pp. 409f.

2 Collmer, op. cit., p. 96.

Since the medieval practice of bringing all of the observers into the room of the dying was not much urged, the funeral sermon was adapted as a way to bring the death scenes to the people: a transcription of the triumphant words and acts of the dying.

. . . he had this peculiar dispensation, That he preached as effectually by his death as by his life or Doctrine. For the manner of his sicknesse and death speaketh to all that saw it, or shal [sic] now know it by reading this Sermon.¹

The funeral sermon served the same purpose as the spectacle method.

And funeral sermons are . . . for the benefit . . . of the living, to teach us all to prepare for death And wherein doth our preparation for death so much consist, as foreseeing what so great a change will need, and what a trial it will put our faith and hope to, to seek and get such security for our everlasting state, and such sound belief of it, and settled content and comfort in it, which the fears of death, judgment, and hell, may not shake or overcome²

In his rigorous introspective search for sin, the Puritan discovered that the death of loved ones was frequently the result of the sins of those related to them. This bears the impress of covenant theology which sought to emphasize the affinity between actual sins and death at the cost of the affinity between original sin and death. When a loved one or a minister died, the Puritan was to look for the cause of it in his own sinful action. "I tell you, if your heads were Fountains of waters, and your eyes Rivers of tears, you could

1 Calamy, in Ashe, Living Loves, unpag.

2 Baxter, A True Believer's Choice, Works, XVIII, 117f.

never enough bewail those sins by which you have sinned so many godly Ministers into their graves of late"¹
 When a dear relative was taken the Puritan was urged: ". . . consider thy sins both in it and toward it."² A lay writer asked:

How have we angered Heaven? what ugly sin
 Hath in this wretched City harbour'd been?

 That we should live to see the angry hand
 Of God stretch't against our Church and Land.³

Ashe directed, "Charge your losses and the consequential sorrows upon your sins, as the deserving causes thereof."⁴

The sins that brought about the deaths of relatives and ministers were usually either sins of neglect, or the opposite, sins of excessive love and attention. A minister's death might be a result of both types of sins.

God oft takes away Prophets and Ministers, they have their decease to punish the unprofitableness and unthankfulness of their people, that never knew how to prize and value them in the time of their enjoying them.

.
 They must die as they are Prophets, because perhaps their own Friends have idoliz'd them, and put them in the room of God [God] will not have the Servant advanced above himself nor the man above the Master; the way to be without Ministers, is to think you cannot be without them⁵

Clarkson spoke of sin of neglect:

1 Bragg, op. cit., p. 27.

2 Lee, op. cit., p. 147.

3 Playre, op. cit., p. 59.

4 Ashe, Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 21.

5 Jenkyn, Exodus, pp. 29, 32.

We had a Light in our Candlestick that did not only enlighten the Room, but gave Light to others far and near; but it is extinguished; we did not sufficiently value it: I wish we might not say our sins have put it out Woe unto us, for we have sinned; we have lost an excellent Pilot, when we have most need of him¹

Doolittle felt that the right kind of sorrow for the death of relatives would lead to sorrow for the sins of neglect toward them while they were alive, and bring forth more love to relatives yet alive.²

Kindly Sorrow in this Case will usher in Sorrow for our Sin, especially such Sins as at such a time come to our Thoughts, relating to the Persons whose Death we mourn for; as neglect of our Duty to them, unjust and ungrounded grieving of them, or any sinful and unsuitable [sic] Carriage towards them, when they lived with us.³

The more common fault was excessive love for the creatures. In their attempt to define the proper degree of sorrow, the Puritans condemned this sin also. A repeated warning was: "The way to shorten the best mens lives, is for people to think they cannot live without them."⁴

. . . you must love them . . . but according to the Measure that God allows; for, to love . . . your Relations . . . immoderately, will not be to be thankful for them; but, to abuse them, and make Idols of them.⁵

1 Clarkson, op. cit., pp. lxxiv-lxxv.

2 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 63.

3 Ibid., p. 48.

4 Jacombe, Moses His Death, p. 10. Cf. Jenkyn, Exodus, p. 32; Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 25.

5 Thomas Doolittle, תשובה ל'קול' אר, A Serious Enquiry for a Suitable Return, for Continued Life, in and after a Time of Great Mortality, by a Wasting Plague: (Anno 1665.)

The word 'idol' was a particularly well chosen word, from the Puritan point of view, because it expressed succinctly the fear that by excessive love for the creature, God's position would be usurped. "I hope," said Baxter to the Countess of Balcarres, ". . . this loss also shall promote your gain, by keeping you nearer to your heavenly Lord, who is jealous of your affections, and resolved to have them entirely to himself" ¹

The Puritans believed that when the creature was loved too much God often removed the loved one by death in order to bring the offender back into a proper relationship with Himself.

It may be God had too little of your love, and it was an offence, and grieve unto your God, that the Creature should have that love which was due unto himself; and therefore he hath cut off the Streames, that you may get nearer to the Fountain. ²

It was the opinion of Clarkson's eldest daughter that she had provoked God by idolizing her husband so that he was taken from her.

. . . my inordinate love to the creature, and want of submission to the will of the Lord, in disposing of what I had so unduly set my heart on, prepared me to look for awful things, in a way of judgment from the righteous God, which I afterwards found; his hand was soon laid on that very object by which I had so provoked him; for a disorder seized him, under which he long languished, till it ended in

Answered in XIII Directions (London, 1666), p. 290.

1 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 111, epist. ded.

2 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 270. Cf. Idem, The Mourners Directory, p. 61.

his death.¹

If friends are selfishly loved, said the Puritan, ". . . it is just with God to take them from you, to teach you . . . to know that your own felicity is not in the hands of any creature, but of God alone."²

In his search for the proper balance between insufficient sorrow and excessive sorrow, the Puritan wrestled with every aspect of the problem. Both extremes were sinful. If, as Doolittle insisted, behind all deaths there are sins of relatives causing the forfeiture of those lives,³ it would appear that the proper balance was seldom attained. Men fell into either the sin of neglect or the sin of excess. The latter, however, was regarded as the more heinous because excessive love for the creature was held to imply a deficient love for God.

1 David Clarkson, The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., I (Edinburgh, 1864-5), xvi, pref. note.

2 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 315.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 32.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

Whenever the unknown thrusts itself upon the human mind, the probabilities are that it will be received with apprehension and fear. Because the state after death was unknown to the Puritan, he dreaded it. Even with the strong eye of faith he could only see over and beyond this intermediate state. He could not see into it. He professed that he did not really want to see into that void because it was either too ugly or too attractive. "If godly parents should see the soules of their children carried away to destruction in the claws of an hellish dragon, & crying unto them with a lamentable and desperate voyce," said dismal Paget, "what horroure & woe would this be unto them" ¹ Clarkson, on the other hand, is certain that "If so be we had the full discovery of the Glory that shall be put upon the Bodies of the Saints . . . it would be as hard to persuade the Saints to be content to live upon Earth, as it is to persuade the Men of the World to die" ² But neither of these arguments sufficed to put the Puritan's mind at ease. The soul, he knew, went to be with God, but of the body he knew only that it would be raised at the last day. What the body experienced in this strange 'separated' state he could only

¹ John Paget, Meditations of Death, Wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end (Dort, 1639), p. 81.

² David Clarkson, A Funeral Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Late Reverend and Learned Divine John Owen, D.D. (London, 1720), p. lxii.

surmise, and the uncertainty expressed by the Early Church concerning the intermediate state only confirmed the uneasiness he felt when he looked into the grave.

Throughout the history of the church, theologians had been uncertain about the state after death and out of this uncertainty had grown curious doctrines. The Puritans rejected the doctrines but they were unable to eliminate the uncertainty--and the fear that uncertainty inspires.

The earliest thinking of the church was that men entered the eternal state they deserved before the judgment, or else waited in places which indicated and to some extent provided the rewards or punishments they were to receive after the judgment.¹ These early theologians believed in a purging fire but not in a Purgatory. Origen, with whom the concept of a purging fire had its beginning, conceived of the pains of even the damned (in keeping with his Platonic view of the progressing or declining soul) as merely purgatorial,² and many early theologians believed in a purging fire. This is

1 Thus Irenaeus says, ". . . it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also . . . shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection" [Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", trans. Alexander Roberts and W. H. Rambaut, in Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, IX (Edinburgh, 1868), 140.] Cf. Cyprian: "The righteous are called to their place of refreshing, the unrighteous are snatched away to punishment; safety is the more speedily given to the faithful, penalty to the unbelieving." [Cyprian, "On the Mortality", trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, VIII, 461.]

2 Origen on First Principles, trans. G. W. Butterworth (London, 1936), pp. 52f, 57.

not to be confused, however, with the later doctrine of Purgatory: in the first place the purging fire was commonly associated with the judgment and occurred at it or after it; in the second place it was something everyone passed through. Yet the purging fires which were to cleanse the Christian from the last vestige of sin repented but not fully paid in penance¹ became the fires of hell. What had been a rather comforting doctrine in its assurance that the Christian who was not fully sanctified would not perish forever, became an ominous concern. By the tenth century the fires of hell were kindled in the intermediate state.²

The Puritans stamped out the purging fires and declared that the status of the dead was fixed, without change or adjustment. Ridicule was heaped upon the "superstitious Papists" for bequeathing their lands to priests to pray for them in Purgatory.³ But the mixture of dread and uncertainty that had fed the original flame remained. Just as medieval man had no real dread of hell (because he did not seriously consider himself bound for hell) but could not expect to

1 "Yet we have here further to consider, that none can be there purged, no, not for the least sins that be, unless in his lifetime he deserved by virtuous works to find such favour in that place." [The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, ed. Henry James Coleridge (London, 1874), p. 276.]

2 John Laurence Von Mosheim, Institutes of Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern, trans. James Murdock, ed. Henry Soames, II (London, 1841), 291.

3 Richard Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, in The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, XVIII (London, 1830), 25.

escape Purgatory,¹ so the Puritan was quite confident of his final state but had no hope of avoiding the dread intermediate state.

Beginning with Tertullian,² followed by Cyprian,³ Gregory Nazianzum,⁴ Chrysostom,⁵ and others, the idea of praying for the dead took root in Christian writers. The idea was not original in Christian thought,⁶ and when it entered the Christian Church, it afforded an opportunity for much verbose confusion among the church voices of the time and for more blatant shouting fourteen centuries later.

Attempts have been made to see the value of this practice apart from a purgatorial setting; but the shrewd Schoolmen asked the obvious question when they wanted to know why prayers should be offered for the dead unless it could do

1 Von Mosheim, op. cit., II, 291.

2 "Indeed, she prays for his soul, and requests refreshment for him meanwhile, and fellowship [with him] in the first resurrection" [Tertullian, "On Monogamy", trans. S. Thelwall, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, XVIII, 41.]

3 Cyprian, "Epistle XXXIII", trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, VIII, 96f.

4 Gregory Nazianzum, "Oration VII", in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, ed. Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, VII (Oxford, 1894), 235.

5 Chrysostom, "Homily XLI", The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, in A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church Anterior to the Division of the East and West, IV (Oxford, 1839), 592.

6 The idea may be found in the Second Book of Maccabees [12:43-46] which was probably written in the first or second century B.C.

them some good. It seemed to Aquinas a natural bond in thought to link the idea of a Purgatory with prayers for the dead. Speaking in reference to II Maccabees 12:46 he said,

Now there is no need to pray for the dead who are in heaven, for they are in no need; nor again for those who are in hell, because they cannot be loosed from sins. Therefore after this life, there are some not yet loosed from sins, who can be loosed therefrom¹

Calvin quite agreed that a potential unity existed between these two ideas and for that reason wanted no part of the practice.² Perhaps the two ideas can stand or fall separately but the fraternal bond between them seemed most natural to both the Roman Church and to the Puritans and they accepted or rejected them as being of one flesh.³

Two constituents of these early prayers for the departed, praying for a speedy resurrection or for the first resurrection, clearly indicate that the intermediate state was considered something from which early deliverance was desirable. Baxter took a novel position not far different from

¹ Thomas Aquinas, The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Third Part (Supplement) (London, 1922), p. 237.

² John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, I (8th Am. ed., rev. and cor.; Grand Rapids, 1949), pp. 741-743.

³ The anxiety with which a return to such practices was viewed is reflected in the Directory which came out of the Westminster Assembly wherein any praying in connection with burial was forbidden lest it be abused. [George W. Sprott and Thomas Leishman, "Concerning Burial of the Dead," in The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland Commonly Known as John Knox's Liturgy and The Directory For the Public Worship of God Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster (Edinburgh, 1868), p. 318.]

this. He did not, of course, countenance praying for the dead, but he did suggest the possibility of the separated soul praying for its own body. The soul has no need of prayer because it possesses all things, but "Whether the soul pray for the body's resurrection . . . is to me yet unknown" ¹

The early Anglicans, however, did not wish to eradicate the ancient prayers for the dead from their liturgical practices;² and today's Anglican is still the defender of this preservation. Most of the excuses that have been made for the practice to prove that it is a legitimate religious exercise, reveal, significantly, an incertitude regarding the intermediate state. Browne³ cites five, of which four speak out of lack of assurance. With interesting casuistry he suggests that prayers for the dead were really quite innocent and justifiable because, although the eternal state of the departed may be already decided, yet it is unknown to the one who prays and thus, for him, is future. He can pray in the future tense for that which is already past because he is ignorant of it. The Puritans countenanced no such view because they were convinced that death was indeed the

1 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 47.

2 Edgar C. S. Gibson, The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (7th ed.; London, 1910), pp. 537f. Cf. Harold E. Browne, An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles Historical and Doctrinal (4th ed.; London, 1858), pp. 496f.

3 H. E. Browne, op. cit., pp. 395f.

dividing line.¹ They were unwilling to modify that view with casuistry. The state of the dead is so rigidly determined that "The one sort have no need of prayer; for they be already in most blessed state and joyful rest; and the other are in so damnable case, that prayer can do no good for them"²

Prayers for the dead and the purging fires had found a place in the Roman doctrine of Purgatory and Purgatory was an error to be rejected. If the heresy of the Medieval Church could grow out of the seed of innocent error in the Early Church, then the Fathers³ responsible were to be rebuked and both seed and fruit destroyed. The seed had indeed borne bitter fruit. That which had begun with the seemingly innocent prayers for the dead had been cross-pollinated by the conception of a purgatorial fire for Christians that they might not come into the presence of God impure, fertil-

1 Edward Pearce, The Great Concern (19th ed.; London, 1697), pp. 32f. However, there was a fringe element within the Ranters called the Clements who believed in repentance after death. [C. E. Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688 (London, 1931), p. 273.]

2 Thomas Becon, The Sick Man's Salve in Works of Thomas Becon, ed. John Ayre, III (Cambridge, 1844), p. 129.

3 Even Augustine said that ". . . temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before that last and strictest judgment." [The City of God, in The Works of Aurelius Augustine, ed. Marcus Dods, II, 2 (Edinburgh, 1871), pp. 439f.] He also believed in the legitimacy of prayers for the dead, asserting it to be one of Aerius' errors that he declared against oblation for the dead. ["De Haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum", in Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia, Tomus Octavus, Pars Prior (Paris, MDCCCXXXVII), p. 55.]

ized by the desire to do away with an eternal hell and watered by the lust for ecclesiastical power through indulgences and the merit of saints' deaths. Puritanism killed the plant but left undisturbed the soil of apprehension in which it had flourished.

The Puritans violently rejected a Purgatory that eliminated everlasting punishment in hell, but themselves held a conception of an intermediate state that rivalled the Roman idea in degree of dread inspired. The Puritans expected all of the torment of the purgatorial state with none of the benefit. For them, too, it was penal, but retributive, not cleansing; it was static, not progressive. Purgatory, for all its evil and dread, did have a beneficent side even after the fires of hell were kindled there, for it was hell in a relatively brief time and one could buy one's way out with indulgences.

Purgatory partook of some of the qualities of this life while the Puritan intermediate state was more a state of death than life.¹ The significance the Puritans attached to death as the dividing line may be all that is needed to mark the reason for this difference; and yet, amongst the inchoate ideas about Purgatory, there was no suggestion that

¹ Clarkson, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, refers to the intermediate state as a state of death when he says, "He continued not under the power of death for ever, nor as others who suffer death must do, till the general resurrection" [Clarkson, Christ's Dying For Sinners, in The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., III (Edinburgh, 1864-5), 69.]

there was a renewed or continued opportunity for decision after death. Rather, Purgatory was a continuance of the cleansing begun in this life and on the basis of a decision made in this life. Intrinsically, Purgatory was an extension of the doctrine of penance rather than an hypothesis of eschatology. Purgatorial punishments are spoken of as temporal punishments¹ and as such are connected with this world of time more than with the next world of eternity.

The Puritan intermediate state was rather a state of death. It represented the grim failure of the attempt to assign redemption to the individual at death, as a result of discovering in both nature and the Bible the knowledge that the body must await the general redemption of the whole creation. Cut off from this life by the fact of death, the intermediate state was likewise cut off from the life in heaven for that demanded a resurrected body. Although affianced to that state by promise, fulfillment could come only at the resurrection.

Yet, at first glance, it would seem that the Puritans should have viewed the intermediate state as a profitable thing: the soul, perfected, went to be with God, and the body was finally subjugated, receiving the mortification its owner could never quite manage in his ascetic efforts in this life. For the bulk of the Puritans, the body was a great

¹ The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent, trans. J. Waterworth (London, 1848), Session VI, Cannon XXX.

hindrance to the soul anyway. The body was frequently referred to as a "prison",¹ or as ". . . the fetters and manacles of the soul",² and the soul was ". . . hidden in the body as a man in a dark dungeon"³

If the body was called a "deseased lump of dirt"⁴ while alive, that was mild compared with the invective heaped upon the dead body. It crumbled to dust⁵ and lodged in dishonour.⁶ "Rottenness" and "putrefaction" are favorite terms used to describe its condition,⁷ and a really imaginative description referred to its ugliness and rotten smell: "Looke upon the flesh as it is presented unto us even by the first death; behold the rottennes thereof in the grave, the horroure & ugliness together with the lothsome smell thereof."⁸ Baxter offends all but seventeenth century aesthetics when he compares the dead body to so much human excrement.⁹ (And yet Baxter

1 Bacon, op. cit., pp. 124, 144. Cf. Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 545.

2 Edmund Calamy, B.D., The Saints Transfiguration (London, 1655), p. 4.

3 Ibid.

4 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 55.

5 Pearse, op. cit., p. 14. Cf. Calamy, op. cit., p. 6.

6 Paget, op. cit., p. 86.

7 Pearse, op. cit., p. 74. Cf. Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 27; Idem, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 548; Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 549.

8 Paget, op. cit., p. 375.

9 Baxter, Mr. Baxter's Dying Thoughts, Works, XVIII, 307f.

said that the body [and the soul] ". . . considered as the workmanship of God, must not be thought or spoke contemptibly of" ¹)

In the stratification of Puritan thinking, the soul was on a much higher plane than the body. That which was considered highest and best in man by the thinkers of the seventeenth century, the Puritans attached to the soul. This was the age of reason. Intellect, reason, and will, these were the lauded qualities of man and all these, said the Puritans, are summed up in the soul.

If you know what intellection, or reason and free-will are, you may know what it is to have a spiritual nature, essentially containing the power of reasoning and willing. It is thy soul by which thou art thinking and asking what a soul is; and as he that reasoneth to prove that man hath no reason, doth prove that he hath reason by reasoning against it; so he that reasoneth to prove that he hath no soul, doth thereby prove that he hath a reasonable (though abused) soul.²

Speaking on the last words of Stephen: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" [Acts 7:59], Baxter says, "By 'spirit,' here can be meant nothing but the rational soul, which is the principal constitutive part of man."³ Whether or not Baxter and the rest of the Puritans were influenced by Descartes who made both "God" and "I" intellectual abstractions--his "I" being merely the 'thinking part of me'⁴--it is clear that for them

1 Idem, The Crucifying of the World, Works, IX, 345.

2 Idem, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 13f.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (London, 1950), p. 86.

the soul tended to become the "I".

By virtue of being soul, it is immortal; having an
 ". . . aptitude in the nature of the soul to be immortal
" ¹ Being, in fact, ". . . a Beam of God's own Immor-
 tality breathed into the Body" ² Souls are ". . . so
 much more precious than . . . bodies" ³ As if this
 were not enough, Baxter says: "It is thy soul that is said
 to be made after God's image" ⁴ To define 'soul',
 moreover, is to define 'man'. ⁵ The soul is the whole man.
 ". . . indeed it [the soul] is in a manner the whole man;
 for Abraham was Abraham when he was dead, when his soul was
 in heaven, and his body in the grave. It is the whole man." ⁶

The body, on the other hand, stood by wretchedly and
 received quantities of abuse. The body was considered a vile
 thing. In the detailing fashion of the age Calamy enumerated
 in what respects the body may be said to be a vile body:

1. . . . it was made . . . not of dust simply, but
 of dust mingled with water
2. . . . subject to vile diseases
3. . . . subject to vile abuses by Tyrants and
cruell Persecuters
4. . . . our bodies are instruments of unrighteous-

1 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 16.

2 Pearse, op. cit., p. 164.

3 Baxter, A Sermon of Judgment, Works, XVII, 452.

4 Idem, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 14.

5 Ibid., p. 13.

6 Richard Sibbes, Balaam's VVish, in The Complete Works
 of Richard Sibbes, D.D., ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, VII
 (Edinburgh, 1864), 4.

- ness unto sinne
5. Because even in the best of Saints, it is a great impediment and hindrance to their immortall souls, and therefore called sepulchrum animae, and vinculum animae
 6. . . . in reference to its dissolution and separation, For when it once dies, it is then evident to an eye of flesh, that it is nothing but a rotten, stinking, putrifying carcass an ugly, deformed, gastly carcass, mouldring quickly into dust
 7. . . . in comparison of the precious soul. The body is the worst half of man
 8. . . . in comparison of what it shall be at the great day of the resurrection¹

The body, in short, is ". . . the worst half of man, the boxe, the shell, the carcasse: . . . the Soul is the Jewel, the life, the man of man."²

The body was unforgivably vile because of its intimate connection with sin and death. One of the blessings of death was that then the body ". . . ceaseth to be either an active or passive instrument of sinne, whereas in the life time it is both."³ Milton never forgave Eve and the soul never forgave the body for involving the whole man in the Fall and in continual sin. ". . . the Flesh like a wicked traitour openeth the gates of our soules when we are assaulted, and receiving the pay of the worldly vanities, loyneth with these externall forces to worke our finall ouerthrow."⁴

¹ Calamy, op. cit., pp. 3-7. Thomas Pierce, although not a Puritan, in like manner lists six respects in which the body is "Vile and Contemptible". [Death consider'd as a Door to a Life of Glory (London, [1690?]), pp. 94-103.]

² Calamy, op. cit., p. 2 intro. Cf. Zachary Crofton, A Defence Against Dread of Death (1665), p. 96.

³ W. Perkins, A Salve for a Sicke Man (Cambridge, 1595), p. 107.

⁴ John Downame, The Christian Warfare (London, 1633),

The soul, freed from the vile body and received by Christ,¹ entered a "perfect freedom of the spirit"² where it enjoyed "rest, life, and celestial glorie"³ in the "immediate Presence of God".⁴ The state of the soul defied definition in its sublimity; the angels at the instant of dissolution conducted the soul to God and eternal happiness.⁵ The soul went immediately to reign with God.⁶ This reigning or judging is interpreted as governing. Since men became like and equal to the angels, they did the same work as angels. "And as the angels have a . . . superintendency over men and their affairs . . . so also shall the saints: and it is not likely that this is wholly deferred till the resurrection" ⁷ So the intermediate state for the soul was one of bliss. The soul was with God in Paradise, seeing Him face to face, enjoying the pleasures of a more perfect love and praises of God, and filled with the pleasures of His

unpag. to the reader.

1 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 18.

2 Perkins, op. cit., unpag. ded.

3 Ibid., p. 107.

4 Pearse, op. cit., p. 74.

5 Thomas Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote Against Sinful Contagion in Dying Times. A Cordial for Believers in Dying Times. with A Corrosive for Wicked Men in Dying Times (London, 1665) p. 104.

6 Bacon, op. cit., p. 124.

7 Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 545.

love.¹ The soul was in a state of Paradise, 'in possession of the Kingdom'² ". . . without any possibility of change or alteration for ever"³

But all was not well in this midnight hour of separation even for the soul. Baxter sounds the note of anxiety when he says,

The state of a soul incorporated we know by long experience. What kind of apprehensions, volitions, and affections belong to a soul while it acteth in the body, we feel or understand, but what manner of knowledge, will, or love, what joy, what sorrow, belong to souls that are separated from the bodies, it is not possible for us now distinctly and formally to conceive.⁴

What lies behind such a nervous statement is the unconscious suspicion that perhaps the soul after it leaves the body will not be the same soul at all. What the soul (the reasoning, knowing, feeling, willing, part of man⁵) knows or wills or feels in a separated state, it is impossible for us to conceive distinctly. Thus the "I" that is made up of the combined body and soul is lost, it is suspected the soul may be different (and in the very faculties that make it a soul), and the body lies putrefying in the grave. This overwhelming state of affairs prompts Baxter to admit that

1 Ibid., p. 546.

2 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 78.

3 Pearse, op. cit., p. 76.

4 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 534. Cf. Idem, Faithful Souls Shall Be With Christ, Works, XVIII, 141.

5 Idem, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 13.

even ". . . good men have been haunted with this horrible temptation" to question the very existence of such a state.¹

The sheer fact of separation is the real anguish of the intermediate state both to the body and to the soul. Baxter, again the spokesman, exposes his deepest dread.

And it is not only to the body, but to the soul also, that death is naturally an enemy. The soul hath naturally a love and inclination to its body, and therefore it feareth a separation before, and desireth a restoration afterward. Abstracting joy and torment, heaven and hell, in our consideration, the state of separation as such is a natural evil: even to the human soul of Christ it was so, while his body remained in the grave. Which separated state is the hades, which our English calleth hell, that Christ is said to have gone into.²

Removing all the orthodox attempts to say the right thing, the most shocking point that emerges is that the separated state is called hell! Baxter states later that it is a better state for the soul than this life but even in the midst of that attempt he breaks out again in spite of himself: "The separation as such is still an evil"³

The Puritan dreaded the intermediate state because there he ceased to be. In the dissolution that occurred at death, the parts of the man were preserved, the body and soul were each united with Christ,⁴ the members were "written in Gods

1 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 534.

2 Ibid., p. 530. Cf. John Goodwin, Mercy in Her Exaltation (London, 1655), pp. 16f.

3 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 530.

4 Sibbes, op. cit., p. 6.

book",¹ his dust was "regarded" by God²; yet the man was no more. Death; ". . . by separating the soul from the body, and dissolving the body into its principles," in the strict negative of logic, ". . . maketh a man to become no man"³ Although the names of the dead were on the heavenly rolls, although they were remembered here on earth, and although their souls were with God and their bodies kept by Him, they had ceased to be subjectively. Other men might remember them as an objective unity but they would not know themselves to be so. The soul and body, preserved but separate, are not one, for they must be together to constitute a unity. The complete man is more than the sum of his parts.⁴

To speak of the end of their 'being' was a fine philosophical way of stating their objection to the intermediate state. Why should they dread the intermediate state if the body was insensible⁵ and the soul with God?⁶ If both body and soul were more intimately joined to Christ than ever

1 Crofton, op. cit., p. 100.

2 Ibid., p. 152.

3 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 529.

4 For Milton, however, any differentiation between the "whole man" and "whole of man" was no better than a "sophistical distinction". [De Doctrina Christiana, in The Works of John Milton, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, XV (New York, 1931-38), 227.]

5 ". . . suppose mens foolish envy should digg up my stinking carcass, to burn or bury it under the Gallows; they may annoy themselves, they cannot afflict me: sure I am, they can do nothing under the Sun, which shall concerne me when I am dead" [Crofton, op. cit., pp. 69-70.]

6 Perkins, op. cit., p. 97.

they were to each other? Because while body and soul are separated, "I" becomes a "nonentity".¹ That which is lost in the intermediate state is "the enjoyment of my self".² Man occupied a high place in the hierarchical order of things and it was just because he had such a high place in the 'great chain of being' that dissolution was so calamitous. "Death doth destroy my being; when I am dead I am not; can dissolution choose but diotate dread to sensible, much more to rational beings?"³ If the main intellectual problem of the seventeenth century was the separation of the 'true' from the 'false',⁴ the irreducible emotional problem was the separation of the soul from the body.

But a man suffered more than the destruction of the "I" in the intermediate state. Each of his parts also suffered separately. Not until the resurrection when body and soul would be joined together again would the suffering for each be over; not until then would death lose its sting.⁵ The 'whole man' suffered apprehensively in this life as he faced the

1 Crofton, op. cit., p. 109. In the opinion of Basil Willey, the philosopher Hobbes also believed that the man ceased to be at death but in a much more ultimate and final sense. "Soul" for him simply meant "life". The proposition completes itself simply from such a premise. Hobbes felt that the idea that the soul continues after death came from Greek demonology. [Willey, op. cit., pp. 104-5.]

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 111.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

4 Willey, op. cit., p. 48.

5 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 548.

destruction of the union that made him a man, and believed that he would suffer in each of his parts after the union was destroyed and until it was again consummated. The intermediate state, as an extension of death, was 'penal to' both body and soul.

. . . the enmity, and the enemy itself, is conquered at the resurrection, and not till then. And therefore death is the last enemy to be destroyed. The body lieth under the penal effects of sin untill the resurrection. And it is penal to the soul to be in a state of separation from the body, though it be in a state of glory that it is in with Christ: for it is deprived of the fulness of glory, which it shall attain at the resurrection, when the whole man shall be perfected and glorified together.¹

Concern for the body aggravated the feeling of dread with which the Puritan contemplated the intermediate state. It was only 'insensible flesh' but he had a real regard for it.

" . . . in the warfare between the spirit and the flesh, it was the Puritan's task . . . to mortify the flesh, of which the body and the sensitive faculties were agents"² and it was useful in this pursuit of asceticism to show the body as an ephemeral carcass whose state in death was even more miserable. He drew a lurid picture of the body in the grave both because he was appalled by it--and was drawn to speak of it in a way that confirmed Victor Hugo's contention that we are more attracted by the ugly than the beautiful--and because it helped him disown his love for the flesh. But this did not express

¹ Ibid., p. 546.

² Garth W. Legge, "The Element of Christian Asceticism in English Puritanism and French Jansenism in the Seventeenth Century", (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1951), p. 93.

his whole attitude.

The Puritan professed to hate his body but he could not help himself; he had always had the body and could not imagine what it must be like to be without it. When Baxter said "The soul hath naturally a love and inclination to its body" ¹, he was expressing the Puritan love for the body in the only overt manner orthodox asceticism permitted him. The Puritan wished that he was not so attached to it for he knew it to be a source of grief to him; it brought upon him the sins of the flesh; it would rot and decay in death and cause him torment in so doing. The body was like a sinful friend from whom he could not totally cut himself off.

This love² for their bodies is revealed in many ways: in the concern for the body in the grave and the conviction that God cherishes it; in the persuasion that the union between body and soul is a most intimate one; in the hopeful assumption that the body is united with Christ in death even as the soul; and in the emphasis that the resurrected body is the same body.

For all the vituperation heaped upon the body as a traitor that won the affection of the soul and then in sin lost God's affection for both, and further betrayed the soul by condemning both to separation, the affection of the soul for the body remained.

Many early Puritans, seeking to emphasize the contrast

¹ Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 530.

² This is the word the Puritan himself used to describe his feeling and is therefore the most accurate word.

between Christian hope and pagan hopelessness, recommended a minimum of mourning over the dead body.¹ This attitude was warmly espoused by the dying Ephaphroditus. "These sumptuous and costly burials are not to be commended; neither do they profit either body or soul, but only set forth a foolish, vain, and boasting pomp."² Chrysostom is quoted with approval:

When thou hearest that the Lord did rise again naked, cease, I pray thee, and leave off the fond and vain charges that thou bestowest upon funerals and burying of dead bodies. What meaneth this superfluous and unprofitable cost? seeing that it hindereth them greatly that do it, and availeth nothing at all the dead, but rather hurteth them³

However, this attitude was not always maintained. Crofton refers approvingly to what Bacon condemned. God does not

". . . disregard my body, when divided from my soul; or disesteem the dust thereof; he causeth it to be mourned over by my friends, and natural relations, and to be buried with the greatest solemnity, pomr [sic, pomp], they can observe; yea, he loveth it . . . my dust is precious in Gods sight"⁴

Not only does this Puritan love his body; he attributes that same love to God and conceives of God as approving of pompous burial.⁵

1 Perhaps to encourage an impersonal attitude, burial was more properly considered a civil than an ecclesiastical action. Davies notes this as a departure from the Reformed tradition. [Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans (Glasgow, 1948), p. 44.]

2 Bacon, op. cit., p. 125.

3 Ibid.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 100.

5 Simeon Ashe and Jeremiah Whitaker would not have agreed with Crofton for Ashe quotes approvingly Whitaker's request for a private funeral with no pomp. [Simeon Ashe, Living Loves Betwixt Christ and Dying Christians (London, 1654), p. 62.]

The Puritan love for the body, a most revealing aspect of the Puritan attitude to the intermediate state, is further exhibited in the intimate relationship the Puritan felt existed between the body and the soul. As it is often referred to as a conjugal relationship, it can be compared with the union between husband and wife.

Marriage, said a Puritan, is ". . . a pleasing combination of two persons into one home, one purse, one heart, and one flesh."¹ In the hierarchical scheme of things, the husband occupied a position above his wife even as the soul was above the body; yet the degree of subordination was very slight and amply recompensed by the love of the husband for his wife. The Puritan tried to pattern his marriage on the Pauline equation that the husband is to the wife as Christ is to the Church; as Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for her, so must the husband love his wife. A marriage without love, he said, was ". . . no better than a very living death."²

It was an exceedingly difficult thing to see one's spouse taken in death, for even the death of a friend left one ". . . almost as lifeless . . . as the body is left by the departing soul."³ Yet the Puritan faced separation between husband and wife at death with greater equanimity than he faced

¹ William Whately, *A Bride-Bush*, (1619 ed.) p. 31. Cited, William & Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love", *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, V, 2 (1941-42), 268.

² Ibid.

³ Baxter, *A Treatise of Death*, Works, XVII, 573.

separation of body and soul. The union between ". . . these two that were together in the same womb"1 was closer than the union between the two that marriage made one flesh: hence, the dissolution of the first union must be more difficult.

The dissolving the Union between a Man and his Wife is terrible, because they are nearly united each to other; but the dissolving the Union between Soul and Body is more terrible; because the Union is more near and close. A Man and his Wife are one Flesh; but the Soul and Body make but one Person; now Death dissolves this Union.²

The Puritan love for the body will also be discussed below as having motivated the idea the Puritans evolved of the body's being united with Christ in the grave even more intimately than ever the body was united with the soul, and their emphasis on the resurrection body as the same body.

The intermediate state was so abhorrent to the Puritans that they could not refrain from glancing enviously at three escapes. They were tantalized by the translations of Enoch and Elias, they thought longingly of the state in Paradise when one came 'naturally' to God (and despised Adam for having lost that which--so the implication seems--they would not have lost had they been there³), and they sighed wistfully at the thought that some fortunate few would be alive when Christ comes again.

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 116.

2 Pearse, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

3 Thomas Browne [Religio Medici, ed. W.A. Greenhill (London, 1881), p. 61] says, "This is that dismal conquest we all deplore, that makes us so often cry, O Adam, quid fecisti?"

The Puritan reactions to the translations of Enoch and Elias were somewhat diverse. Paget, showing that the shortening of man's days upon earth was a judgment of God, asserts: ". . . not the wicked alone, but the elect, the beloved of God (as Henoch, Gen. 5.23.24) are also taken away in the midst of their dayes"1 Collinges too sees that although translation is a better way, basically it is just another way of being taken out of this life. "Elijah had delivered others from death; himself from a change he could not save"2 He goes on to point out that not even the prophets live forever.

But the translations were also put in a helpful light. Jacombe³ reasons that Enoch's translation before the flood and Elijah's after it were intended to testify to the existence of a future state for man before the Word was written to reveal it. Similarly, Bunyan⁴ conceives of the welcoming party on hand at heaven's gate to receive Christian and Faithful as consisting of Enoch and Elijah and Moses. (whose death was also different).

The most helpful use to which the translations were put was when they were applied euphemistically to the death of a believer. Particularly favored, of course, were fellow ministers

1 Paget, op. cit., p. 13.

2 John Collinges, Elisha's Lamentation for Elijah (London, 1657), p. 1.

3 Tho. Jacombe, Enoch's Walk and Change (3rd ed.; London, 1657), p.3.

4 John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (London, [n.d.], p. 196.

who might be said to compare in life with Enoch and Elijah.

"Tis true, we had not Elisha's evidence . . . we saw him not ascending; but we saw him for many years walking with God; . . . we doubt not but he is on the top of Mount Sion, in the presence of the living God"¹ In like manner Jacombe refers to Rev. Richard Vines. "His life was like Enoch's life, and his death very like to Enoch's Translation. He died suddenly. He went well to bed, slept, and died. His death was a sleep indeed"²

However, this use was extended to include more than the clergy. "This is the happiness of every child of God that walks with him, whenever he dies God takes him. Enochs passage was extraordinary . . . but Enochs Glory, for the substance of it, every holy man hath it"³ Perkins likewise asserts that ". . . this which befell Enoch shall after a sort befall them also that live in faith and obedience: because death shall be no death but a sleepe unto them"⁴ and Doolittle, with the same reference in mind, says, "[Death] is your Chariot to wheel you away into everlasting glory."⁵

With reference to the intermediate state, however, the translations were most of all an incitement to envy. The simple fact was that ". . . nature can be much more content to be

1 Collinges, op. cit., p. 23.

2 T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 43.

3 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 100.

5 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 123.

changed, then to dye."¹ The fact that ordinary men like Elias, whom Baxter observes to have been 'subject to like passions as we are'², had escaped the contemplated misery of the separated state was an enticing thought. Thus Baxter, speaking to convince his audience (and himself) that they were not lacking in love for God when, hindered by fear of death, they drew back from the thought of leaving this world, says, "Might we be translated as Enoch, or conveyed thither in the chariot of Elias, what saint is there that would not long to see the face and glory of the Lord?"³ And again, "Would you not gladly hear the news of your removal, if you might be changed without death, and translated to heaven as Enoch and Elias were, and as Christ at his ascension?"⁴ Baxter is not the only one to covet this manner of going to heaven. Doolittle addresses similar objectors among his readers: "But perhaps you will reply, If Christ would come and take you as you are, without the disuniting of Body and Soul, you could be willing"⁵

This desire for a private translation presents an interesting contrast to the Old Testament outlook. If we take the word of Old Testament scholars, the eschatological emphasis

1 Crofton, op. cit., p. 4.

2 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 584, citing James 5:17.

3 Ibid., p. 532.

4 Ibid., p. 554.

5 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 141.

before the exile was primarily national.¹ The Old Testament writer saw the nation, the institution of God, continuing, while the Puritan looked forward eagerly to the day when there would be no more "lunatic commonwealths".² The Puritan not only centered his desire on the redemption of the individual, but never really relinquished his desire for the special redemption of the individual apart from the over-all redemptive process. If the Old Testament seems to reflect an extreme corporate position, the Puritans entertained an extreme individualism. To Baxter, the greatest difficulty to natural knowledge was whether souls continued their individual existence in heaven or were absorbed into one common soul.³ (He suspected that the fear that individuation might cease arose from selfishness--but he confessed to having it himself.⁴) Even when speaking of the task of the ministry as the seeking of salvation for others, the Puritan illustrated that individual interest was greater.

If you fall out with your physician, or cast away, or cast up, the only physic that can cure you, is not death more to you, than the loss of his labour and physic to him? . . . Is your unconverted, unpardoned, miserable state, and your danger of

¹ Lewis A. Muirhead, The Terms Life and Death in the Old and New Testaments, and Other Papers (London, 1908), p. 4. Cf. R.H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity (2nd ed., rev. and enlarged; London, 1913), p. 157.

² Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 593.

³ Idem, Dying Thoughts, Works, XVIII, 267.

⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

damnation, more to us than to you?¹

The Puritan and the Old Testament writer held almost completely opposite views: the Old Testament saint saw the nation continuing in this world and the individual being elided, while the Puritan saw the state perishing as a thing of this world and the individual continuing.

Part of the urgent desire for Christ's second coming was this same frustrating search for a deliverance from the intermediate state. It would, of course, be a mistake to attribute all hopes for Christ's speedy return to this desire, for Christ's coming was desired as the climax and culmination of all things holy and eternal and the final ruin of all things evil and temporal. This is the day for which all believers should long ". . . as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires and endeavours of their souls."² Yet, when an individual Puritan contemplated what it would mean in terms of his deliverance from death and the intermediate state if Christ were to come while he lived, these general hopes could become intensely personal. Zachary Crofton, expecting execution at the hands of the state at any moment, wrote pathetically and resignedly:

I do most certainly believe, at the coming of our Lord in glory, all shall not dye, some shall be changed: but I have no assurance that I am of that number; nor is it probable; for though I live in

¹ Idem, A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of That Holy, Painful and Fruitful Minister of Christ, Mr. Henry Stubbs, Works, XVIII, 77.

² Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 591.

the last and worst days of the world, that last day is not so near me as my lives end; the great things which must be accomplished before that great and terrible day of the Lord come, cannot be effected in those few days nature will permit me to live; nor is it probable in this present age; I will not envy the Saints then living, the happiness of never dying, but my soul; I see no reason of hope, that I should partake thereof."¹

Baxter, continuing to defend the view that a man may have no desire to die and yet love God, confesses that

. . . death, as death, appeareth to me as an enemy, and my nature doth abhor and fear it. But the thoughts of the coming of the Lord are most sweet and joyful to me; so that if I were but sure that I should live to see it, and that the trumpet should sound, and the dead should rise, and the Lord appear before the period of my age, it would be the joyfullest tidings to me in the world. Oh, that I might see his kingdom come!²

Nor does it seem possible to explain entirely the popularity of the Fifth Monarchy movement apart from this desire to escape death and the waiting period in the intermediate state. Although Baxter viewed the possibility of a millennial reign here on earth with indecision³ and doubt,⁴ both Owen and Thomas Goodwin delivered sermons with traces of millenarianism.⁵ The extreme Millenarians became known as the Fifth Monarchists, who sought an ideal society

1 Crofton, op. cit., p. 13.

2 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 555.

3 Ibid., p. 590.

4 Idem, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 545.

5 T. Richards, Religious Developments in Wales, 1654-1662, p. 206. Cited by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (Oxford, 1946), p. 110.

without human monarchial or Cromwellian head. Nuttall notes that there was also a rising nationalism mixed with the eschatological expectation that the age of the Spirit was come.¹ Yet the appeal of the movement cannot be fully explained apart from its appeal to the desire to circumvent death. If the millennial reign came, then death and the resurrection would be past and the saints would rule with Christ beginning with one thousand years here on earth. The very concept of an imminent return and reign of Christ demanded that the eschatological expectation of the resurrection be brought forward to the beginning of this period of Christ's rule and death, of course, abolished. The fact that the eschatological benefits of resurrection would be available and the end of death accomplished in an imminent millennial reign of Christ, was no small part of its appeal.

However, as an answer to the problem of the intermediate state, reliance on the coming of Christ was not regarded as very satisfactory and one author felt called upon to remind his readers that 'except for a few' it had been the way of Divine Wisdom from the beginning to take men to heaven via death and they should realize that their bodies were no better than those of David or Abraham or Paul.²

If it was not very probable that one would be 'translated' or delivered from death by Christ's return, it was just possible enough to encourage the hope. That they might begin

1 Nuttall, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

2 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 142.

again where Adam had begun was an utter impossibility, however, and so they did not permit themselves to cherish any hope of recovering that long lost opportunity. Yet the Puritan would have read with chagrin Raphael's encouragement to Adam that his body might turn to spirit,

Improv'd by tract of time, and wing'd ascend
Ethereal, as we; or may at choice
Here or in heav'nly Paradises dwell;¹

Baxter laments that death is such a hindrance to the work of grace that it even hinders the heavenliness of our conversation.

Whereas if we could have come to God in the way that was first appointed us, and could be clothed with glory, without being stripped of our present clothing by this terrible hand, how familiarly should we then converse above!²

He later lashes out against that sin that now 'causes us to fear a dissolution' and mourns that but for that sin,

. . . as Enoch and Elias were translated when they had walked with God, even so should we: as those that are alive, and remain at the coming of Christ, shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air³

He does not say that Adam's difficulties were insignificant, but "Adam was but to seek the continuance of his life, and a translation to glory, without the terrors of interposing death; he was never called to prepare to die, nor to think of the state of a separated soul"⁴

¹ John Milton, Paradise Lost (London, 1785), Bk. V, ll. 498-500.

² Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 533.

³ Ibid., p. 549.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 550f.

While they had sympathy for the desire to escape death, certain Puritans administered gentle reproof. Doolittle remarks sensibly,

How would you go to Heaven, if you would not die? must you not die, and so enter into glory? Would you have God to translate you, that you should not see death? but that is not the common road to Heaven. Be content to go the same way as others do, though it be dark and uncomfortable in it self, and be glad that by dying you may go to Heaven.¹

And asks with sly humor: "And will you not be willing to go unto this blessed place of Joy, and Peace, and Rest, but upon your own terms?"²

One of the theological defenses which the Puritans used against what they recognized to be their 'natural' fear of the intermediate state was the curious belief that not only the soul but also the body in the state of separation is united with Christ. The idea of this union was an antidote to the dread of leaving one's body to the decay of the grave.³ It is a ". . . Spiritual and an Invisible union . . . perceived by Faith and not by Sense."⁴ It is an "unspeakable union" on a par with the union of the three persons in the Trinity and the two natures in Christ.⁵ It is a "sympathizing union" so

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 124.

2 Ibid., p. 141.

3 ". . . though the body rott in the graue . . . that will not be unto us a matter of discomfot, if we doe well consider the ground of all grace, namely our coniunctiō with Christ." [Perkins, op. cit., p. 25.]

4 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 117.

5 Ibid.

that Christ is also afflicted by the separation of body and soul,¹ and it is an "indissoluble union".² "Your body when it is sleeping in the dust, shall still be united to him; nay, your body turned unto dust, shall still retain this union and your Soul when it's got into the highest Heavens."³

Perkins speaks at length about this union, and says, in part of his discussion of it,

. . . we must not imagine that our soules alone are ioyned to the body or soule of Christ, but the whole person of man both in body and soule is ioyned and united to whole Christ. And when we are once ioyned to Christ in this mortall life by the bond of the spirit, wee shall remaine and continue eternally ioyned with him: and this union once truly made, shall neuer be dissolved. Hence it followes, that although the body be seuered from the soule in death, yet neither body nor soule are seuered from Christ, but the very body rotting in the graue, drowned in the sea, burned to ashes, abides still united to him, and is as truly a member of Christ then as before. This point we must remember as the foundation of all our comfort, and hold it for euer as a trueth.⁴

The Puritans found in this union a profound--if Scholastic--parallel in the death of Christ:

For looke what was the condition of Christ in death, the same or the like is the condition of all his members. Now the condition of Christ was this, though his body and soule were seuered each from other as farre as heauen and the graue, yet neither of them were seuered from the godhead of the sonne, but both did in death subsist in his person.⁵

The covenant concept was extended into the grave to explain

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 118.

3 Ibid., p. 116. Cf. Sibbes, op. cit., p. 6.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 25.

5 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

this union. "He is the God of our dust, of our dead bodies. He will raise them up, for they are bodies in covenant with him."¹

This doctrine that Christ is united with the body after death was especially dear to the Puritans because of their concern for the body. This is evidenced by Crofton when he says, ". . . death shall not separate my soul from thee; death shall not separate my body from thee; but my dust shall be regarded by thee; my death shall be precious in thy sight"² It was comforting to think that when death broke the unity that permitted a man to be, another unity existed that would re-effect his existence. "Let my God, and my Saviour, do with me what they please; so they will but please to be with me in life, and in death, whilst I am: and with my divided parts when I am not"³

This doctrine provided a partial differentiation between the intermediate state of the godly and the intermediate state of the damned. Their bodies shared the same grave, but the bodies of the damned did not enjoy this union. It was essential that the bodies of the righteous be joined with God because separation from Him was the "death of all deaths", or hell.⁴ However, this is not to say that, because their bodies and souls were not united with God, the damned were believed to be

1 Sibbes, The Faithful Covenanter, Works, VI, 20.

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 152.

3 Ibid., p. 105.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 7.

in hell immediately after death. Their state was similar to the state of the righteous. The souls of the unrighteous, for which "The damned Devils, and the cursed Fiends of Hell"¹ had been watching, went immediately ". . . unto hell-fire, unto that 'lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,' where weeping and gnashing of teeth is"², but their bodies were not there. The consummation of bliss that awaited the Christian when his body was reunited with his soul in heaven was homologous to the consummation of agony when the body of the unrighteous joined his soul in hell.³

This doctrine of union was intimately connected with another doctrine; that of the resurrection of the body. Both were Puritan defenses against the fear of the intermediate state. The Puritans maintained the idea of the body's union with Christ and of God's watchful care over its dust because of their great interest in the resurrection of the body; and they held to the fact and necessity of the resurrection because it met their need of assurance. To ignore the body would be to slight belief in the resurrection; to deny the resurrection would be to increase apprehensions of death. The union of the body with Christ not only 'frustrates' the design of death which was to divide both from God,⁴ but also guarantees

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 141.

2 Bacon, op. cit., p. 182; cf. p. 129.

3 Perkins, op. cit., p. 8. Perkins describes this as being the third or last degree of spiritual death.

4 Crofton, op. cit., pp. 104, 98, 102f.

resurrection.

. . . [death shall not] be able long to keep these parts of me asunder, and at distance each from other; for my union with God and Christ, doth necessitate; and will most powerfully, irresistably effect the reunion of my soul and body, at the resurrection¹

This same idea that it is the union with Christ that effects the resurrection is deepened by another author who says,

The bodies of the Saints when dead, and separated from their souls, are not separated from Jesus Christ, and therefore are said to be dead in Christ; while dead they are united to Christ, and by virtue of this union Christ as their Head will raise them at the last day²

The Puritans held that the union between Christ and both parts of a man after death was indissoluble, yet they conceded that it was to some extent interrupted by death.

. . . death shall ere it be long, by the sound of the last triumphant trumpet, at the glorious and general resurrection, know, and prove, that the union between Christ, and the bodies of his people, is as real, as inseperable; as the union between him and their souls: Christ will not lose any part of his purchase; he paid a price for man; for whole man; for our bodies; and for our souls; both are his: all enemies that interrupt the union; that intercept the communion which is between Christ and his members, must be destroyed, and the last enemy to be subdued is death³

Quick as Crofton is to defend the union of the body with Christ, he unconsciously concedes that death is effective even against this union until the resurrection. Baxter adds, "All that is fore-mentioned [antidotes to the enmity of death] doth abate

1 Ibid., pp. 104f.

2 Calamy, op. cit., p. 12.

3 Crofton, op. cit., pp. 103f.

the enmity, and conquer death in some degree; but the enmity, and the enemy itself, is conquered at the resurrection, and not till then."¹

The resurrection marks the perfection of glory; the final conquest of death; the commencement of complete eternal felicity. Whatever things were lacking in the intermediate state, the resurrection would supply. The soul had gone immediately to a ". . . boundless Ocean of . . . Happiness" ² Its state was ". . . without any possibility of change or alteration for ever, but that of its re-union with the Body" ³ The departed saint has glory and superintendency now ". . . though both will be greater at the resurrection." ⁴ The prospect of the immediate glorious state of the soul softened the harshness of the intermediate state; but the expectation of the final release of the body relieved the sting still more.

Even if the Bible had not taught that the resurrection was a fact, wishful thinking would have moved the Puritans to fabricate it.

. . . my self is redeemed and related to the Lord; and my soul, or my body is related to him, but as parts of my self; these divided must be reunited, that my self may exist to enjoy my redemption by him, and my relation to him⁵

1 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 546.

2 Pearse, op. cit., p. 76.

3 Ibid.

4 Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 545.

5 Crofton, op. cit., p. 109.

Plato and Aristotle may have been satisfied to believe that the mind lived bodiless after the body died, but the Puritans were by no means so ready to discard or ignore the resurrection of the body.

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that there was an undue insistence that the resurrection body be the same body. "Your Body is not lost," says Doolittle, "but shall be raised again"1 Crofton is more definite when he says that ". . . though laid in the grave, or dispersed on the earth; all my members are written in Gods book, not one of them must be lost or miscarrie; they shall not be neglected: my dust is precious in Gods sight, not a grain of it shall be lost. . . ."2 He becomes still more emphatic: "My body is part of my self; it must not, it cannot be lost: its seperation from my soul, maketh me cease to be; this seperation continued, would continue me a nonentity for ever"3

Calamy is so insistent that the resurrection body be the same body that he is led to argue that ". . . it is easie for God to distinguish between dust and dust, and to give to every man his own dust, as it is for a gardiner that hath divers seeds in his hand to sever them, and know them one from another."4

Lest it be thought that this belief was peculiar to the

1 Doolittle, op. cit., p. 141.

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 100.

3 Ibid., p. 109.

4 Calamy, op. cit., p. 17.

Puritans, it would be well to note that the same Thomas Pierce who spoke of the body as vile in six respects¹ spoke sweetly of our bodies lying dormant ". . . like Trees in Winter; and like Trees do take Root too."² That the resurrection body is this same body is evident when he asks, "For what is our Rising from the Dead but our being Transplanted from thence to Paradise?"³

This dead body is in some sense alive or at least in possession of an "animating principle."⁴ Pierce, too, evidently believes some sort of 'animating principle' must be in operation for he writes later: "That things may live whilst they are buried, we are able to demonstrate by Worms, and Fishes, which live the better by being buried."⁵

One author goes to such lengths to justify the title which the soul has to the dust of the body it inhabited that he insists there is, even in the intermediate state, an "indissoluble union" between that dust and the soul.

The body was once a partner with the soul in all her actions, it was the souls brother-twin; what could the soul do without it? whatever was in the understanding was conveyed by the sense. The soul sees by its eyes, hears by its ears, works by its hands; yea, which is more, there is an indissoluble union between

1 Among them: at death the body is ". . . nothing but Rottenness and Stench; fitly kept under Ground, for fear the air should be infected" [Pierce, op. cit., p. 99.]

2 Ibid., p. 20.

3 Ibid., pp. 20f.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 108.

5 [Pierce], op. cit., p. 89.

the dust in the grave, and the glorious soul.¹

Insisting that the resurrection be of the same body,

Henry King, an Anglican, charges the earth:

Be kind to her; and, prithee, look
 Thou write into thy doomsday-book
 Each parcel of this rarity
 Which in thy casket shrin'd doth lie:
 See that thou make thy reckoning straight,
 And yield her back again by weight;
 For thou must audit on thy trust
 Each grain and atom of this dust,
 As thou wilt answer him that lent--
 Not gave thee--my dear monument.²

The Puritans knew the body was formed from the dust and despised it just because it had such an origin,³ and yet they earnestly entreated God to watch over their dust and raise it again. They relied on this for their comfort.⁴ Since they were so severely critical of the flesh because of its origin from the dust, one would expect them to be critical of another body made from that same dust. That they were not is a tribute to their regard for the body. Calamy insists that

It cannot stand with Gods justice. . . that one body should serve him and another be crowned; this is contrary to the justice of God, and to the very nature of the resurrection; for a resurrection is, when the same body that dieth riseth again, otherwise, it is rather a new creation than a resurrection.⁵

¹ William Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn Coming in In its Season (London, 1654), p. 8.

² Henry King, "The Exequy", in Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century, I, (London, 1836), 179.

³ Calamy, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴ Doolittle, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵ Calamy, op. cit., p. 12.

A further comfort against the dread of the intermediate state was the knowledge that death had been changed by Christ so that the grave is not the grave at all but ". . . princely pallaces, and beds of most sweet & happie rest, farre more excellent then beds of downe."¹ In a seventeenth century dialogue, Death laments:

What now I catch I have no power to keep,
My very Name is chang'd from Death to Sleep.²

For some this was only the vaporous rampart of euphemism,³ but for others there was real comfort in the thought. Doolittle uses it in an extended analogy:

Familiarize Death to your self, by representing it to your minde, under the easiest notions. This hath been usual with the holy men of God, in Scripture, to set forth Death by the resemblance

1. Of a Sleep. And who is afraid, or loth at night, to go to sleep, when he hath been at hard labor all the day? Children indeed might cry when they are to go to bed. Sleep is the shadow of Death, Job. 11. 11. I Thes. 4. 13, 14. I. Cor. 6. 18. Death is but the putting off your old rags. 2 Cor. 5. 2, 3, 4. When Men go to sleep, they leave their wealth in some other place; their Lands and Houses are elswhere. You take not your Gold into your Bed, so neither must you into your Grave. The putting out of your Candle, as the expiration of your life; you are covering you with cloaths, as the covering of your Body with the Mold of the Earth; And in the morning when you awake, think of the Resurrection when your Body shall be raised

. . . .⁴

¹ Perkins, op. cit., p. 25.

² R[ichard] S[tandfast], A Dialogue Between a Blind Man and Death, [1610?], p. 7.

³ Words like "translation" and "change" were also used euphemistically to refer to death as were "rest" and "departing". [Doolittle, op. cit., p. 34.]

⁴ Doolittle, op. cit., p. 33. Cf. Crofton, op. cit., p. 31; Ashe, op. cit., p. 46f.

In the graceless hands of Paget the comforting thought that ". . . the holy Ghost often describeth death by the name of sleep, or lying downe to sleepe"¹ becomes an inverted analogy so that death is not to be thought of soothingly as sleep but to sleep is attributed the sharpness of death.

By this marvelous work of God in breaking off the course of life, and making Sleepe like an Half-death to invade us continually, to come upon us like an unresistable Giant every day and to throw us downe; and then by his manner of speech in calling death a Sleepe, he calleth us by consideration of our sleepe to consider our death; & by the sight of our bed to remember our grave, to looke upon it as a Tombe or Sepulchre. . . .²

Perhaps more than one Puritan enjoyed his sleep less for this analogy but there were others who agreed. ". . . thy sleep should make thee think of the sleep of death . . . the putting off thy clothes from thy body, should instruct thee, of putting off (shortly) the clothes of thy body."³

The most extended use of this idea was made by an Anglican. Sleep for him too is ". . . nothing better, than the Elder Brother of Death" and contrariwise, ". . . Death it self is nothing worse than the younger Brother of Sleep."⁴ The fact that death lasts longer is no objection for "Duration and Quietness do rather add to the Value of it. Were Glass as durable as Silver, it would perhaps be as

1 Paget, op. cit., p. 56.

2 Ibid., p. 57.

3 Jenkyn, op. cit., p. 21.

4 [Pierce], op. cit., p. 10.

precious too."¹ "For Us to dye, and to be buried, is but to lay our selves down, and to take our rest."² "For Death it seems is but a Sleep God the Son has chang'd its Nature; and God the Holy Ghost has chang'd its Name too."³

Perhaps even more would have been made of the idea that death could be thought of as sleep if there had been no possibility of confusion between this idea of the sleep of the body and the doctrine proclaimed by many fringe elements of the sleep of the soul. To conceive of the body as sleeping rather than rotting was to raise its level in the intermediate state; to think of the soul as sleeping rather than being with God was to lower its status immeasurably.

Milton was led to his heretical stand on mortalism (or sleep of the soul)⁴ because he revolted against the thinking that blamed the vile body for sin and considered the soul to be injured innocence. He held that the soul was responsible for the fall of man and that the body was practically an innocent bystander.⁵

1 Ibid., p. 90.

2 Ibid., p. 7.

3 Ibid., p. 6.

4 Willey would extend the heresy to include the denial of any after life and believes that both Milton and Hobbes conceived of death as the absolute end. Saying men sleep until the resurrection in the last day is ". . . as good as to say that they wake up never, only it has the advantage of sounding much more orthodox." [Willey, op. cit., pp. 105, 241.] If this is true, however, it is to be wondered why Milton did not express himself more plainly in the De Doctrina Christiana--wherein he was wont to express his thought quite freely.

5 Baxter, on the contrary, found the flesh ". . . more

. . . what could be more absurd than that the mind, which is the part principally offending, should escape the threatened death; and that the body alone, to which immortality was equally allotted . . . should pay the penalty of sin by undergoing death, though not implicated in the transgression.¹

Both body and soul died to await the resurrection for both had been involved in sin. However, this does not mean that Milton placed the body on a level equal with the soul. Even the body in Paradise was not the very best thing for Raphael holds out the hope that if Adam is obedient, "Your bodies may at last turn all to spi'rit"²

Within Puritanism there were a large number of background figures, who, with Milton, believed that the soul would sleep with the body until the resurrection. Pagitt³ even mentions the existence of a separate sect whose main doctrine was proclaimed in their very name. This group, the "Soule-Sleepers", seem to have followed in the teachings of Overton who wrote a work entitled Man's Mortality; or, a Treatise wherein 'tis proved, both Theologically and Philosophically that Man (as a rationally creature) is a Compound wholly mortal, contrary to that common distinction of Soule and Body⁴ C.E.

Whiting⁵ notes that Overton's belief was one of the heterodoxical

than a mere instrument to the soul, even a servant and an associate." [The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 55n.]

1 Milton, De Doctrina Christiana, Works, XV, 219.

2 Milton, Paradise Lost, Bk. V, l. 497.

3 Ephraim Pagitt, Heresiography (4th ed.; London, 1647), pp. 143f.

4 R[ichard] O[verton], Mans Mortalitie (Amsterdam, 1644).

5 Whiting, op. cit., p. 173.

concepts that found its way into Quakerism.

Although the sectarians Reeve and Muggleton regarded the mortality of the soul as a cause for rejoicing and wrote a work called Joyful News from Heaven: . . . Wherein is Infallibly Recorded How That the Soul dieth in the Body,¹ this was hardly a prevalent attitude among the Puritans. The idea was repugnant to them. It attacked the very citadel of their defense against the dread of the intermediate state. To say that the soul and body would rise together at the resurrection was not enough. Indeed, it was barely enough to have said that the soul would be with God during this interim. Almost the last thing Zachary Crofton cries out in his A Defense Against Dread of Death is a request for more light and assurance regarding the intermediate state of which he has been speaking. He says,

O let thy spirit of adoption seal up my relation to thee! and mine interest in thee! let me not remain in the dark, or be deceived in a matter of so great concernment to me, clear up to me by certain premises, the truth, the realty [sic] of mine inseperable union with thee! else I am undon, & have said nothing to my soul, in all that I have said against the dread of death.²

Baxter is convinced that if one is going to face the intermediate state with any equanimity, one cannot surrender belief in the immortality of the soul and its presence with God. "The opinion of the sleeping of the soul till the resurrection is

¹ Found in John Reeve, Sacred Remains ([London?], [1752?]), pp. 1-53.

² Crofton, op. cit., p. 157.

but a step to flat infidelity¹

To defend their belief, the Puritans used all the weapons at their disposal; even the artillery of ridicule. Asked whether or not he agrees ". . . with such in opinion, as affirm that the souls of both the faithful and unfaithful sleep until the day of judgment, and then shall awake out of sleep"², the faithful mouthpiece Epaphroditus replies, "I believe that the soul sleepeth no more than this my bedstead waketh and talketh with us."³ Baxter is equally biting when he says, "To confute the dream of those that talk of the sleeping of souls . . . were but to dispute with sleeping men."⁴

The shadows of the intermediate state have the distressing habit of meeting and melting with the darkness of hell. When they are again, with difficulty, separated, the hesitation of the one is found to have borrowed from the uncertainty of the other. Shades of dark grey incertitude are not always easily and rigidly distinguishable. Death as the moment when life departs and the soul separates from the body, and death as the condition that ensues until the resurrection, and death as it shall be eternally for the damned all mingle uncomfortably together. As the idea of Purgatory in the Latin Church during

¹ Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 534. Cf. Idem, Faithful Souls, Works, XVIII, 134.

² Becon, op. cit., p. 182.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 16. Cf. Idem, Dying Thoughts, Works, XVIII, 264; T. Jacombe, op. cit., p. 36.

the Middle Ages, lost its center of gravity and toppled over into the idea of hell, so the grave in seventeenth century Puritanism, shared some of the characteristics of hell.¹

R. H. Charles sees this mixture even in the Old Testament. The eternal place of the damned is also the intermediate place of the righteous. "Though Sheol is regarded as the intermediate abode of the righteous Israelites in Is. xxvi. 19, it remains the eternal abode of all the rest of mankind."² It is the substantiating opinion of another authority that the meaning of Sheol shifted in the apocalyptic literature from the endless dwelling-place of good and bad alike to the intermediate state where the righteous rest in peace until the resurrection and the wicked are tormented. Finally it became the place of damnation for the lost and the righteous were disconnected from Sheol entirely.³

If the Puritans had a difficult time separating their conception of hell from their conception of the intermediate state and if the dread they felt for the intermediate state was the dread one might expect them to have for a temporary hell, then the Puritan interpretation of the Old Testament must bear some share of the blame.

1 "Now the great and most formidable enemies . . . are Death, and Hell [or the Grave] . . ." [Goodwin's brackets.] J. Goodwin, op. cit., pp. 16f. Cf. Pearse, op. cit., p. 55; Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 530.

2 Charles, op. cit., p. 161.

3 Charles Venn Pilcher, The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought with special reference to The Doctrine of Resurrection (London, 1938), pp. 82f.

The Puritan reasoned from what he saw with his physical eyes of the decay in the grave to what he read in the Old Testament concerning death. Baxter believed the Bible should be used to ". . . fetch our hope and comfort . . . in life and at our death"¹--and the Puritan did so use it--but if the Puritan had not been so frightened of death by nature, he might have been more willing to learn from the brighter Biblical elements, particularly as they are to be found in the New Testament. Instead, he believed his views were confirmed in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament was popular with the Puritans. Particularly in the Psalms did they find ". . . the best expression of their hopes, fears, and ideals" ² It was in that Book of Psalms that they read [6:5, 115:17]: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks."

Confronted with this occasional grimness of the Old Testament, the Puritan had to accept it. He could, and did, however, escape from some of its extremest severities. For instance, he took the Eighty-eighth Psalm (where the writer laments the approach of the grave) and interpreted verse eleven ["Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?"] as an assertion that death

¹ Baxter, A True Believer's Choice and Pleasure Instanced in the Exemplary Life of Mrs. Mary Coxe, Works, XVIII, 111.

² W.B. Selbie, "The Influence of the Old Testament on Puritanism", in The Legacy of Israel, ed. Edwyn R. Bevan and Charles Singer (Oxford, 1928), p. 424.

is the dividing line beyond which there will be no further opportunity for salvation.¹ When the Old Testament spoke of man as perishing at death, he explained that this could not mean annihilation. ". . . it is most certain that this their perishing doth not intimate, either their annihilation or utter destruction. Indeed the Psalmist useth this word perish to express the frustration and the annihilation of mans designs by death"² It is ". . . as to us, and in regard of further service on earth, they perish"³

As Ashe indicates, the doctrine of annihilation was an unacceptable alternative. The prospect of annihilation is not welcomed in the happiest of times and the cold and bleak days of the seventeenth century did not offer much encouragement to the growth of such an idea. The doctrine of the sleep of the soul was an alternative not much more attractive than annihilation.

The idea of a development in the Old Testament was unknown to the Puritans. "They had little or no conception of the Hebrew Bible as the thousand-years-long record of a people's history, nor did they see in it any movement or development of thought."⁴ Ashe, it is true, explained that when the Old Testament spoke of man as perishing at death, it was only

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 55.

2 Simeon Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented (London, 1655), p. 6.

3 Ibid., p. 9.

4 Selbie, op. cit., pp. 407f.

using ". . . the common language of those times, wherein some imagined their dissolution by death, to be no less than utter perdition";¹ but that is as close as any Puritans came to a developmental idea--and much closer than most.

The Puritan was convinced that the Hebrew saw the final state of the righteous in the same way he did. He was capable of revealing this conviction in unlikely places. When David, speaking of ordinary awakening in Psalm 17:15 says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness", it is alleged that he is speaking of the "happy state of Heaven".² "It is certain," says Baxter "that the Jews believed the immortality of the soul, in that they believed the resurrection and future life of the same man."³

Therefore, since he had no notion of development, whenever the Old Testament writers spoke gloomily about death for the righteous, the Puritan had to assign it to an intermediate state. In this way Doolittle can cite three grim texts in succession and fit them into the Puritan scheme.

Lord lengthen out the life of thy servant, O Lord deliver my soul, O save me for thy mercies sake, for in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks? What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth, The living, the living

1 Ashe, The Good Man's Death Lamented, p. 4.

2 Ralph Robinson, Safe Conduct, or The Saints Guidance to Glory, (London, 1654), p. 74.

3 Baxter, Dying Thoughts, Works, XVIII, 281.

he shall praise thee. Were not these your pleadings at the throne of grace? And did not you promise to God, and purpose in your heart, that if God would spare you, you would celebrate his praises? And shall not there be a correspondence betwixt your actions when you were in fears, and your actions, when your great danger (by the Plague) is over?¹

Milton took these passages at their face value and implicitly rebuked his fellow Puritans (who professed to believe that the soul, at least, went to heaven) for not going to death more cheerfully.

Certainly if he [David] had believed that his soul would survive, and be received immediately into heaven, he would have abstained from all such remonstrances, as one who was shortly to take his flight where he might praise God unceasingly.²

Thus, Milton says, if you really believed that the soul went to be with God, you would die happily.

The rest of the Puritans could no more ignore these Old Testament texts than Milton. None had any conception of development in the Old Testament so all saw the period after death to be grim and a ". . . long abode in the places of darkness"³ The major body of Puritans saw a partial escape for the soul but the fact remained that there was Scriptural proof that the intermediate state was not a happy one.

1 Thomas Doolittle, מתיאשיר לייקונה or, A Serious Enquiry for a Suitable Return for Continued Life, in and after a Time of Great Mortality, Answered in XIII Directions (London, 1666), p. 283. Citing Psalm 6:4-5, 30:9, Isaiah 31:8, 13.

2 Milton, De Doctrina Christiana, Works, XV, 221.

3 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 533.

FEAR AND DESIRE

Two powerful forces, one of attraction, the other of repulsion, struggled with each other to dominate the Puritan in his attitude to death. The result was a tension that continued all through life and was finally resolved only by death itself. The basic question--was death good or bad--took many forms: was it to be feared or desired; was it a curse for sin or a cure for sin; was it the messenger of evil or the servant of God? No seventeenth century Puritan gave a simple answer; death was both. Persuaded in one direction by the arguments of his theology, he was drawn in the other by his senses and by what he regarded as his innate reaction to the thought of death.

Nature said death was dreadful. Theology acknowledged that there was good reason for this natural fear and ascribed it to man's sin. With one or two exceptions, however, the Puritans did not say that a Christian ought to fear death because he was a Christian. Fear was something in the natural man which theology interpreted and sought to quieten. If the problem had been confined to the realm of theology, therefore, the Puritan would have seen death as desirable. His nature, however, dictated to him an attitude of fear. His theology was willing to consider death as desirable, but his nature could not possibly admit such a thought. Only a generation removed from the gloom and superstition of the Middle Ages, the Puritan could not efface it completely from his mind.

When Milton, in Paradise Lost, describes death both as

the punishment for sin and also as the release from what would have been an eternity of woe,¹ he presents one more expression of the tension between the two opposing views. To suggest, therefore, that "The theologian in him was persuaded that death was a curse, the result of sin; but the poet in him uttered his true opinion, after a long and exhausting life, that death is a heaven-sent release",² not only falsely suggests that Milton must be set apart from his fellow Puritans, but it does so by setting the quality "poet" above "theologian". The Puritans (including Milton) considered both the idea of death as a blessing and the idea of death as a curse, from a theological point of view. It was their theology that gravely admitted that death was not a pure blessing even to the believer; but it was also their theology, not their poetry, that emphasized the desirability of death as it had not often been emphasized before. It was what he himself called his 'nature'--not his theology--that would not be persuaded that there was anything desirable about death.

Doolittle manifests the same tension as Milton: "Get right apprehensions of Death; do not look upon it, onely as a debt due to nature; nor onely as a punishment, due to sinners; but as a priviledge granted to Believers" ³ Ashe, too,

1 John Milton, Paradise Lost. (London, 1785), Bk. III, ll. 203 seq.; and Bk. XI, ll. 54seq.

2 John Erskine, "The Theme of Death in Paradise Lost", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXII, New Series, XXV (1917), pp. 581f; cf. p. 580.

3 Thomas Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote Against Sinful

admits both attitudes. Men die, he says, not only because of sin and God's determination to judge, "But there are peculiar Reasons wherefore Christs and the Churches friends do die."¹ These are the reasons that make death desirable. Both Doolittle and Ashe tend to lighten the emphasis on death as a curse to the believer, in order to emphasize its blessing to him. Jenkyn follows this lead when he asserts that death for the believer, while it is 'a consequent of sin', is not 'a curse for sin'.² Baxter, however, insisted on maintaining the tension unresolved. Because he feared death more than most Puritans, he insisted vehemently on maintaining strong theological justification for fear. Taking note that the question 'whether death is penal to the godly' was a contemporary controversy, he states that those who say it is not do not really believe what they say. "Though Christ do us good by it, that proveth it not to be no punishment . . . to conclude that death hath no sting now to a believer, is not only besides, but against the text"³

In an attempt to relieve the tension that could not be resolved, it was frequently stated that although death itself

Contagion in Dying Times. A Cordial for Believers in Dying Times. with A Corrosive for Wicked Men in Dying Times (London, 1665), p. 25.

¹ Simeon Ashe, Living Loves Betwixt Christ and Dying Christians (London, 1654), p. 40.

² William Jenkyn, Exodus (London, 1675), p. 29. Cf. Idem, A Shock of Corn Coming in In its Season (London, 1654), p. 4.

³ Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death, in The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter, XVII (London, 1830), 547f.

was never desirable, death as a means to an end could be desired. The tension remained (for the joy with which the end was anticipated was hampered by the thought of the means whereby the end was to be obtained) but death looked more desirable after having been placed in good company. This is illustrated in the concept of 'Death, the servant of God'.¹ Formerly, death had been thought of as an uncontrollable and grim conqueror, an implacable armed enemy who swept tempestuously through the world, seizing whomever he pleased. In the Middle Ages, this was the most common personification of death.¹ However, as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century, Death and Liffe, an alliterative debate poem, portrayed death both as the "dame daughter of the devill", and also--the archetype of Milton's combination--declared death to be the servant of God.² The Puritans continued to develop this line of thought.

Death, though he remained personal, lost his autonomy. He was still lordly enough to retain messengers of his own,³ but he and his entire company owed fealty to God. He was not free to come when he pleased, but only when God sent him. He

¹ Mary Christopher Pecheux, Aspects of the Treatment of Death in Middle English Poetry (Washington, 1951), p. 85; cf. p. 139.

² Death and Liffe A Medieval Alliterative Debate Poem in a Seventeenth Century Version, in Select Early English Poems, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz, V (London, 1930), xiv, pref.

³ W. Perkins, A Salve for a Sicke Man (Cambridge, 1595), p. 47. Cf. John Paget, Meditations of Death, Wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end (Dort, 1639), pp. 430f.

himself was still ugly sometimes and not always gentle, but his action was strictly limited by the merciful will of God. He was "A grim Porter to fetch home to their fathers mansions, all that are God children."¹ For Baxter, Death, although God's servant, was still an "ugly porter" to the believer.² For Paget, Death (or God by death) took a man by the throat to "thrattle him for ever".³ The Jacobbe's likewise picture death as an unfriendly soldier brusquely performing a task for God. "Faithful service to God is no security from the common Law of Mortality: Gods best servants are not persons priviledged from the arrest of this surly Serjeant."⁴

These men--particularly Baxter, Crofton, and Paget--do not represent the most positive Puritan outlook on death. Other men sought to ease the tension by suggesting that Death, a servant of God, was not such an ugly fellow to the believer. "And think not that Messenger to be too harsh that comes from God, to open the door to let you in to his glorious Kingdom where you shall be forever with your Lord."⁵ The Christian may even ". . . see some smiles in the face of death it self; for death is to a Man, as God is; if God be Mans enemy, so is

¹ Zachary Crofton, A Defence Against Drend of Death (1665), p. 33.

² Baxter, on. cit., p. 532.

³ Paget, on. cit., p. 399.

⁴ Samuel Jacobbe, Hoses his Death (London, 1657), p. 8. Cf. Tho. Jacobbe, Enoch's Walk and Chance (3rd. ed.; London, 1657), p. 41.

⁵ Doolittle, on. cit., p. 142.

death. If God be Mans friend, so is death."¹ Because Death came from God, bringing good things to the believer, he was to be welcomed. Jenkyn speaks of opening the door cheerfully to Death's knock,² and Owen says,

Death is a messenger sent of God; he knocks at the door, and what comes he for? To perfect the frame you are in, that you may see heavenly things more clearly. He is come to free you from that deadness you are burdened withal, that darkness you are entangled with, and to set you at perfect liberty in the enjoyment of those things your souls cleave unto. How, then, can your souls but bid this messenger welcome?³

To the prepared soul, Death is ". . . but as a Messenger to him, to fetch him home to his Father's House, which he can welcome and embrace with joy."⁴

The Puritans believed that the desire for death had to be held in check by the fear of death lest men be impelled to suicide. They were all agreed that the desire for death must never lead to this 'grievous sin' of self-murder which denied the Lordship of Christ. Suicide by any method was reprehensible. Those who shortened their lives by excessive sorrow for the death of loved ones were guilty of it,⁵ and so were those who

1 Ibid., p. 123.

2 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 10.

3 John Owen, The Christian's Work of Dying Daily, in The Works of John Owen, D. D., ed. William H. Gould, IX (London, 1851), 351.

4 Edward Pearse, The Great Concern (19th ed.; London, 1697), p. 24.

5 Thomas Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, Guiding him to the Middle Way betwixt the Two Extreams Defect Excess of Sorrow for his Dead. (London, 1693), p. 120.

'rashly exposed themselves to unnecessary danger',¹ Those who shortened their lives by duels, and those gluttons ". . . that dig their graves with their teeth . . . that swallow, not only their estates and livelyhoods, but their lives also down their throats . . .", were considered "felons of themselves".²

The Puritans believed that natural fear had been provided to counteract an extreme desire for death. Natural fear of death was ". . . necessary for the preserving of life."³ Baxter, too, is quite sure that "somewhat of averseness and fear" is an integral part of "nature's self-preserving principle".⁴ However, many of these men could not understand why anyone would want to commit suicide. Exactly how far they were from Donne, for instance, who believed that the desire for death was central to all humanity,⁵ is seen when Baxter says of suicide: ". . . it is not an effect of fortitude, but of an imbecility and impotency of mind".⁶ Suicide was abhorrent on more than theological grounds for these Puritans. Donne said the desire for death was natural; but these men said it

1 Paget, op. cit., p. 415.

2 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 20.

3 Paget, op. cit., p. 417.

4 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 51.

5 Robert C. Collmer, "The Concept of Death in the Poetry of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1953), p. 208.

6 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 56.

was cultivated.

The contest between the opposing forces was the sharpest in time of affliction. It was legitimate for a Christian to desire death in order to be delivered from his affliction, yet he could not take his own life or ". . . use any indirect and unlawful means to get from under Gods afflicting hand."¹ His desire for death was not to be a desire to escape from submission to God's will.

Perkins believed that men did not always sin in wishing for death; ". . . death may be lawfully desired in respect of the troubles and miseries of this life" ² Baxter regards death as God's merciful answer to a desire for deliverance from afflictions.

Did you not often join in prayer with them, for deliverance from malice, calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations and sin? and now those prayers are answered in their deliverance; and do you now grieve at that which then you prayed for?³

He suggests to his reader, who wants his friends back from death, that when his present ease has passed, ". . . you may feel the griping griefs and pains, which may make you call for death yourselves" ⁴ Whitaker, on his deathbed, besought God to deliver him by death, but he sought to keep the desire within the proper bounds and so added, ". . . but enable me

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 56.

2 Perkins, op. cit., p. 108.

3 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 313.

4 Ibid.

willingly to wait thy time!"¹

God appointed the length of one's life, the time and manner of death; suicide was an attempt to deny His sovereignty. Furthermore, afflictions were from God, and man--although he could desire release--could do nothing 'unlawful' to bring them to an end. Thus the dying man could pray for release from his sickness and suffering, but he was morally bound to use medical means to preserve his life as long as possible. The permission to use medicine may have been a concession to the desire for long life, but permission carried with it obligation. To fail to use 'physic' hinted at suicide.

" . . . all sicke persons must be carefull to preserve health and life till God do wholly take it away."² This is described as being the sick man's 'duty'. God bound man to use all lawful means to preserve his life and not to do so was a transgression of the sixth commandment.³ In another work he adds, ". . . the use of meanes, for preservation, is not inconsistent with trusting in God, but is supposed and included in it, else it is not trusting in God, but presumption . . ."⁴

Arguments were mustered both for fearing death and for desiring it. That death was fearsome was never in doubt; that

1 Ashe, op. cit., p. 65.

2 Perkins, op. cit., p. 70.

3 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, p. 120f.

4 Thomas Doolittle, הנהגות לזיווג or, A Serious Enquiry for a Suitable Return, for Continued Life, in and after a Time of Great Mortality, by a Wasting Plague! (Anno 1665) Answered in XIII Directions (London, 1666), p. 273.

it was desirable, required proof. The reasons for fearing death were largely the Puritan's social inheritance--what he and his contemporaries believed belonged to the 'natural' man. These reasons were supported in part by theological thought which, however, had its roots in this same natural fear. The conception of the intermediate state is the most important example of this; the dying struggle with Satan is another important example. The reasons for desiring death, on the other hand, were almost entirely theological. Even the negative reasons for desiring death--to see the end of this world of sin and death and evil--were, for the Puritan, as much theological as natural: release from this wretched world was simply the counterpart of entry into heaven.

That death was feared by the Puritan is evident. Moreover, it was no small fear. He continued to cite Aristotle's dictum--a cliché by the seventeenth century¹--that death was ". . . the most terrible of all terrible things."² He spoke of the ". . . painful terrors of the king of fears. . . ."³ Combining hatred and fear, the Puritan referred to death as "Death (that Jesuit)" who held men in "his Diocess".⁴ His favorite

1 The quotation appears in the Ars moriendi. [Mary Catherine O'Connor, The Art of Dying Well The Development of the Ars moriendi (New York, 1942), p. 11.]

2 Pearse, op. cit., p. 7. Cf. Crofton, op. cit., p. 2.

3 Robert Bolton, Discourse of Happiness, p. 163, cited by Baxter, The Vain Religion of the Formal Hypocrite, Works, XVII, 74.

4 "A Dialogue Between Death and Doctor Wyld Who Dyed lately of an Apoplexy [sic]" (London, 1679).

delineation of the fearful nature of death, however, was the Biblical phrase [Job 18:14]: 'the king of terrors'.¹

Many Puritans succeeded in overcoming much of the fear of death, but even for those who could speak of it as the "King of Comforts",² death was awful. The reason for this was the magnitude of eternity. ". . . Eternity! what is that? a word of astonishment! an estate of amazement! I cannot look into it without heart-sinking thoughts, soul-troubling apprehensions" ³ The smallest particle of doubt at death became mountainous when multiplied by eternity. Eternity put weight to the judgment and to the joys of heaven or the torments of hell. "Death is the inlet of mine immortal soul, into the Ocean of eternity; can I apprehend it without amazement, and great astonishment?"⁴

Some said that a believer ought not to fear the judgment; he ought to have assurance. But the way suggested--a life of works--did not bring the desired assurance. Far from taking comfort from all he had done, a dying man wondered if he had done enough; knew he could have done more; worried over the possibility that he would be lost irrecoverably. Because he believed but did not have complete assurance, death and judgment

1. Tho. Watson, The Fight of Faith Crowned (London, 1678), p. 26. Cf. T. Vincent, Gods Terrible Voice in the City (reprint of cor. 5th ed. of 1667; London, 1831), p. 12; Doolittle, The Mourner's Directory, p. 166; Pearse, op. cit., pp. 21, 25.

2 Pearse, op. cit., p. 25. .

3 Crofton, op. cit., p. 113.

4 Ibid., p. 5.

could be twice as fearful to him.

The saints themselves being sanctified but in part, are but imperfectly assured of their salvation; and therefore, in that measure, as they remain in doubt, or unassured, death may be a double terror to them. They believe the threatenings, and know more than unbelievers do, what an insufferable loss it is to be deprived of the celestial glory; and what an unspeakable misery it is to bear the endless wrath of God; and therefore, so far as they have such fears, it must needs make death a terror to them.¹

The Puritan considered his fear of death natural. He feared, he said, simply because he was a man. "The dread of death is as common, as natural to man; as is the stroke thereof"² He accounted for part of his fear with theological explanations, which could be answered with opposing theological arguments, but a significant portion of his fear remained unaccounted for. He concluded, that the fear of death must be something basic to man's nature. It was basic, not to fallen man alone: God had created man with the fear of death.

Had it not been naturally an evil to be dreaded and avoided, God would not have made it the matter of his threatening, nor would it have been a fit means to restrain men from transgression. To threaten a man with a benefit, as such, is a contradiction.³

"Puritanism made few concessions to the inclinations of the natural man",⁴ but the fear of death was one of them. No man could anticipate (with knowledge of what it meant)

1 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 531.

2 Crofton, op. cit., unpag. to the reader.

3 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 553f.

4 Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans (Glasgow, 1948), p. 280.

the dying struggle, the pain of dying, the last minute doubts and uncertainties about the reality of a next life and one's ability to pass the judgment, the assaults of Satan, the stabbing reminders of conscience, the prospect of a 'naked' soul and a rotting body--no man could anticipate all this and not fear.

Collmer, in his examination of the seventeenth century, discovered two types of fear of death: 'natural' and 'holy'. The latter allegedly induced fear of God which was desirable; the former, ". . . natural fear, was considered evil."¹ Neither of these types may be attributed to the Puritans. It was said by them that ". . . where this fear of [God] is, it frees us from base fears He fears not death itself, though the king of fears";² but it was not said that fear of death induced fear of God.³ As for 'natural' fear, it was not considered evil. Excessive fear was considered sinful but not natural fear itself. Perkins exhorted men to look beyond death for strength against "immoderate feares",⁴ but he believed that one could fear the destruction of one's human nature without sin.⁵ Baxter considered "inordinate fears"

1 Collmer, op. cit., p. 102.

2 Richard Sibbes, The Sun of Righteousness, in The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes, D. D., ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, VII (Edinburgh, 1864), 168.

3 Collmer's only evidence of this type of fear is a quotation from Ignatius Loyola, [Collmer, op. cit., p. 106.]

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 64.

5 Ibid., pp. 105f.

hurtful,¹ but he stoutly maintained that natural fear was not sinful. He distinguished between natural and sinful fear of death.² He comforted believers (himself among them) who feared death and thought they were therefore not Christians, saying, ". . . the natural fears of death that standeth in thy way may much perplex thee, and make thee think that thou art averse from God, when indeed thou art but averse from death"3

Doolittle states the Puritan attitude accurately. There are four types of fear.

There is an holy fear of Death, which every man should have; so to fear it, as to prepare for it. There is a Natural fear of Death, which no man can be perfectly delivered from: There is a groundless, slavish fear of Death, which many of Gods children are kept in bondage by; and there is a grounded fear of Death, which should be in all wicked men.⁴

The Christian could rise above the slavish fears, ". . . yet, the natural fears of Death will remain, till by death you put off this natural body."⁵

Crofton and Baxter are the most outspoken concerning natural fear. The one had been in daily expectation of execution; the other ". . . in some continual expectation of

1 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 544f.

2 Idem, A True Believer's Choice and Pleasure Instanced in the Exemplary Life of Mrs. Mary Coxe, Works, XVIII, 114.

3 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 535f.

4 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 171.

5 Ibid., p. 27.

death, supposing still that I had not long to live."¹ Each confirmed the other's remarks. "A beast that knoweth not that he must die, is not tormented with the fears of death"², said Baxter enviously. Crofton vehemently continued the thought:

. . . men exempt from phrensie; and not miraculously, extraordinarily acted by a divine Spirit, as were the three Children, and other Martyrs; must be the subjects of stoical Apathie, senseless stupidity, strong delusions, or a reprobate sence, if they fear not the stroak of death³

" . . . Christians cease not to be men"⁴, said Crofton. Of course not, said Baxter, "For let a man be never so much a saint, he will still be a man, and therefore, as death will still be death, so nature will still be nature, and therefore, death, as death, will be abhorred."⁵ Indeed, agreed Crofton, " . . . which of Gods Saints have not feared to dye?"⁶

The believer's fear of death was justified by the Puritans by the fact that Christ had feared it. Since He was sinless, it could not be considered sinful for any of His followers to fear it. Becon's understanding of Christ's request that He might not have to 'drink of the cup' is common among the

¹ Richard Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, Being the Reliquiae Baxterianae, ed. J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London, 1931), p. 26.

² Ibid., A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 531.

³ Crofton, op. cit., unpag. to the reader.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 532.

⁶ Crofton, op. cit., unpag. to the reader.

Puritans.

. . . a little before his passion, being greatly dismayed with the terrors and fears of death, [He] prayed unto his heavenly Father, that these bitter pains and torments, which were at hand for him to suffer, might be removed from him, so that he might not suffer them, but be free from them.¹

Crofton interpreted this on a strictly human level. "Shall I expect to be exempt from; Shall I be afraid or ashamed to express the passions which were existent in all Gods Saints, and from which my Lord and Master himself was not freed?"²

Others, perhaps more anxious to speak of the desirable aspects of death, sought to account for Christ's fear in terms of the torments of hell which He was to bear rather than in terms of mere physical death. It was God's wrath, not physical death, that He feared. They did not wish to ascribe fear of mere physical death to Christ. He feared, ". . . not out of an horror of temporall death, which many of Christs servants also have by his power overcome, but out of a certaine sence of a supernaturall and spirituall death."³ This was Calvin's position also. Some men despise death, he said, others face it calmly, and still others rush forward to it. Therefore, if Christ feared it, "What disgraceful effeminancy . . . would this have been, to be so distressed by the fear of a common death, as to be in a bloody sweat, and

1 Thomas Becon, The Sick Man's Salve, in Works of Thomas Becon, ed. John Ayre, III (Cambridge, 1844), p. 114.

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 3.

3 William Ames, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Drawn Out Of The holy Scriptures, and Interpreters thereof, and brought into Method (London, [n.d.]), p. 89.

incapable of being comforted without the presence of angels!"¹

Most of the Puritans took a mediating position. They suggested that Christ feared because He had to face both the 'first' and the 'second' death. He prayed in agony ". . . because he had not only the pangs of death, but the sence of his Fathers wrath to conflict withall" ² Perkins wanted to emphasize that Christ's fear arose largely because of the curse of the sins of mankind which He bore, but he could not bring himself to deny that Christ feared physical death as well. ". . . death is the destruction of humane nature in a mans owne selfe and others; and in this respect Christ feared it without sinne" ³

Baxter favored a similar position but placed more emphasis on Christ's fear of physical death. He believed that Christ, in bearing the sins of the world, tasted the dregs of the cup--which believers will not have to do. ⁴ But he also believed that Christ feared physical death. Baxter was ever sympathetic with those who feared physical death because he was one of them. His belief that Christ had also experienced this fear was a great comfort to him. He repudiates the assertion that fear implies insincere faith by saying:

¹ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen, I (8th Am. ed., rev. and cor.; Grand Rapids, 1949), 567.

² Thomas Case, Correction, Instruction (2nd. ed., cor. and enlarged; London, 1653), p. 33.

³ Perkins, op. cit., pp. 105f.

⁴ Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 559.

" . . . the soul may savingly love God that is afraid of death . . . Even Christ himself had a will that desired that the cup might have passed from him"1 Fear came from a natural enmity toward death, and from the strangeness of it,--and from weakness of faith, too, but "Even Christ himself prayed, 'That if it were possible, that cup might pass from him.'"2 Ladell's contention that Baxter has " . . . very little patience with those who are afraid to die"3 is not true. Baxter was concerned about his own fear of death and confessed that in him it had been sometimes excessive and hence sinful;⁴ but far from having 'very little patience' with those afraid of dying, Baxter, perhaps more than any other Puritan, regarded fear as natural and sinless, argued that Christ had feared to die and so it could not be sinful, and was greatly surprised when he met a person who did not seem to fear death.⁵

The counterpart to the Puritan's 'natural' fear of death was his 'natural' love of life. When one recalls his deprecation of this world and the life lived in it, and his emphasis that heaven is the only real world and in it life really begins, one is somewhat surprised to discover that he

1 Ibid., pp. 556f.

2 Idem, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 438.

3 A.R. Ladell, Richard Baxter Puritan and Mystic (London, 1925), p. 144.

4 Baxter, A True Believer's Choice, Works, XVIII, 114.

5 Idem, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 51.

almost invariably regarded long life as a blessing. For the most part, a desire for long life was not encouraged, but, nevertheless, such a desire was frequently taken for granted. Although the Puritans would not unequivocally endorse the statement that long life was always a blessing, yet they considered the enjoyment of long life a good thing.

. . . Baxter called it ". . . the hypocrisy of our complaints . . ." that ". . . after all our convictions, complaints, and prayers . . ." we still ". . . had rather continue in a troublesome, weary, restless life, than by the sleep of death to pass to rest."¹ Crofton recognized the strong natural desire for life: ". . . nature hath taught me to desire and endeavour the preservation, and if it were possible the perpetuation of my natural, sinful, sorrowful life . . ."² Jenkyn confessed: ". . . our times . . . are not in our own hands, if they were, we should live too long . . ."³ Becon's The Sick Man's Salve illustrates the tension that existed between a natural love of life and a theological abhorrence of what this life entails. In addition to Becon's condemnation of this life cited above in the first chapter, the almost violent avowal of his character Philemon that he would utterly refuse to become young again may be taken as a representative expression of the negative attitude to life in this work. He

1 Idem, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 571f.

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 145.

3 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 18.

says, in part, "For what pleasure and commodity hath this life? yea, rather, what displeasure, incommodity, pain, travail, and trouble hath it not?"¹ Yet in this same work, the examples of Job and Tobit, who were blessed with a long life after their trials, are noted with envy.² Epaphroditus, shortly after declaring that ". . . the end of this life is the beginning of my joy", asks that God bless his children with long life.³ Moreover, when he has completed his dying tasks according to the plan of the book and is dying prepared and righteous, he is asked for a sign (since he can no longer speak) whether he is yet alive. He holds up his hand and Eusebius promptly says, "God be thanked."⁴ There is no reason suggested for Eusebius' statement and no significance is given to Epaphroditus' lingering. The only implication, therefore, is that even an additional moment or two of life is considered a blessing.

Life, in the almost identical language of Pearse and Doolittle, is ". . . the sweetest of all outward [or, earthly] Mercies . . ." ⁵ and a preservative from death a "Great Salvation".⁶ Long life is a result of "special promises" made

1 Bacon, op. cit., p. 148.

2 Ibid., pp. 99f.

3 Ibid., pp. 129, 131.

4 Ibid., p. 189.

5 Pearse, op. cit., p. 9. Cf. Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 387.

6 Samuel Lee, Ἐλεοςρίμβος Or the Triumph of Mercy in

to those who have received "peculiar grace."¹ It was Ashe's opinion that "God ordinarily granteth long life unto good men."² Old age, obviously a mark of God's respect, was, in itself, a 'matter of commendation' "Because aged persons, thus qualified, [i.e. righteous] are the Emblems of God himself, who is called the ancient of days"³

Man's desire for long life was recognized and turned to advantage by the Puritans but seldom commended by them except as a deterrent to suicide or unless long life was desired for the sake of service.⁴ In one of his inimitable syllogisms, Baxter referred to this desire. "Do you love life or do you not? If not, why are you afraid of death? If you do, why then are you loth to pass into everlasting life?"⁵ Doolittle⁶ accepts without criticism the fact that a man confronted by the possibility of death by the plague will pray to God for deliverance from death. Still another preacher, striving to build up the reputation of the clergy, suggests that they are valuable because of their ability as praying mediators, and

the Chariot of Praise (London, 1677), pp. 18, 23. Cf. Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 52.

1 Simeon Ashe, Gray Hayres Crowned with Grace (London, 1655), p. 24.

2 Ibid., p. 34.

3 Ibid., p. 7.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 108.

5 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 586.

6 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, pp. 280-284.

cites as his example: "Isaiah prays for Hezekiah, & gets 15 years added to his life."¹

The blessing of long life was not to be lightly received. Gratitude was expected to characterize every area of the life of a man who was so richly rewarded. Those who had been saved from the plague were directed to praise God solemnly for His 'signal preservation'. "Life is the mercy I call upon you to praise God for, and you must do it by your life."² Aptly using imagery associated with death, the Puritan said,

. . . . God hath not given you over unto death; God hath not laid you in the Grave, where you would soon have been forgotten; do not you lay Gods Mercy, towards you, in the grave of oblivion; nor bury his mercy (of saving you alive) in forgetfulness. . . ."³

The sharpest encounter with fear was in the dying hour.⁴ In that hour a man could no longer shield his mind from the thoughts of the stark reality that lay before him: judgment, the intermediate state, reward or punishment. But there was reason to fear something more than what lay beyond death. Death itself was physically and mentally painful and the Puritan anticipated that his fear of the 'pangs of death' would be at its greatest immediately before he experienced them.

¹ John Collinges, Elisha's Lamentation for Elijah (London, 1657), p. 17.

² Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 282. Cf. Ashe, Gray Havres, pp. 24f.

³ Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 266.

⁴ Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 51.

The fear of the pain involved in dying was a significant part of the whole fear of death. The Pricke of Conscience, a work written in the Middle Ages, lists the pain of the death struggle as one of the chief causes of fear.¹ The position was the same in the seventeenth century. ". . . the paine and pangs of death", said Paget, "are objected by many as a cause of their feare & why they are loth to die."² The seventeenth century Puritan thought that the pain of dying was often exaggerated, but he feared it nevertheless. Crofton knew that his fear of the pain in death was greater than the pain would actually be,³ and Baxter agreed that 'some of us' are apt to overfear the antecedent pain;⁴ but still men argued that Christ had feared the pangs of death.⁵

The Puritans were all agreed that death was painful. In the midst of long comforting orations by his friends the dying Epaphroditus injects sharply: "Death is painful."⁶ The Puritan spoke of death's "fierie sting" piercing the heart;⁷ of the "bitter pangs of Death";⁸ and of the ". . . painfull

¹ The Pricke of Conscience, ed. Richard Morris (Berlin, 1863), pp. 46-73. Cited by Pecheux, op. cit., p. 18.

² Paget, op. cit., p. 427.

³ Crofton, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴ Baxter, A True Believer's Choice, Works, XVIII, 105.

⁵ Case, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶ Becon, op. cit., p. 150.

⁷ Perkins, op. cit., p. 88.

⁸ Pearse, op. cit., p. 179.

travell in returning to dust by death"1 He felt it was important to point out that Christ did not simply dismiss His soul from His body as He could have done, ". . . but it was forced out by the pain of death."2

The 'pangs of death' were thought to be caused by the painful rending of the body from the soul. The closeness of their union indicated the intensity of the pain at their dissolution: they did not separate easily but had to be wrenched apart. Death 'tears' the body from the soul;³ it ". . . cruelly part[s] asunder both body and soule"4 Only the Trinity and the two natures of Christ were more closely united than man's soul and body. Owen defines it as ". . . that strict, near, unparalleled union and relation between the soul and the body. There is a near union between parents and children, a nearer between husband and wife; but they are nothing to this union between the soul and the body."⁵ In a double act of creation God had linked together a "heavenly spirit" and an "earthly, sensual body".⁶ Man was

1 Paget, op. cit., p. 398.

2 David Clarkson, Christ's Dying for Sinners, in The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., III (Edinburgh, 1864-5), 64.

3 John Bunyan, "One Thing is Needful; or, Serious Meditations upon the four last things; Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell", in The Works Of that eminent servant of Christ, Mr. John Bunyan, IV (4th ed.; Edinburgh, 1769), 76.

4 Perkins, op. cit., p. 28; cf. p. 26.

5 Owen, op. cit., p. 347.

6 Ibid.

a single being combining the spiritual and the material; he was the essential link in the whole 'chain of being'. His double nature ". . . had the unique function of binding together all creation, of bridging the greatest cosmic chasm, that between matter and spirit."¹ In man's death this union was broken, and it was as though God's creation had collapsed. With great pain, a body that had no desire to die and a soul that feared 'nakedness' struggled against dissolution, and then were separated.

No Puritan was without this primitive conception of the painful rending apart of the body and soul. This was another inheritance from the Middle Ages. Medieval thought had dealt graphically in sermons and in poetry with the physical suffering involved in death.² Some of the friars' books on mortification had urged a man to think of the pain in dying. (To aid his imagination he was to hold the tip of his finger in a flame and thus experience in part what the pains of death would be.³)

The Puritans advanced as far beyond medieval thought as

¹ E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943), p. 60.

² Brown, Thirteenth Century Lyrics ([n.d.]), pp. 270-272; Owst, Preaching in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1926), pp. 341-3. Cited by Pecheux, op. cit., pp. 18f.

³ Bacon scorned this idea because he believed that the most vital parts of the body did not have the most feeling and therefore death often involved less pain than the torture of a limb. [Francis Bacon, "Of Death", in Bacon's Essays, introd., annotations, notes and indexes F. Stoor and C. H. Gibson (London, 1886), p. 9.]

the medical knowledge of the seventeenth century permitted. In an age when a prescription might be for 'moss from a dead man's skull' or a 'gold bullet'¹ (because gold, the perfect metal, was the symbol of health²), it is quite remarkable that the Puritans began to discredit the accepted idea about 'death pangs' by suggesting the important part played by disease. They suggested that the greatest part of the pain experienced at death was due to the disease from which the dying person suffered. They did not say that the 'dissolution' itself was not painful, nor did they go so far as to equate the 'pangs of death' with the pains of disease, but they did say that the pains which preceded the actual moment of 'dissolution' were caused by disease and were not part of the 'death pangs'. They were the same pains that were experienced at any other time of life from disease; they were not peculiar to the long struggle with Death. The usual view, even in the seventeenth century was this:

Hark how he groans, look how he pants for breath,
 See how he struggles with the pangs of death!
 When they shall say of these poor eyes--
 How hollow and how dim they be!
 Mark how his breast does swell and rise
 Against his potent enemy!³

The Puritans, however, said:

As for other strange events which fall out in death,

¹ These were prescriptions Baxter took. [The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, pp. 76, 92.]

² Tillyard, op. cit., p. 60.

³ Thomas Flatman, "Death", in Religious Poetry of the 17th Century, II, ([n.d.]), 363.

they are the effects of diseases The writhing of the lips, the turning of the neck, the buckling of the joints and the whole body, proceeds of cramps and convulsions, which follow after such evacuation.¹

Many people experience more pain in diseases from which they recover than they will feel at death.

To many apparently the pain is not so grievous: for some die so quietly that they do not shew so great tokens of pain & grief as others do in many sicknesses that are not deadly. It is probable that some have felt more pain long before in divers diseases, then in the hour of death.²

The pain of death, though sharp, was over in a moment;³

. . . the pain and extremity of a killing disease, is often, and ordinarily more, then the pain of death; it is usually such as maketh life a burden, and death desirable; how many in the burnings of a Fever, a fit of the Stone, or Collique, have wished for death to ease them of their pain?⁴

By indicating the important part played by disease at death, the Puritans were able to reject much of the superstitious interpretation that medieval thought had given to the 'pangs of death'. (In the same way that they were able to reject the superstitious interpretation of sudden death.) It had been believed that the manner of a man's death indicated his soul's eternal state: if a man's last hour was comfortable, then he went to heaven; if it was particularly difficult and painful, God, in a special judgment, was either exposing a hypocrite or punishing a wicked man. The Puritans, however,

1 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 15f.

2 Paget, op. cit., pp. 427f.

3 Ibid., p. 427. Cf. Crofton, op. cit., pp. 51f.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 51.

were not willing to have their emphasis on holy living overthrown by a superstitious interpretation of the 'pangs of death'. It was the way of life, not the way of death, that indicated a man's eternal state. ". . . the difference between the death of the holy and the unholy . . . doth not appear to fleshly eyes . . ." ¹

And if this be true, that strange diseases, [sic] and therupon strange behaviours in death, may befall the best man that is, we must learn to reform our judgements of such as lie at the point of death. The common opinion is, that if a man lie quietly and goe away like a lambe (which in some diseases, as consumptions and such like, any man may do) then he goes straight to heaven; but if the violence of the disease stirre up impatience, & cause in the partie franticke behaviours, then men use to say, there is a iudgement of God serving either to discover an hypocrite, or to plague a wicked man. But the truth is otherwise. For indeede a man may die like a lambe, and yet goe to hell; & one dying in excedding torments and strange behaviours of the bodie, may goe to heaven. ²

The physical suffering was accompanied by the anguish of a spiritual struggle. The dying hour was an "hour of temptatioⁿ"; ³ an hour in which one was assailed both with the pains of death and with the terrors of Satan. ⁴ Satan never left a man free from temptation--that was a blessing only death could bring ⁵ but he was most busy when a man approached death.

¹ Baxter, Some Initable Passages of the Life of Elizabeth, Late Wife of Mr. Joseph Baker, Works, XVII, 602.

² Perkins, on. cit., p. 17.

³ Paget, on. cit., p. 398. Cf. Crofton, on. cit., p. 150.

⁴ Bacon, on. cit., p. 188.

⁵ Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 10.

. . . In a dying Hour the Devil is most fierce and terrible in his Assaults and Temptations upon the Soul. The Devil is in the Scripture called a Roaring Lion; and is usually most so against the poor People of God, when they come to die: Then he hath Wrath, because he knows his Time is short.¹

Satan's subtlety and cleverness could not really be anticipated. Often he tried to make the dying believer despair of God's mercies;² but sometimes ". . . he will not urge men to desperation, knowing that by this means he shall stirre the vp to resist him . . ."³ Against such cunning there was no perfectly prepared defense. Perkins' final advice is to avoid trying to answer Satan when he seems unanswerable.

When thou art tempted of Satan and sees [sic] no way to escape, euen plainly close vp thine eyes, and answer nothing, but commend thy cause to God. This is a principall point of Christian wisdom which we must follow in the houre of death.⁴

Although Satan was sometimes an 'angel of light' and at other times a 'roaring lion', certain temptations occurred frequently enough for the Puritans to prepare a defense against them. The five temptations portrayed in the Ann horlandis⁵ (unbelief, despair, impatience, vainglory, and attachment to relatives and material possessions), together with their antidotes (faith, hope, love, humility, and detachment), having the weight of tradition behind them, were believed to

1 Pearse, op. cit., p. 10, Cf. Perkins, op. cit., p. 17.

2 Bacon, op. cit., p. 156.

3 Perkins, op. cit., p. 109.

4 Ibid., p. 111.

5 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 7.

occur most frequently. Of these, the Puritans found unbelief and despair the most common. Baxter¹ lists four of the five temptations of the Ars, each with its assigned antidote. One he leaves out: Baxter could never bring himself to believe that anyone would be impatient to die.² For the temptation to impatience, he substitutes fear. The antidote, however, is still love. Not content with these five, he later lists another twelve,³ but these are for the most part elaborations of the basic five.

As the relation to the Ars suggests, the conception of a spiritual struggle with Satan in the dying hour was one more part of the heritage bequeathed to the Puritans by the Middle Ages. Yet, although they did not question the reality of Satan or the reality of his intense activity at death, their growing awareness of the part played by disease modified the traditional attitude. They still believed that Satan sought by one last great effort to conquer a dying man by temptation, but some Puritans began to say that Satan would not be given the man's soul if he yielded, because he was not aware of his actions. A single act in a dying hour, committed out of weakness, should not invalidate the testimony of an entire life. As they questioned the validity of the deathbed

1 Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 416ff.

2 Other Puritans believed it, however. See Paget, op. cit., p. 415; Perkins, op. cit., p. 108; Ashe, Living Loves, p. 65.

3 Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 433-438.

repentance, so they doubted the binding nature of the deathbed sin.

And all sinnes, procured by violent diseases, and proceeding from repentant sinners, are sinnes of infirmitie; for which, if they know them and come againe to the use of reason, they will further repent; if not, they are pardoned & buried in the death of Christ.¹

Diametrically opposed to the fear of death was the desire for death. Unlike fear, desire for death was not inherent in the Puritan's make-up; it had to be induced by theological persuasion. The Puritan did not consider natural fortitude strong enough even to enable him to face death resolutely²—much less to bring him to desire death. Death to the natural man was an object of dread, but "To a believer, when his faith is on the wing, life . . . is not dear, and death . . . is desired."³ Theology could look at death and see that it had been changed by Christ; death had become part of the Christian charter. The believer could exult with Paul [I Cor. 3:22], "Death is yours".⁴ Death had become the New Testament verification of Benson's riddle 'out of the eater came meat'.⁵

The Puritan could not believe that the desire to die could exist apart from strong theological assurance of

1 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 16f.

2 Bibbes, The Vanitie of the Creatvre, Works, VII, 46.

3 Jenkyn, A Shook of Corn, p. 11.

4 Watson, op. cit., p. 25. Cf. Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 123.

5 Paget, op. cit., p. 429.

salvation. If he encountered a person who had a great and constant desire to die but who still complained of doubtings and weakness of assurance, he thought it very strange.

I hear men willing to die, and I find others do; but it is to go contrary to the principles of nature. No man under heaven (it implies a contradiction) can part with that which appears good to him, unless it be upon motives of a greater good. He must part with it; but he cannot willingly and cheerfully part with it.¹

Unless he was convinced that the glory of spiritual and eternal things outweighed all the things the soul parts with in this world, no man could die willingly and cheerfully.²

Even after assembling all of their theological arguments, some Puritans found they still could not desire death. Their theological arguments persuaded them that heaven was desirable, but not that death was. "I can be content to be dead, but I would not die."³ Arguments from theology at least persuaded them to be willing to die if they could not actually desire to do so. "Though we love not death, yet we love God and heaven so well that we will submit to it."⁴ Without the comforts of Christian doctrine, the fear of death would have been overwhelming to these men. It was for their sake that ministers were advised to be cautious in insisting that Christians must desire to die.

¹ Owen, op. cit., p. 346. Cf. Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 4n, to the reader.

² Owen, op. cit., p. 346.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 556.

. . . lest they bring a snare of oppression & despaire upon weak consciences, who may condemne themselves as being without faith when they heare that all faithful desire to be dissolved & yet feele not this desire in themselves.¹

For all of the Puritans, death, without the vision that theology provided, was nothing but dreadful. If they were to be made, 'contrary to the power and property of their natures', to desire to die, it could only be by being convinced of the 'happy sequels of death'.² Some pagan philosophers may have been able to welcome Death as a friend because he came to make an end of this life, but when the Puritans saw Death as a friend, it was because they saw him as God's messenger. Unless Someone, or something (heaven), stood behind Death, he appeared a grim enemy indeed.

This is not to say that the Puritan did not regard death both as an entrance into heaven and, like the philosophers, as a release from this world. But the Puritan, whose hope permitted him to desire death, must be distinguished from the men who have desired death out of sheer despair. The Puritan looked to death as the end of evil, but he also saw it more positively as the beginning of good. ". . . Did the pain of life, take away the pain of death to Heathens? and shall it not much more do so unto Christians, who have other, and better hopes of future happiness then they ever knew or expected?"³ It has been alleged that Milton the theologian

1 Paget, op. cit., p. 416.

2 Crofton, op. cit., p. 160.

3 Ibid., p. 54.

saw death as an object of horror, while Milton the poet saw death as a "heaven-sent release" from this world of woe.¹ If this had been all that Milton had seen in death, he would not have risen to such heights as his fellow Puritan theologians who saw death as desirable not only negatively as a release, but also positively as redemption. But Milton too looked forward to a 'second life' and a 'renewed heaven and earth',² as well as back on a world of misery.

No rigid line divided the positive reasons for desiring death from the negative. Both could be summed up in the single word 'heaven'. Heaven was as much heaven because it took a man out of the reach of evil as because it put him into the hand of good; death was desirable not only because it brought him into happiness, but also because it ushered him out of misery.

The negative and positive reasons complemented each other. When the Puritan said that death was desirable because it ended sin, he had in mind at the same time that it began perfection; when he said that death ended death, he had in mind that it began a life that would never be terminated. He looked forward to the termination of misery because it was also the beginning of happiness.

Without embarrassment the Puritan mixed the positive and negative aspects of the desirability of death. He sometimes found it convenient to separate them and to distinguish, as

¹ Erskine, op. cit., pp. 581f, 580.

² Milton, op. cit., Bk. XI, ll. 64 seq.

Doolittle did, between 'ten evils you shall never be delivered from till you die' and 'five great things you cannot have till you die' but they were all under the general heading of 'privileges granted to believers'.¹ Baxter, describing the saint's rest, moves back and forth between the positive and negative;² and Perkins sees, as the three chief and legitimate reasons for desiring death, first, that it is the means to free us from the corruption of our nature, second, that it is the means to bring us to immediate fellowship with Christ, and third, that it ends the troubles of this life.³ Without a pause in his thought a Puritan would say, "When you therefore wonder why good men die, you forget too much the trouble of life, and the glory after death"⁴ "My pain endeth in this life. And the end of this life is the beginning of my joy."⁵

To persuade himself that death was desirable, the Puritan constantly argued from his theology that this life was wretched and sinful and that a wonderful world lay beyond death. This was contrary to the counsel his nature offered. His nature could only prompt him to avoid pain; and for the

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, pp. 25ff.

2 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 106-171.

3 Perkins, on. cit., pp. 107f.

4 B. Jacobbe, on. cit., p. 14.

5 Becon, on. cit., p. 129. Cf. Bibbes, Belonm's Wish, Works, VII, 6.

Puritan, the bigger pain was death, not life. His nature therefore spoke louder for avoiding death than for escaping life. It proclaimed life both good and evil; but death only evil. Left to his natural desires, the Puritan would have taken this life and this world, for he did not find it so painful that he naturally desired to leave it.

It was one thing to think about the desirability of dying when the misery of this world weighed heavily upon one, and quite another thing to desire death when life seemed good. "For a Man in a prosperous Condition, all things going smoothly with him in the World, to be willing to loose Anchor, and be gone hence to Heaven . . . this is noble Grace."¹ To convince men of the desirability of death when life seemed pleasant, therefore, theology had to speak positively about heaven, and negatively about this world.

The negative aspects were more emphasized than the positive. There are two reasons for this. Although heaven was somewhat nebulous—its full glory being not yet revealed²—the evils of this world were experienced realities. It was more meaningful, therefore, to express the desirableness of death in terms of what it ended than in terms of what it began. An even more important reason was that the Puritans' beliefs

¹ Pearse, op. cit., p. 126.

² Robert Bolton, Mr. Bolton's Last and Learned Worke of the Foure Last Things, Death, Iudgement, Hell, and Heaven, in The Worke of the Reverend, truly Pious, and Indiculously Learned Robert Bolton . . . as they were finished by himselfe in his life time, I (London, 1641), 113.

concerning the intermediate state discouraged the positive declarations of the joys of heaven. Death was a 'door'¹ leading to heaven, but it did not lead immediately to heaven for the 'whole man': two judgments, a long abode in the grave, and a resurrection delayed the entrance into heaven in perfection and completeness. "Death shall do much for us, but the resurrection shall do more."² Death did, however, lead one immediately out of this world with all its pain and travail. Even as the benefits of Easter are in Good Friday--but the negative aspects are more prominent on that day--so the positive aspects of heaven were present in the Puritan conception of death, but the negative were more prominent.

Death was not the complete step into perfect happiness, but it was ". . . the last step out of Mortality and Misery."³ At death ". . . cease all their miseries and travails, and begin their joys and pleasures."⁴ It was a mercy that God had shortened the days of man on earth. As the just desert of sin, death was a punishment; but God turned it into mercy. "If you should live longer, you would sin longer, and you would sorrow longer, and you would be afflicted longer; and are these so pleasing to you, that you would not die?"⁵ After reciting

1 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 557.

2 Ibid., p. 590.

3 William Bates, The Great Duty of Resignation to the Divine Will in Afflictions, Enforced from the Example of Our Suffering Saviour (London, 1684), p. 134.

4 Bacon, op. cit., p. 149.

5 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 124.

a long list of the miseries of this life from which the dead are delivered, Baxter continues,

Did you not often join in prayer with them, for deliverance from malice, calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations and sin? and now those prayers are answered in their deliverance; and do you now grieve at that which then you prayed for?¹

In an age of ineffective medicine, death was hailed both as the best "physick"² and as ". . . the best Physician, curing then perfectly of all diseases whatsoever."³

The most outstanding example of the fact that even the negative aspect of death's desirability was theologically induced, was the reiterated desire to be released from sin and sinning. "I desire to be dissolved; never did any man more desire life than I do death! When will that time come, when I shall neither sin more, nor sorrow more?"⁴ Sin is not a concept known to the natural man. Only theology could teach that we ought to be glad of death because all sin is abolished and we then no longer offend God. In contrast to the interpretation suggested by Milton's critic that the poet rather than the theologian desired death, the Puritan actually said: "And though we lay down our bodies with natural unwillingness, yet we lay down our sin and sorrows with gladness and spiritual delight."⁵

1 Baxter, The Divine Life, Works, XIII, 313.

2 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 10.

3 Ashe, Living Lovers, p. 42.

4 Ibid., pp. 65f.

5 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 560.

Only by dying could a man conquer sin. The Puritan considered it greatly to his profit to die because he knew he could not cease to sin unless he died.¹ He declared that death alone would be the accomplishment of the mortification of sin. ". . . Death is the Saints only perfect cleanser through Christ."² When he reflected that death alone could free him from sin, even Crofton found he could 'very cheerfully and willingly' yield to death.³

Sin died with the body because it lived in the flesh. The body ceased to be an active and a passive instrument of sin only when death rendered it insensible. "This dying flesh is not only the subject of sense, but also the seat of sin; the members of my body, are the instruments of sin, unto and until death . . ."⁴ When in life the Puritan nourished his body, he regretted that he was thereby enabling the flesh to fulfill its lusts.⁵

The Puritan did not mean that sinning merely ceased at death like all other bodily functions (a rather pallid idea); he sounded a far more triumphant note; sin was conquered and annihilated by death,⁶ vanquished and killed forever,⁷

1 Bacon, op. cit., p. 148.

2 Pearson, op. cit., p. 156.

3 Crofton, op. cit., p. 88.

4 Ibid., p. 89.

5 Ibid.

6 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 557.

7 Sibbes, The Matchless Heroine, Works, VII, 163.

destroyed.¹ That death should make an end of sin which brought in death, satisfied the Puritan's sense of poetic justice: Frankenstein was destroyed by his own monster.

Death for the godly was not simply the end of sinning; it was that for the ungodly as well; but while death destroyed the sins of the saints, it did not kill the sins of the ungodly: their sins lived with them in the grave. This was ". . . the one half of Hell; for what is Hell, but Sin at the highest, and Wrath at the hottest?"² The saint was not only cleansed, but made perfect. The desire to receive this perfection was the complement of the desire to be free from sin.

What, daily cleansing thy self, and yet still unclean? Daily perfecting Holiness, yet still imperfect? Oh how sad is this? Well, but Soul, when Death comes, things will be strangely alter'd with thee; that will do that for thee in one moment, which thou by a whole Life of Prayers, Tears, Faith, Watching, Warring, Labouring, couldst not do; 'twill make thee perfect"³

Death not only killed sin; it killed itself also. In death the Puritan had his revenge on that which had kept him in bondage to fear all his life. ". . . Death is the last enemy I must encounter; and cannot be otherwise conquered then by my falling under its stroke"⁴ It was a desperate measure but it was effective. Like Samson, the

1 Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 545.

2 Pearse, op. cit., pp. 156f.

3 Ibid., p. 156.

4 Crofton, op. cit., p. 23.

Puritans found that slaying the Philistine involved his own death.

Taken in reference to this life only, desiring death because it ends death is a rather strange idea. It must be understood as the negative expression of the positive thought that after death the godly man enters a new life which will never be terminated. "The same day you live, the same day you may die;—but after death, you shall no more be liable to die"1 By definition, eternal life was a life which could not end in death.² It was written in heaven's constitution that death had no place there. Where there was no sin, there could be no death.

Death delivered a man from death because it ushered him into a world of unending life. "It is highly for our profit to die! . . . We shall never come unto the true life, where felicity both joyful and eternal is, except we die! why then make we so little speed to haste thither . . . ?"³ It was not really a death at all, therefore, but a birth—an "aeterni natalis, the birthday of eternity"4 Painful death opened the 'womb of time' and bore man into a life of eternal glory.⁵

Another positive reason for desiring death was that it

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 27.

2 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 169.

3 Becon, op. cit., p. 148.

4 Watson, op. cit., p. 25.

5 Baxter, A Christian Directory, Works, IV, 470ff.

brought one into the immediate presence of God and Christ. Many of the positive joys of heaven were not directly associated with death. This is because the Puritans cautiously reserved most of the benefits of heaven until the body arrived to share in them. This particular experience, however, could be enjoyed by the soul alone during the intermediate period between death and the resurrection.

There was, of course, communion with God in this life, but this was very small compared to that which was to be enjoyed in heaven. Here it is "little and inconstant": but it is "constant and perpetual" in heaven.¹ Man's condition and status as a sinful creature kept him from enjoying fellowship with God. God was present with him but he was not present with God. "While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord: even absent while he is present."² In this life we do not have the eyes with which to see God; we are as unaware of His presence as trees are of ours.³

The Puritan wished to enjoy fuller communion with God; but this was possible only in heaven and heaven lay on the other side of death. Many Puritans argued that the thought of coming into Christ's presence should be sufficient reason for regarding death as desirable. If a man only remembered to whom he was going, he would quicken his pace, pray for

1 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 139.

2 Baxter, The Saint's Everlasting Rest, Works, XXII, 346f.

3 Ibid., p. 347.

deliverance, and hasten home.¹ He was not only going to rest, but to a rest that was with God. The desire to be with Christ should bring one to love death. ". . . by the love of Christ men are brought to the love of death, having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."² If God's people fear death and are unwilling to go out of this world, then their love for Christ must be weak.³ If pagan peoples have willingly died with their kings out of affection for them and out of desire to be with them, how much more should Christians long to die to be with their King?

If these so wickedly and resolutely leave this world before they be called, and blindly cast away their lives for the love of a wretched creature; what shame is it unto Christians if the love of their glorious prince & heavenly bridegroom does not mortify them unto the world, and make them ready to goe unto him when they shall be called? True love must needs make us to long after death that we may live with him, in whose life our life is bound up for ever.⁴

The desire for communion with God and Christ should be distinguished, in the main body of Puritanism, from the mystic's desire to be absorbed into a unity with the Perfect Being. These Puritans meant to suggest no such mystical merging into a single unity with God. They did speak occasionally of 'union' but it was union 'to' or 'with' rather than 'in'.⁵ What strikes one most about their language is

1 Clarkson, Of Living as Strangers, Works, I, 246.

2 Paget, on. cit., p. 342.

3 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 22. Cf. Watson, on. cit., p. 23.

4 Paget, on. cit., pp. 343f.

5 Watson, on. cit., p. 23.

that it appears to be a deliberate attempt to avoid mystical misinterpretations. Far more representative of Puritan thought than the rather ambiguous 'union' are expressions such as the following: death gives the soul an entrance "into the presence"¹ of God and Christ, to "immediate fellowship",² "immediate communion"³ with them. Men should desire to be "as near to God" as the saints who have already died.⁴ Most often, the relation was described simply as being 'with' Christ.⁵ Another very popular figure maintained a clear distinction between the creature and his God: Doolittle speaks of the delight at the first view of Christ.⁶ Pearce speaks at some length about the ". . . full, constant, and Immediate Vision" of God, comparing the present sight of God to the 'back parts' that Moses was permitted to see.⁷ Calamy clearly repudiates any suggestion of mysticism when he says that we will ". . . behold with our bodily eyes the sight of Christ as man."⁸

1 Perkins, op. cit., p. 23.

2 Ibid., p. 108.

3 Ache, Living Love, p. 41.

4 Baxter, The Life of Faith, Works, XII, 555.

5 Paget, op. cit., p. 342. Cf. Baxter, A Treatise of Death, Works, XVII, 545; Simeon Ache, The Efficiency of Gods Grace in Bringing Gain-Saying Sinners to Christ (London, 1654), p. 38.

6 Doolittle, The Mourners Directory, pp. 155f.

7 Pearce, op. cit., pp. 157 et. seq.

8 Calamy, op. cit., p. 16.

Even more significant is the intimate way in which these Puritans united into one great reason for desiring death, the two ideas coming to Christ and getting rid of sin. Frequently in the same sentence, very often in the same thought, the Puritans linked these two aspects. This distinguishes them from the true mystics for whom the desire to be merged in a union with God assumes such proportions that the desire to be rid of sin is either relegated to a poor second place or forgotten altogether. Collmer says of the seventeenth century metaphysical poets that those who spoke of the 'unitive' aspect of death were only secondarily interested in freedom from sins.¹ Sin is not a bold and demanding doctrine for the true mystic ('invariably' an optimist) who comes ". . . dangerously near to breaking down distinctions between right and wrong."² ". . . generally speaking, the higher mystics had but a weak conception of moral evil . . ."³ The Puritan, however, united the desire to be with Christ and the desire to be free from sin. Owen, answering the question "Upon what grounds, then, can a man be ready and willing to lay down his tabernacle in the dust?", 'fixes upon' two reasons: the desire to be with Christ and the desire to be rid of sin.⁴ Perkins!

1 Collmer, on. cit., p. 67.

2 Elbert N. S. Thompson, "Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century English Literature", Studies in Philology, XVIII (1921), 215.

3 Ladell, on. cit., p. 141.

4 Owen, on. cit., p. 349.

three reasons for desiring death begin with the desire to be free from the corruption of our nature and move secondly to the desire to enjoy the fellowship of Christ and God in heaven.¹ Mrs. Jane Ratcliffe, who wrote "Why I desire to dye", looked forward to death because she loved God and did not want to be kept too long from the enjoyment of Him, and because she wished to be rid of the disease of sin.²

The Puritan wished to be able to desire death and to meet it victoriously when it finally came. He wanted his theology to triumph over his nature. He listened to the persuasion of stronger voices which was echoed in his own conscience and realized that he should desire to die. If a man really loved Christ, should he not desire to be with Him? If he really hated sin, should he not be willing to go where he would be rid of it? Was not the intensity of his love for God and of his hatred for sin reflected in the extent to which he desired death? Fear of death in God's people argued great weakness: "Is this your love to Christ, to be more afraid than desirous to go to him?"³ Unwillingness on the part of Christians 'to go hence' showed that their faith as well as their love was weak.⁴ It implied that they were not yet weary

1 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 107f.

2 Samuel Clarke, The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines, Famous in their Generations for Learning and Piety, And most of them Sufferers in the Cause of Christ (3rd. ed., cor. and enlarged; London, 1677), pp. 384f.

3 Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 22.

4 Watson, op. cit., p. 23.

of sinning. ". . . the love of sinne makes men fear death; and he who hates sinne must needs love death, because hereby sinne shall be wholly abolisht."¹

Desire for death was the proof of love of Christ and hatred of sin; and the proof of this desire was a joyful reception of the messenger of death. "A Christian encouraged by the blessed Hope, comes with joy to Death . . ."² The disposition of a holy and blessed man at death was, in a word, "happy".³ Becon's The Sick Man's Salve is again instructive because its intent is to set forth the complete way to die correctly. Epaphroditus, reminded of forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, says: "This maketh me not to fear death, but joyfully to look for it, and lovingly to embrace it whensoever it cometh."⁴ There were other occasions in life in which a man could demonstrate his faith, but the time of death, being the time of his greatest trial, was the special occasion. It was in death that men were the best Christians.⁵

To achieve such a victorious end was one important reason for the time and energy which the Puritan expended on preparation for death. To 'reap the fruit' of all meditation

¹ Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 12. Cf. Doolittle, A Spiritual Antidote, p. 23.

² Bates, on. cit., pp. 156f.

³ Bibbes, Balcan's Wich, Works, VII, 6.

⁴ Becon, on. cit., p. 144.

⁵ Perkins, on. cit., p. 88, citing Luther. Both Becon's The Sick Man's Salve and Perkins' A Salve for a Sicke Man, first printed in the sixteenth century, continued to go through frequent new editions well into the seventeenth century.

and preparation for death ". . . is not to feare death but to be ready to entertaine & welcome the same"1 God's method of helping men to be able to welcome death was to threaten them with it throughout their lives.

God sees it expedient for his servants, that they shall thinke they must surely die even when they shall not die, to the end that when they shall die indeed, they may better welcome death which they remembered & prepared for beforehand.²

A necessary last rite was the committing of one's soul to Christ. ". . . this prayer . . . 'That Christ will receive our departing souls,' is a most suitable conclusion of all the actions of a Christian's life."³ "At the hour of death commit your Soules to him; trust him with your Soul"⁴ It was an act of faith to be performed with great care: like a dying man entrusting an only child to the care of a friend.⁵ To be able to perform this act when dying, the Puritan found it necessary to prepare for it and to practise it when living; for ". . . it is manifest, that no man ordinarily can performe these duties dying, that hath not performed them living."⁶ If a man did not learn to perform this task when his faith was strong, he could not "joyfully perform it" in the hour of

1 Paget, on. cit., p. 413.

2 Ibid., p. 62.

3 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 13.

4 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 279.

5 Owen, on. cit., p. 343.

6 Perkins, on. cit., p. 99.

his extremity when doubts and fears were assailing him most severely.¹

The Puritan exhibited his triumph in action, in attitude, and also in speech. In his dying words he proclaimed his victory, reaffirmed his faith, and exhorted others to follow in his way. His declaration of faith was more effective than at any other time in his life: if his faith persevered in the face of death, there could be no doubt that it was real. The advice he gave implied his faith: he witnessed publicly that he staked the reputation of his past life and his hope of a future life on the truth that lay behind the advice.

Dying words possessed a virtue and an authority which ordinary words did not. Perhaps every age has considered dying words of peculiar value; certainly the seventeenth century was no exception. ". . . we make much of the words of a dying man," said Jenkyn, "and God eminently regards them."² ". . . if the dying speeches of Gods Children had all been recorded," said another, "it would have been a Book more worth than Gold . . ."³ ". . . for instructions sake & for imitation" Perkins repeats the dying words of several men of the Bible and saints of the church.⁴

1 Baxter, The Last Work of a Believer, Works, XVIII, 44.

2 Jenkyn, A Shock of Corn, p. 23.

3 Robert Bragg, The Life and Death of the Godly Man (London, 1677), p. 17.

4 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 91-96.

Perhaps dying words derived some of their authority from the fact that men near death often accurately predicted the time of their death,¹ and this suggested that a sort of sixth sense was given to dying men. The fact that they had no need to fear any temporal power any longer--and that they stood so near the final judgment--argued that they would speak unadulterated truth. The principal reason for the fascination which dying words exercised upon the seventeenth century Puritans, however, was the preoccupation with death. In reading dying words a man was listening to one who had stood at the very threshold of death--where he himself would one day have to stand. He was consulting with a veteran who had been through the fight. Dying words were an answer to the question in the mind of every Puritan: what is it like to know you are about to die?

Because dying words enjoyed such respect, Puritan ministers wished their people to think of them as dying men. ". . . . Oh that I could preach every Sermon as a dying man"² Many a minister, preaching his last sermon before being evicted by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, called it his dying words. "I have a happiness this day . . . to preach my own funeral: and I beseech you, let the words of a dying man

¹ John Synn foretold the very hour. [Edmund Calamy, D. D., The Nonconformist's Memorial, abr., cor., methodized, with additions, Samuel Palmer, II, (2nd ed.; London, 1802), 22.] Richard Byfield [Ibid., III, 302] and George Trosse [Ibid., II, 107] also predicted that their end was at hand.

² Doolittle, The Mourner's Directory, unpag. introd.

make some impression on your hearts."¹ ". . . because they say, The words of a dying man make the deepest impression, before I am altogether civilly dead, I shall give you one exhortation more."²

The Puritan, particularly the Puritan preacher, sought to declare the counsel of God in life as well as in doctrine because he believed, ". . . as one says, Suadet loquentia vita, non oratio: that the preacher's life is the most persuasive preaching."³ It was said of Henry Staples that "His ordinary discourses were short sermons and his holy life was the application of them."⁴ What was true all through life was even more true at death. All Puritans wanted to be able to give some public demonstration of their victory at death but ministers particularly wanted the close of their lives to be an effective sermon. The last hour of life was to be the culmination of a life of preaching. It was considered a compliment to say: "I admired Doctor Seaman more . . . on a Deathbed, than ever I did in the Pulpit"⁵

It was axiomatic, of course, that the Biblical heroes had died victoriously. If the Biblical narrative seemed to indicate that these saints did not welcome death, the Puritan found it

1 John Garret. Cited by Galamy, The Nonconformist's Memorial, II, 94.

2 Philip Lamb. Cited by Ibid., p. 117.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., III, 333.

5 Jenkyn, Exodus, p. 33.

necessary to supply a more satisfactory interpretation. If David prayed for the deliverance of his soul from death in Psalm 6, it was not because he feared the first death, but because he was apprehensive of God's wrath in the second.¹ Similarly, Hezekiah wept when told that he was going to die not so much because he feared death as because he had no one to succeed him on the throne.² Giving a good example of what Puritan piety could do with the Bible, Perkins, a responsible Puritan writer, explains the real situation in Job's household:

Jobs wife in the midst of his affliction said vnto him to very good purpose, "Blesse God and die." I know and graunt that the words are commonly translated otherwise, "Curse God and die:" but (as I take it) the former is the best. For it is not like that in so excellent a family, any one person much lesse a matrone and principall gouernour thereof would giue such lewd & wretched counsell, which the most wicked man upon earth hauing no more but the light of nature would not once giue, but rather much abhorre and condemne.³

It is difficult to know how many Puritans achieved the victorious death which they all desired and for which they all prepared. The spiritual biographies which were such popular reading in the seventeenth century are an abundant source of examples of those who did achieve this end. As standardized by men like Samuel Clarke, these biographies invariably contained the dying acts and words of the notable person. (Since a triumphant conclusion to life was one of the qualifications for entry into the spiritual hall of fame, few

1 Perkins, op. cit., pp. 11ff.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 89.

were included without some mention of it.) The best funeral sermons were incomplete without some mention of the last hour of the deceased. If a man died in a less than victorious manner, however, it was not considered worth recording.

Not all, certainly, left this world with a shout of victory. That much at least is indicated by Pearce when he says,

Some poor Souls crowd into Heaven through a throng of doubts and unbelief, difficulties and dependancies, through many fears and temptations in so much that it might be truly said of them, that they are nearly saved, as the Apostle's expression is¹

Examples of deaths which were not triumphant, when these were recorded, referred to unbelievers.² Nevertheless, in a few instances when the reflections of a Puritan expecting death have been preserved, something less than triumph is sometimes revealed.³

There must have been a sufficiently high proportion of victorious deaths among members of the orthodox Puritan party, however, to enable them to set the victory of believers over against the defeat of unbelievers. After referring to the fact that some unbelievers die in terror, Doolittle says, "It hath been ground of great rejoicing to hear! how many of Gods people in this plague did dye with joy and comfort?"⁴

1 Pearce, op. cit., pp. 27f.

2 Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial, II, 94. Cf. Baxter, The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, p. 82.

3 Crofton, op. cit., pp. 159f.

4 Doolittle, A Serious Enquiry, p. 87.

Some of the examples of those who died triumphantly indicate how very successful many Puritans were. "And when he saw any probable symptoms of death (which he called the little crevices at which his soul did peep out) he was exceedingly joyfull."¹ These men would not be deceived by friends and physicians into vain hopes of recovery nor were they startled if asked whom they wanted to preach their funeral sermon.² When they discovered the signs of an approaching death, they were apt to seek out a friend and discuss the immortality of the soul, the vanity of this life, and the joys of the next world; and then say:

Sir, I now much wonder that any man that fully believes these things to be realities, and not mere notions . . . should be unwilling to die: for my own part, I will not be so flattered with any carnall content, as to be desirous to live longer in this world . . . and therefore now it is a great favour of God to be sent for needily.³

When this man lay dying, he was urged to be cheerful. He answered: ". . . I am so chearfull in my heart, that I could laugh whilest my sides ake."⁴ Few men were so confident of their ability to die victoriously as Fernando Nicoll who ". . . often expressed a great desire to die in sight of his congregation . . ."⁵ but the triumph of his death — he

1 Calamy, The Saint's Transfiguration, p. 26.

2 Ashe, Gray Havres, p. 59.

3 Samuel Faireclough, Άγιοι Άέιοι Or, The Saints worthinesse and The world's worthlesnesse (London, 1653), p. 21.

4 Ibid., p. 23.

5 Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial, II, 37.

died in church, singing loudly and cheerfully--was not unique.

Thus, after a lifetime of tension between fear and desire, the Puritan came at length to the deathbed and there resolved the struggle. For many Puritans, this was the first time that they were able to close their eyes to the fearful qualities of death and to think only of its desirability. Often to their own joyous surprise, they discovered that their fears and doubts were resolved and only a joyful expectation remained. Thomas Goodwin, mentioning the examples of faith in Hebrews 11, said with amazement in his dying hour: "I could not have imagined I should ever have had such a measure of Faith in this Hour, no I could never have imagin'd it."¹ The Puritan concluded his life in the way poetically described by Bunyan. Having resolved the struggle by vanquishing fear, and having reaffirmed his faith and gotten the victory

. . . he keeps the field,
While death is gone and fled;
And then lies down upon his shield,
Till Christ doth raise the dead.²

¹ Thomas Goodwin, The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D. D., V (London, 1704), xix.

² Bunyan, op. cit., p. 79.

SUMMARY AND CRITICAL CONCLUSION

Those who rightly engage in philosophy, said Plato, study only dying and death. The seventeenth century Puritans very nearly realized this ideal. Thoughts of death permeated all of their thinking. When they thought of life they thought of its end in death. When they thought of heaven, they remembered with dismay that they must first pass through death. The first and last thoughts of the day were to be of death, and throughout the day everything from brooms to ministers reminded them of their 'latter end'.

They were not interested in philosophical speculation and contemplation, however, but in preparation. They kept death constantly before their eyes to remind themselves of their continual need to prepare for it. The hour of death and the struggle with Satan, the pangs of dying, the fears and temptations demanded life-long preparation. Preparation could not be delayed for death might come suddenly; and would surely come swiftly.

The Puritans believed that men were placed in this world to prepare for the next: their 'business' in this life was to prepare for heaven. Any other use of life was 'foolish trifling'. God sent afflictions to remind men to attend to eternal things. They could not both enjoy this world and prepare for the next. Therefore, to prevent the attractiveness of this world from beguiling him from his single purpose of preparation, the Puritan poured contempt on this world and fixed his thoughts on heaven.

An examination of the Puritan attitude to death reveals

that much that might be interpreted as mysticism was really subordinate to the Puritan's concern with death. His vigorous rejection of this world in order that he might prepare for heaven, for instance, is not the mystic's attitude of indifference. The mystic does not isolate this world from the next. The Puritan meditated on death and imagined himself dying, not to experience a mystical ecstasis, but to eradicate his fear of death by becoming familiar with it. The fact that he feared death distinguishes him from the mystic who is indifferent to it. In arguing for death's desirability, the Puritan united two ideas: coming to Christ and getting rid of sin--two ideas which mysticism never sees in conjunction.

The union to which the Puritan looked forward in heaven was not union 'in' an eternal being, but union 'with' a personal Christ. The Puritan further distinguished himself from the mystic by insisting that the body as well as the soul must be united with Christ. The mystic desires to be free from the encumbrances of his body but the Puritan believed that since both body and soul were necessary for his 'being', both had to be united with Christ. This union was the basis of ideas which gave the Puritan comfort. It was essential that this union should exist even in the grave; only with this assurance could a man face the long period in the grave. It was this union which distinguished the intermediate state of the righteous from the intermediate state of the unrighteous. It was this union which would effect the resurrection. The Puritan's concern for the body would have moved him to

fabricate a doctrine of resurrection if the Bible had not taught it as fact. He insisted, moreover, that it must be a resurrection of the same body, made of the same dust.

The Puritan's attitude to death suggests that he was egocentric--that he was primarily concerned with his own personal salvation. Evangelism was vitally important and the Puritan was sorrowful when one who was unrepentant died, but that sorrow was not to keep him from his personal preparation: his own death was fast approaching. (Besides, in heaven he would no longer mourn for the unrepentant.) A man's relation to his loved ones was a matter of deep concern, but ties of affection were not to prevent a man from pursuing, for himself, the things of eternal significance. Like Christian, fleeing from his family with his fingers in his ears to shut out their cries to return, the Puritan was to flee, shouting, 'Life, life, eternal life!' The death of loved ones revealed the Puritan to be a man of tender heart. The proper comfort of the bereaved received much of his attention. He condemned as 'inhuman' and 'unchristian' those who felt no sorrow in the death of a friend. He believed that Jesus had given adequate sanction for sorrow by weeping over Lazarus' death. But sorrow for loved ones was excessive and sinful if it interfered with a man's preparation for his own death. He was to 'profit by' and 'use' the death of another.

Some men do not begin to desire immortality until they consider the death of a person most precious to them. For themselves, they may not be greatly interested whether or not

death is the end. They are led to desire immortality by discovering a desire for a loved one's continued existence. The Puritan's desire for immortality, however, began with himself. He was concerned first of all with his own continued existence. Moreover, he wanted it to be an individual existence. He was greatly concerned whether souls continued their individual existence or were absorbed into one common soul.

The Puritan was more concerned with his own death than with the death of any other; his anxiety and fear was greater for himself than for others. He dreaded the separation of his body from his soul more than he dreaded the separation from his wife. The union between husband and wife was a 'near union', but only the union within the Trinity and between the two natures of Christ was closer than the union between body and soul. The separation of the marriage partners was as nothing compared with the dissolution of the 'I'. The Puritan would have liked an individual deliverance from this dissolution and from the intermediate state. For this reason he envied the translations of Enoch and Elijah. The desire for Christ's second coming, too, could become intensely personal when an individual Puritan contemplated what it would mean in terms of his deliverance from death and the intermediate state.

The Puritans would have been horrified to have been called unscriptural, but this charge must be leveled at them, for recent Biblical scholarship reveals that Puritan understanding of the Scriptures was deficient, and their

thinking often untrue to the Bible.

To no principle were the Puritans so devoted as to 'sola Scriptura'. The Bible was their most venerated authority and all of their attitudes and doctrines--indeed, their very raison d'être--ultimately claimed Biblical authority. Yet a pious attitude towards the Bible does not ensure the correct interpretation and understanding of it. A Puritan was apt to insist that Job's wife must have said 'bless God and die' rather than 'curse God and die' because the wife in such an excellent family would not have given such 'lewd & wretched counsell'.

The Puritan understanding of man was more true to Greek thought than to either the Old or New Testament. The Puritans accepted the Greek antithesis between a body that was composed of perishable and evil matter and a soul that was indissoluble and thus immortal. This was adapted to the Biblical idea of fallen man, but that did not alter the basic contrast between a mortal body and an immortal soul. True to Greek thinking, the Puritans regarded the body as a prison in which the soul was incarcerated.

The Biblical view of man, however, is that he is a total person, an 'animated body', a whole man seen in different ways and not that he is made up of two or more conflicting elements. The Old Testament does not even contain a distinct word for 'body', and for Paul the word 'body' (soma) is nearly equivalent to 'personality'.¹ Moreover, Paul never

¹ John A.T. Robinson, The Body (London, 1952), p. 28.

contrasts the terms body and soul.

The Puritans, with the Greeks, referred to the 'immortal soul', but this is not a term found in the Bible. With its inference of independence of God, such a term would have been abhorrent to the Hebrew for whom a man's 'immortality' depended upon being called to a personal and eternal relation with God. The Puritans believed that the Old Testament referred to the immortal soul when it spoke of the condition of men after death. However, the dead in Sheol are not called 'souls' but 'shades' (rephaim) which are unsubstantial, but not thereby non-material.

Puritan eschatology was something less than the eschatology of the New Testament. The Puritans missed the Biblical 'resurrected life' in which members of Christ's body participate even while in this world. They thought of the resurrection of the body in individualistic terms and did not see it in the context of the hope of God's universal kingdom and the renewal of God's whole creation. They thought that a bodily resurrection was necessary to preserve men as individuals, when in reality it is meant to preserve participation in a social context. In their egocentric pursuit of salvation they became blind to the fact that the Bible speaks primarily of the people of God rather than of individuals as such.

The Biblical idea is that as man's body of flesh and blood unites him with the men of this world and ties him to the solidarities of earthly existence, so the resurrection

body will unite him with the resurrected community. As in his earthly body he is bound to the powers of sin and death, so in his spiritual body he is a partaker of the blessing of life and bound to Christ. The physical body bears the marks of the community to which it is bound; the spiritual body will carry the evidence of the community of which it forms a part.

The Puritan attitude to death was altered in the seventeenth century by a theological movement known as covenant theology. This theological system attempted to answer Arminianism on the one hand and Antinomianism on the other. Puritanism, with its emphasis on holy living, found Antinomianism to be the more heinous of the two errors. Covenant theology, therefore, although it compromised with Arminianism, found in Puritanism a fertile soil in which to grow because it was welcomed there as opposing Antinomianism. Intended only as an extension of Calvin's thought, it actually became a distortion of it and a weakening of some of its basic tenets.

Salvation was in the covenant. Since in a covenant 'both parties must agree', man had to be in a position to agree. He could not be as dead in sin as Calvin had insisted. He had to be capable of assenting to the terms of the covenant and then he had to uphold those terms by a life of good works. Calvin had related death--physical, spiritual, eternal--to original sin; but the covenant theologian, finding it necessary to depreciate the effects of original sin on man's spiritual

nature, began to relate death to actual sin. He continued to speak of original sin, but his emphasis was on actual sins and their counterpart, good works.

Works came to be so essential that the covenant theologian finally said that a believer could not be saved without them. The concept of a meritorious death, one of the most distinctive marks of a theology of works, was revived. One's death was called a 'sacrifice'. Martyrdom tended to become a sort of summum bonum.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory is basically an extension of the doctrine of penance, and is therefore an eschatological expression of a theology of works. The Puritans rejected the formal doctrine of Purgatory (as well as purging fires and prayers for the dead) because they believed that the intent of the doctrine was to offer the unregenerate a chance for salvation after death. But they returned to a theological position closely akin to that which had fostered the doctrine of Purgatory. Repentance, like penance, came to be measured in terms of works. Because they had no Purgatory for deathbed repenters, the covenant theologians could recognise as valid only a repentance which allowed time, before death, for good works, the proof of the validity of the faith and repentance professed.

They sought to bring the deathbed repentance into disgrace by saying that it was made under duress of fear or pain and hardly more valid than the repentance of the damned in hell. Such a repentance, moreover, could offer no comfort at death

because there was no guarantee that it would issue in the holy life so necessary to salvation. The example of the thief on the cross was an embarrassment to them. If it had not been for this illustration, they might have been able to reject the validity of the deathbed repentance altogether. Since they were prevented from rejecting it outright, they sought to discredit any interpretation of the thief's repentance which would suggest that a general principle might be derived from it.

For the seventeenth century Puritan, as for the men of preceding centuries, death was 'the most terrible of terrible things'. He believed that all men feared death; that they were expected to fear it: God had created man with a natural fear of death. Since Christ had feared it, it was evident that it could not be considered sinful for His followers to fear it.

The Puritans found theological reasons for this natural fear of death. It had been placed in every man to keep him from suicide. For while it was legitimate to desire death as a release from afflictions, it was considered reprehensible to speed the course of death by one's own hand. Moreover, fear was placed in man to encourage him to prepare for death. The Puritans considered it perfectly legitimate to use fear--of death, of judgment, of hell--in trying to bring about a conversion, because God had created it and used it Himself. Fear was an instrument equal with love to be used in bringing men to repentance. (However, they repudiated the repentance

produced by fear at the time of death. It would have been tantamount to universalism to believe that such a repentance was valid. All men were afraid when they were on their deathbeds.)

There was much that was fearsome about death. It was a door that led out into a vast eternity, a final judgment, and an everlasting state of heaven or hell. No man was immune from fear when he considered his dying hour: the struggle and pain, the last minute doubts and uncertainties, the assaults of Satan and conscience, and the prospect of the grave. But the thing the Puritan dreaded most about death was the separation--both the act and the state--of the soul from the body.

The act of separation took place at the very moment of death: then the soul and the body were painfully wrenched apart. No Puritan was without this primitive conception of the painful rending of the soul from the body. Man's being united the material and spiritual worlds. When he died and this union was broken, it was as though creation had been undone.

Even more than the act of separation, however, the Puritan dreaded the prolonged state of separation in the grave. This was the real anguish of death. The Puritan worried about the continuity of his being. The intimate 'conjugal' relationship between body and soul that made the 'man', the 'I', was broken until the resurrection. Divided into his parts, man was a 'nonentity'. It was this concern for continuity that

drove the Puritan to insist so strongly that the same body must be resurrected, that both body and soul must be united with Christ, that the soul must not lose its self-consciousness.

The Puritan might have seen the intermediate state as profitable--the cleansed soul was with God and the body was finally subjugated--but the destruction of his being, the repulsive thought that his body would rot while his soul was left naked, the loss of life and friends, and the fact that the intermediate state was unknown and inevitable, filled him with dread. The Puritan conception of the state after death rivalled the Roman doctrine of Purgatory in the degree of dread it could inspire. It was a state of punishment. It was a state of death cut off from this life and from the life in heaven.

The reasons for fearing death were natural; the reasons for desiring death, theological. Nature sometimes dictated to theology, prompting a gloomy interpretation of the Old Testament, but theology struggled long and intently to inspire the Puritan with the possibility of a desirable, victorious, death.

Without the vision that theology provided, death was nothing but dreadful. Theology therefore sought to arm the Puritan's mind against fear, assuage his grief at the death of a loved one, and encourage a desire for death. It pointed beyond the corruption of the grave to a joyful resurrection. The resurrection would fully conquer death and permit the complete enjoyment of heavenly bliss. Theology guaranteed

a future integration of body and soul for both were united with Christ and He would effect their reunion. This assertion was of supreme comfort to the Puritan for whom the prospect of a bodiless state was not a pleasant one. Because Christ had conquered death and assured men of a resurrection, it had become possible to speak of death as sleep and the grave as a bed 'more excellent than downe'. The soul, however, did not sleep. It was in the immediate presence of God and Christ, enjoying a greater fellowship than was possible on earth. The Puritan himself thought that this one point of theology alone should be sufficient to encourage men to die willingly.

Puritan theology emphasized the misery of this world and the happiness of heaven. The Puritan felt that no man could die willingly himself or accept cheerfully the death of another unless he was convinced that the glory of eternal things outweighed everything in this world. Death was presented as the end of suffering and the beginning of true happiness. There was cause for rejoicing, not grieving, when a loved one entered such a felicitous state. It was a strange love, said theology, that would call the dead back into a world of sin and ask them to die again.

Death was desirable because it was the release from sin and sinning. 'He who hates sin must needs love death', said theology, because in death sin is destroyed. Only death could conquer sin because sin lived in the flesh. But death not only destroyed its source: it destroyed itself as well. In death the Puritan had his revenge on that which had kept

him in bondage to fear all his life.

Puritan theology offered man a brighter view of death than the thought of the Middle Ages had provided. Life, in Puritan as well as in medieval thought, was a journey; but it was considered a journey to death in the Middle Ages, and a journey to heaven in the seventeenth century. Puritan theology eliminated much of the superstition that had been associated with death. The pains preceding death were simply the pains of disease, it said, and the effect of those pains on the body could not be interpreted as a judgment from God. Sudden death was not a demonstration of God's wrath but a speedy entrance to heaven for those who died prepared. Death was an autonomous conqueror to the medieval man; but a servant of God to the seventeenth century Puritan.

Many Puritans died victoriously. In looking beyond the pain of death to the happiness of heaven, they achieved the joyful end for which they had prepared so long. In their dying hour the many arguments of theology succeeded in subduing their native fear. In triumphant word and action they witnessed to the supremacy of their faith.

For all their declarations that death is now to be desired by the believer, the Puritans seemed dissatisfied with the finality of Christ's work in relation to death. Christ had left something undone: the ultimate conquest of death lay in the future, when the conquest which Christ had begun would be completed by Christ and by the believer. The evils of death, as Crofton expected to experience them

(nakedness, cold, hunger) were left unchanged by the work of Christ. They ". . . are as certainly as effectually destructive to my being since, as before Christs death and resurrection."¹ Part of the conquest of death was left to the believer. Death ". . . cannot be otherwise conquered then by my falling under its stroak"2

The anticipation of an ultimate conquest of death and this dissatisfaction with the work of Christ disclose the nature of the Puritan doctrine of the atonement. This conquest, which the Puritans felt had been left in some sense unfinished, was the emphasis of the 'classic' or 'dramatic' view of the atonement. The classic view of the atonement saw, in Christ's death on the cross, the complete triumph over the powers of evil (especially sin, death, and the devil) which had held man in bondage.

The Puritan's unconscious expression of dissatisfaction with Christ's 'incomplete' conquest of death is not the only indication that his view of the atonement was not the classic view. The whole conception of a deliverance from the powers of evil as the key explanation of salvation is more natural to Greek than to Hebrew thought. It involved belief in a radical (though not necessarily absolute) dualism which goes hand in hand with a dichotomic view of man. The classic idea

¹ Zachary Crofton, A Defense Against Dread of Death (1665), pp. 12f.

² Ibid., p. 23.

is the logical interpretation of the atonement for the Greek mind. Although the Puritans allowed Greek conceptions to enter into their thinking and even entertained a Greek conception of man, at the point of the atonement, the Old Testament conception (from which they would not have deviated consciously) was strong enough to dominate their thinking. It would be unreasonable to expect the Puritans, for whom the Old Testament was so important, to hold a doctrine of the atonement which was not dominantly an Old Testament view. The Old Testament is the stronghold of the interpretation which sees the atonement as objective, vicarious expiation. The Old Testament sacrificial system cannot be understood apart from the idea of vicarious expiation.¹

Greek patristic thought, in which the classic view of the atonement had been developed, had gone without a hearing for several hundred years, and the Puritans were not aware of the classic alternative view of the atonement. Although Luther's doctrine of the atonement was (in the opinion of some modern scholars) a revival of the Christus Victor theme of Greek patristic theology, the Puritans stood more in Calvin's tradition and, like him, conceived of the atonement principally in the juridical framework.

For the Puritans, then, as for Anselm and Calvin, either

¹ The supporters of the classic view largely ignore the Old Testament and, in addition, ignore those passages in the New Testament which speak of the sacrifice of Christ in Old Testament terminology and which relate it to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

God was just or He was lax; there was no other possibility. The Puritans had too strong a sense of the reality of sin to develop a subjective doctrine of the atonement, and the only objective doctrine of which they could conceive involved the satisfaction of God's justice. Calvin, and Reformed thinkers after him, had freely used the idea of satisfaction and the Puritans continued in that line of thought. The sin of Adam had made it necessary that all mankind must be condemned by God's justice unless other satisfaction could be found.

Dye hee, or justice must: unless for him
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.¹

The seventeenth century was an age of reason and the Puritans were attracted by the rational character of the satisfaction theory of the atonement. They would have agreed with Anselm's nihil rationabilius; nothing can be more reasonable.

There was, however, considerably more emphasis on the classic motif in the seventeenth century than is generally recognised. Not only was the idea popular in seventeenth century balladry, it was also present in Puritan theology. "When our Saviour was nailed to the Cross . . . [He] obtained the most glorious victory; he reconciled God, disarm'd the Law, subdued Satan, broke the Gates of Hell, destroyed Death, and rescued us miserable forlorn Captives."² Crofton's

¹ John Milton, Paradise Lost (London, 1785), Bk. III, ll. 210-213.

² William Bates, The Great Duty of Resignation to the Divine Will in Afflictions, Enforced from the Example of Our

figure comparing Christ's destruction of death and the devil with Samson's destruction of his captors is likewise in keeping with this view of the atonement.¹

The classic theory was not clearly enunciated by the Puritans as an alternative doctrine of atonement, however. Statements embodying the classic view were made simply as attempts to set forth aspects of the work of Christ which, while they form the core of the classic interpretation, are not peculiar to it but are part of the total Biblical presentation. Besides, most Puritans, though somewhat eclectic in their doctrine of the atonement, placed an overwhelming emphasis upon the juridical view and rejected some details of interpretation essential to the classic motif.

The favorite image employed by champions of the classic idea (as Irenaeus and Origen) was that of 'ransom'. The meaning of the atonement was expressed in terms of a ransom which Christ paid to the powers of evil, death, or the devil. By means of this ransom the power of these evil forces over man was broken. With the exception of occasional references in John of Damascus, in the classic view the ransom was never paid to God. Clarkson, however, stated the matter otherwise.

The price was paid to God. . . . [some say] since Satan detains us, it should be paid to him, if to any; and seeing it is absurd to have it paid to him,

Suffering Saviour (London, 1684), pp. 116f. The clause about reconciling God, however, may have much in common with the Latin view.

¹ Crofton, op. cit., pp. 26f.

it is paid to none at all. We say it is God to whom it is paid, for the price is the blood or the death of Christ.¹

Another classic term retained by the Puritans to express their own view of the atonement was that of 'debt'. In the classic view the debt is paid to death which has legal rights over man. Death is thereby 'satisfied'. For the Puritans, however, death itself is the debt which the ungodly owe to God's justice, or which men owe to nature; or the debt is our unpardoned sin which Christ has discharged.

The note of triumph over death in the death of Christ, which is so prominent in Greek patristic theology, though present in Puritan thought, is muted because the Puritans were concerned with other things in connection with Christ's death. Partisans of the classic view of the atonement will therefore criticize the Puritan interpretation, and say that it restricted the realization of total victory over death that the classic view would have given them.

The Puritans concentrated their thinking concerning the death of Christ on satisfaction and reparation for sins and deliverance from the 'second' death--the eternal punishment for their sins. They thought of Christ's victory over death in connection with His resurrection. Their sense of triumph and assurance might have been greater if they had seen the whole span of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection

¹ David Clarkson, Christ's Dying for Sinners, in The Practical Works of David Clarkson, B.D., III (Edinburgh, 1864-5), 70.

as the work of the conquest of death, as the classic view saw it; but, to the Puritans, their view of the atonement gave them something primarily more important than victory over death: right standing with God.

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