

A short account of the life and death of the late Mr. N. Aspden, surgeon, of Blackburn / by T. Wood.

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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF
THE LIFE
AND
DEATH

of the late
Mr. N. Aspden, Surgeon,
OF



—•••••—
BY T. WOOD.
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THE MEMORY OF THE JUST IS BLESSED.----*Solomon.*
THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE IN EVERLASTING REMEM-
BRANCE.----*David.*
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PRINTED BY HEMINGWAY AND NUTTALL.  
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THE HISTORY OF THE

DEATH



THE HISTORY OF THE DEATH OF THE

DEATH

PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

1793

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A

SHORT ACCOUNT,

&c.

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MR. ASPDEN, the subject of these pages, deserves a place in the catalogue of Christian worthies, as a man of undoubted sincerity in his religious profession; of exemplary piety, stability, fortitude, and usefulness in life; and of the most unshaken confidence and joyful triumph in the hour of death. He had, it is true, his weaknesses as a man, and what some might term faults; if not, he would have been exempted from the common frailties and sufferings of human nature. To be free from defects, is what does not belong to this state of being. The best of Christians are not so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance, nor from mistake in things unessential, which, indeed, is almost an unavoidable consequence of it. The soul's dwelling in flesh and blood, and thinking by the mediation of our bodily organs, which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame, is one cause of this. And, consequently, the best of men, while in these regions of mortality, have many infirmities, many defects, either

in conversation or behaviour, which are transgressions of the perfect law, and shew that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may well say for themselves, as well as their brethren, forgive us our trespasses. Yet, where every word and action springs from love, such mistakes are not properly sins, for there is *a conscience void of offence*. However, they cannot bear the rigour of God's justice, but need the atoning blood of Christ. And respecting our much valued Friend, to be as he was, is indeed subject of praise, and worthy of diligent imitation.

He was born January 21st, 1766, at Harwood, near Blackburn, of respectable parents, members of the church of England. Of his infant precocity I shall only observe, that he soon exhibited prominent features of a genius for learning, sprightliness of behaviour, and a taste for some distinguished rank in society. He received his classical education at Clitheroe, under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, author of an *Archeological Dictionary*. When his education was completed, his parents put him apprentice to the present Dr. St. Clare, of Preston, who then resided in Blackburn; the medical profession being congenial to his own inclination and wishes.

When the term of his apprenticeship was expired, and he at liberty to act for himself, he went to London, where he staid but a little while. From thence he went to Richmond in Surry, and was with a Mr. Charlton, a person of eminence

in the medical line; whose attachment to him, and opinion of his professional abilities, were such, that he made him considerable offers to continue with him. But, after he had been about twelve months with Mr. Charlton, there being a vacancy at Coln, his father wrote to him, and strongly urged him to embrace it; and though, at that time, he preferred the situation where he was, and was pleased with his prospects, yet, prompted by filial affection, and influenced by parental authority, he gave it up, and gratified his father's wishes.

He went to Coln; where he soon formed good connections, was successful in business, and much respected by a numerous acquaintance; but was an entire stranger, if not an enemy, to vital religion. Does not the following anecdote of him give a proof of this? One day, when called out to attend a Methodist, and seeing her have a New Testament and a hymn-book lie beside her on the bed, he threw them aside, and said, "You will never be better while you have such books about you!" She, seeing his ignorance of God and antipathy against religion, and believing it very improper for gentlemen of the faculty to deprive the afflicted of the means of religious improvement and consolation, lifted up her heart to God in prayer for him, that he would give him to see himself, and the absolute necessity of applying to Jesus Christ the infallible Physician of souls. She recovered of that disorder; but was afterwards seized with a consumption, at the time he was under conviction for sin; and she now told him of his former conduct, and

of her prayers to God for him: they became very intimate; and she died in peace. If moral instruction and religious preparation were to be suspended for the operation of physical prescription, the physician would in some cases nullify the divine, and, while he attempted to save the body, would eventually damn the soul.

The Rev. Mr. Adamson, curate of Coln, gave public lectures at the work-house about this time, where Mr. Aspden often attended as a hearer, as well as at the church, and also occasionally at the Methodist chapel. And, by hearing Mr. Adamson insist much upon faith, and the Methodists recommend and urge good works, he was rather at a loss how to reconcile them, not seeing their connection, or how the one is produced by the other. However, he now began to examine if he had faith, which he had understood to be nothing more than speculation, or assenting to the truth of Christianity, without experiencing its saving power. And when perplexed, and an opportunity offered, would sometimes converse freely with the Methodists, and ask them questions: and by their answers, many of his doubts were resolved, and he, at last, received much satisfaction respecting evangelical truth.

In the beginning of August, 1788, he entered the connubial state with Miss Edmondson, of Barnoldswick, in Craven, a person of very respectable parentage, for which union he always expressed the warmest gratitude. And as they were both of them volatile and gay, and their connections genteel, they indulged themselves awhile in the fashionable

able circles of society. Nature, indeed, had given him a mind "superior to the vulgar herd." This he was conscious of; and, before his conversion to God, he did not fail to manifest it to the world.

About six weeks after their union, they mutually agreed to hear the Methodists. They went to the chapel, and heard Mr. Atmore, and were much pleased with the sermon. A short time after, Mr. Atmore, being afflicted, called in the assistance of Mr. Aspden, which opened a way for religious conversation between them; and which was soon after renewed, on his being called in to attend Mrs. Atmore. The Methodists seeing him more serious than usual, and frequently attend the chapel, some of the society took the liberty to speak freely to him on the great importance of religion; and their salutary conversation, and virtuous behaviour, had a good effect on his mind. How well it is, when persons professing godliness disseminate religious knowledge, and enforce their instructions with moral examples. Then faith and practice sweetly combine, and a true picture of the Christian religion is held up to the view of mankind, which often operates as an antidote, to expel the poison of sin from the human soul.

He was now much humbled under a sense of his unworthiness, frequently wept under preaching, and resolved to live to God's glory. But, alas! *to will was present with him, but how to perform that which is good, he found not. For the good that he would, he did not: but the evil which he would not, that he did.* His resolutions made in his own strength, were

were only as the spider's web, or as the early dew; and in the course of a few days, he, in general, found himself as bad as ever, and would exclaim, in the bitterness of his soul, *O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* How it was that he should feel such evil propensities in his heart, when he had comparatively nothing from without to provoke them, was what he did not understand. He had not considered the origin of evil, and the natural depravity of man. *The unrenewed heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* And who is sufficient to stem the torrent of nature? What can give a man victory over himself, or turn the whole bias of his soul from sin, to holiness and God? What is reason against passion! What is flesh and blood under temptation! What is nature, without the help of grace! *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may he also do good that was accustomed to do evil.* Alas! our moral powers are debilitated by transgression, and we cannot stand against sin, unless assisted by power from an high. No one *can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*, but God himself. Our Saviour saith, *My grace is sufficient for thee:* and his blood cleanseth us from all sin.

An affliction he was visited with, was, under God, of singular use to him. Mr. Atmore wrote him a letter from Newcastle, dated Oct. 10th, 1789, a part of which I shall take the liberty to insert: "It afforded me," says he, "peculiar pleasure to hear, by my good friend Mr. Sagar, that the Lord has graciously restored you to your former health,  
and

and that you are again enabled to follow the example of the blessed Jesus, going up and down doing good to the bodies of the children of men. I know you will believe me, when I tell you, that I most tenderly felt for you, and dear Mrs. Aspden, when I heard of your dangerous indisposition. My dear Betsey and I, would have been happy to have visited you in your affliction, and to have returned a little of that sympathetic attention you so largely bestowed upon us when in like circumstances, but such a favour was denied us. However, we often thought of you, spoke of you, and remembered you to Him who is the helper of the helpless, and the healer of the diseases of the people. Blessed be God, he heareth prayer, and therefore to him should all flesh come. My dear sir, I hope your late indisposition has been sanctified to the good of your precious soul. Affliction springeth not out of the ground, nor does trouble arise from the dust; it is sent by the hand of a skilful Physician, to cure greater evils. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He does not willingly afflict his creatures, nor has he the least pleasure in putting them to pain. He does it for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness; consult Heb. xii. 5--11. Now as the Lord intends our good by these things, we should be careful to learn from them what he intends by them. Let me then humbly intreat you, to solicit at His throne of grace, that all the blessings purchased by blood divine, and promised by the lip of truth, may be your portion. I am conscious that you and dear Mrs. Aspden, be-  
fore

fore I left Coln, did feel an eager breathing desire of soul after the enjoyment of God. This, my dear sir, is the *one thing needful*; this, and this only, can make the soul of man happy. This will support the soul under the variegated trials of life, in the agonies of dissolution, and will fit it for the everlasting fruition of God. The man that possesses *this* is happy: He that is devoid of *this*, whatever he has besides, *is*, and *must be* miserable. Therefore, pursue *this* with all your heart. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: Remember, many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Luke xiii. 24. Heaven is worth fighting for. The joys of paradise are worth suffering for. O! that Moses's choice may be yours, even to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Read Heb. xi. 24, 25. I have spoken to you in the fullness of my soul. I hope my dear friend will bear my plainness, and impute it to its proper cause---*pure disinterested love.*"

He was at times violently assaulted by the powers of darkness. That evil spirits invade our world, and entice men to sin, is asserted in the word of God. *The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Sometimes he thought himself in a worse state than he was before he heard the Methodists; and the power of temptation was so strong, that he was often upon the point of resolving to hear them no more. However, his serious impressions, the seasonable conversation of his religious acquaintance, and the firm persuasion he had that the religious tenets held by the Methodists are agreeable

agreeable to the tenor of divine revelation, were powerful incentives, and stimulated him to hold on his way. The devil exercises a usurped government in the world. All the fallen angels are confederate with him. They are called, *The rulers of the darkness of this world*; that is, they rule over that part of mankind that are in a state of sin and ignorance. They are very numerous, spiritual, and so invisible, admirably strong, desperately wicked, and wonderfully subtle: and spiritual privileges and blessings on earth, and the glory and happiness of heaven, are what they exert all their united force to keep us from, or spoil us of. We have need to *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*. There are several pieces of this spiritual armour, *the armour of light*—the *girdle*—the *breast-plate*—the *shoes*—the *shield*—the *helmet*—and the *sword*; that is, sincerity, righteousness, patience or resolution, faith, hope, and the word of God. In this enumeration, there is no piece of armour mentioned for the back. The reason is evident; for those that are good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must set their faces as brass, and never turn their backs in fight: to turn their backs on their enemies, would be the way to expose themselves to their fury, without any defence.

As the preaching and conversation of the Methodists had been of singular use to him, he at length desired, and believed it his duty, to cast in his lot among them. And though he was tempted to think, that if he did, he would lose a considerable part of his business, yet he virtually renounced

renounced the riches of the world, and sincerely embraced his duty and his God. And, accordingly, at the quarterly visitation, in September, 1790, he was admitted by Mr. Bramwell; and afterwards found that his fears, respecting his business, were groundless. The fear of man, the love of praise, and an inordinate attachment to secular honours, and advantages, prevent many persons embracing religion, and enjoying its benefits.

According to the Rules of the Methodist Societies, there is one only condition previously required of those who desire admission, namely, *a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins*; but wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shewn by its fruits. Mr. Aspden entered in at this door; he had a perfect hatred to sin, and a sincere desire to enjoy God; and gave the most indubitable proofs of this in his whole deportment. True religion is of an assimilating, and of a cementing nature: in all ages it has influenced its sincere votaries to come out from among the ungodly, and to unite with each other as members of the same family. In the days of Malachi, when iniquity greatly abounded, *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*, which supposes their knowledge of each other, and their meeting together. We may conjecture, that they spake to each other of the existence, nature, and perfections of God—the wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and mysterious works of his providence—the origin, nature, progress, and consummation of redemption by the Messiah—the messages brought them

them by the prophets—the growing prophaneness, and immorality of the times—the temptations they were exposed unto—the mercy of God to themselves, in preserving them from the common infection—the means necessary to their future safety—and their brightening prospects and sure hope of permanent and unmolested happiness beyond the grave. And one of the leading features in the Christian religion is reciprocal love. Real Christians are united to Christ by faith, and to each other by love—they are children of the same heavenly Parent—members of the same family—heirs of the same inheritance—are going the same road, under the same guide to glory.

He was now *deeply* convinced of sin. The Spirit of God is the agent in this work. *When he is come*, says our Lord, *he will reprove the world of sin*, that is, he will convince the unbelieving world, by uncontrollable argument, or undeniable evidence, so as to make sinners acknowledge their guilt, and their obligations to punishment. The Spirit does this, by reflecting a clear light upon the moral law, and by opening the sinner's eyes to see its holiness, justness, goodness, spirituality, and extent, and his own multiplied and aggravated transgressions of it; and so gives him the knowledge of sin, and shews him that he is obnoxious to the wrath of God. For *by the law*, says the Apostle, *is the knowledge of sin*; and it is said to *work wrath*, and to be the *ministration of death*, and to *kill*, in the same sense as the judge's sentence of condemnation. And the Spirit also convinces of sin by awakening the conscience,

and enabling it to perform its own office. Then it brings to light sins that were forgotten, or hid before, and shews those sins that were known before in a clearer light. This the Spirit doth, in general, by the ministry of the Word.

This conviction of sin, and condemnation by the law, gave him to see that he had no righteousness or merit of his own: here all boasting was excluded. Man cannot merit any good at the hands of God. Meritorious works must be good, perfect, and free from all defects;--some way or other redound to the benefit and advantage of the person for whom they are done;--be no way the duty of him that doeth them;--be his own act, independent of any other agent; for works cannot be deemed meritorious, that are done by the help of another; more especially by his help from whom the reward is expected.---And the doctrine of merit implies an equality between the service and the reward, and requires that the wages be proportionable to the work: This cannot be applicable to man.

A view of these things made the gospel peculiarly suitable, seasonable, and acceptable to him. He saw its great utility; steadfastly believed its report; and felt an ardent wish to share in its benefits. The tidings of an all-sufficient and willing Saviour, were to him as a falling shower to parched land. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. The merit of his obedience, and efficacy of his sufferings, arise from the dignity of his person; he being both God and man. His righteousness is as sub-  
jectively

jectively infinite, as our sins were objectively so. And as he viewed Christ as being the appointed Saviour of mankind, and believed he could save him from all his sins, and make him holy and happy; so he embraced all the means of grace with avidity, and, in the use of them, his whole soul was full of earnest enquiry after salvation. *Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief,* was the prevailing language of his soul.

In about six weeks after he had joined the Society, being called out into the country to attend a person in labour, whose case he found extremely dangerous, he was much affected; and in this extremity had recourse to prayer. He left the house, and seeing a tree near, went to it, and prayed to God very devoutly that he would relieve the woman, and have mercy upon his own soul. He then returned to the house, and upon enquiry, finding her no better, retired a second time to the same place and prayed as before. He then returned again, and found her much the same; but being unwilling to give up his suit, and feeling a persuasion that God would yet be entreated, he went a third time, and poured out his whole soul in prayer to God—when, O happy hour! he that saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, saw him, heard his cries, and graciously manifested himself unto him. By the faith which is of *the operation of God* he realized the Saviour of men--fled to him for refuge from the storm of impending wrath--and rested upon his all-sufficient atonement, for deliverance from sin and misery, a title to the favour of God, and eternal life; and to his unspeakable joy experienced its saving efficacy

eacy. This was a season never to be forgotten : Justice, in Jesus Christ, lingered into love ; divine peace was administered to his conscience ; and the love of God was shed abroad in his heart. The bright beams of the sun of righteousness, now risen upon him, scattered the shades of thickest darkness, and poured glory and happiness all over his soul. The springs of sorrow and pain were dried up, and the fountains of eternal life and blessedness were opened, and his thirsty soul regaled. He now, full of joy and peace, returned to the house, and, to his great surprize, found the woman much better, and soon after she was safely delivered.

He was now *accepted in the Beloved ; in whom he had redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* His experience was clear, rational, and scriptural, such as the Apostles preached, and the primitive Christians enjoyed. He did not rest upon the surface, nor content himself with a superficial knowledge of things, but digged deep, and laid the foundation on the Rock. He did not, like many, rest in hearsay evidence, but handled, tasted, and proved, the things of God for himself. Thus should every one do, and thus *must* every one do, or he will be found at last only to have built on the sand. The first reformers, Luther, Calvin, Beza, Zanchy, &c. described faith in Christ, to be a plerophary or full assurance of God's love. "The right and true Christian faith is, according to the church of England, in the homily on 'The Salvation of Man,' not only to believe that holy scripture and the articles of our faith

faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins *are* forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God,---whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

He never lost a grateful sense of the mercy of God, in conferring this salvation upon him. In a letter, which he wrote to Mr. Adam Battinson, of Coln, a little before his death, he says, "I now remember, with gratitude more than usual, the mercies which God bestowed on me and my dear wife, when at Coln; and I fear not, but our small beginnings there will end in glory: I will praise him while he lends me breath." And adds, "Forget not to remember me to all my dear Christian friends, and brethren, at Coln; when I get to heaven, I shall praise God for sending me thither."

Having now *received Christ Jesus the Lord*, he walked in him by faith. He saw the propriety and beauty of his character—the astonishing greatness of his undertaking—his amazing condescension in assuming our nature—his boundless compassion to the human race—his victorious conflicts with the powers of darkness—the unparalleled magnitude and infinite efficacy of his vicarious sufferings—and his all-sufficiency to save men even to the uttermost. And he did not only see these things, but he felt his interest in them, and with believing Thomas would say, *My Lord, and my God*. He was delighted and comforted with spiritual enjoyments, and his

soul, like the chariots of Aminadab, was active and swift in obedience. His consolations in the way of duty were sometimes too great for expression, and his joyful countenance and streaming eyes became the interpreters of his happiness, and uttered praise to God where language failed.

The world, with all its empty pageantry, and fascinating charms, was under his feet; he was no longer emulous of its panegyric, riches, or grandeur, nor of the pleasures of the sensual epicure. By grace, he escaped the pollution that is in the world, through lust; and rose into more rational existence, contemplation, enjoyment, and pursuit. And as a man of reflection and feeling, who has himself escaped from the danger and punishment that others are exposed unto, sincerely commiserates their condition, and wishes their deliverance; so he saw the wretched state of the unconverted world, lying in wickedness, or in the wicked-one, and earnestly desired, and devoutly prayed for, their conversion from Satan to God, from sin to holiness, from self to Christ.

This saving knowledge and enjoyment of God, prepared and assisted him to pass through the trials of life, in a manner he could not have done without its support. *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.* Consequent on the introduction of moral and physical evil into the world, human life is one diversified scene of laborious toil, disappointed hope, dissatisfied enjoyment, and uncertain possession. Without the aid of divine revelation, and the succours of Almighty grace,

grace, darkness and uncertainty would attend our paths, and the ills of life rush in upon us in all their complicated horrors, and sap the foundation of human bliss. But blessed with these, we learn the origin of evil, mark its alarming progress, and find out its period; our afflictions, which are but for a moment, are converted into means of discipline and improvement for eternity; and we are fortified with patient faith to endure the calamities of life, till the storm be over, and we reach the desired haven.

I have already hinted, that our worthy Friend was peculiarly happy in his connections at Coln, and attached to the situation, on account of the many blessings he received and enjoyed there; yet, after a residence of about seven years, bodily indisposition caused a local separation between him and his religious friends, and a numerous and respectable acquaintance. He removed to Blackburn in April, 1791, sincerely regretted by those he left behind.

At Blackburn he was much respected. As a member of distinction in civil society, his condescension and familiarity were notorious, and gained him much esteem. There was a dignity in him, which, to a distant observer, probably had the appearance of reserve, yet, to those who stood near, and knew him well, he ever manifested the humility, frankness, and simplicity of a little child. However elevated men are in public stations, they ought not to lose sight of themselves, or of the ties of consanguinity; for how soon must all worldly distinctions,

distinctions, however necessary now for the well-being of society, be taken away by death, and all flesh be equal in the dust. There, the noble and the ignoble, the learned and the illiterate, the conqueror and the slave, the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, all blend together, and shall rise to ignominy or glory in eternity, according to the deeds done in the body in time.

He was closely united in affection to the Methodists at Blackburn. Our Lord said, in the days of his flesh, *Whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.* So he could say, with the beloved Apostle, *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* His attachment was not excited nor directed by the power, opulence, or splendid abilities, of others, but was the genuine effect of love to God, and was the strongest where he thought there was the greatest depth of unaffected piety, whether the subjects of it were poor or rich. He did *not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth*: his professions of it would bear the strictest scrutiny. He first loved God, and then the brethren; *and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* A man must first love God before he can truly love his people; they stand or fall together. Love to the brethren, is an effect of love to God, and while the cause remains, the effect will appear; but when the cause is removed, the effect can no longer be produced.

The house of God was peculiarly amiable in his eyes. He saw the great utility of public worship;

to hear of God, and Christ, and judgment, and heaven and hell; and to express, in acts of devotion, gratitude, love, and reverence to God, our creator, benefactor, preserver, redeemer, law-giver, and judge. The gospel had entered, through his understanding, judgment, will and affections, into his heart, and displayed its glories there; and the ministers of the gospel had been instrumental in pointing him to Christ for salvation. At the first of his hearing the Methodists, he was most pleased with those preachers whose manners were most genteel; and who appeared to have most of a ripened genius and classic taste; but now he was more engaged with the importance of their message. Of all the true ministers of Jesus Christ he could say, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* He manifested a pious regard to the word of life, and the faithful dispensers of it, by a constant and serious attendance on public worship. When the urgent duties of his profession did not absolutely forbid his assembling with God's people, he was sure to be there. And ever was it his first and last concern, to get his heart duly affected, as well as his judgment properly informed. In a word, he always seemed to join in the devotion of singing, praying, and hearing the word, like a man who knew his business in the house of God, and who was fully intent on securing his present and future interests. He almost always evidenced a wakeful, lively, and cheerful attention, while hearing the word of God; and, on some occasions, the blessed effects it had on his heart were discoverable

coverable in his countenance. To him it was always matter of astonishment how Christians could fall asleep in the presence of God and his holy angels, yea, and while in the very act of devotion ! At such a sight he was not a little pained.

Entire holiness of heart, a present and full salvation, was his most delightful theme. He viewed it in a scriptural light ; not as exempting its possessors from temptations, trials, and afflictions, in this world ; nor precluding the necessity or possibility of encreasing in grace while in it ; but simply, as implying a thorough change of our nature, and loving God with all our heart, effected by the operations of the holy Spirit, and received by faith in our Lord Jesus. And only those who were well acquainted with him, and who joined with him in solemn worship, can say, how often his soul was drawn out, in the exercise of prayer, into an agony of desire, for the full accomplishment of all the great and precious promises of the gospel. When at his band-meeting, about five years ago, he entered into that glorious liberty, and enjoyed it several months ; but then, by defending what he believed a right cause, rather too warmly, he lost his hold of it, yet never his relish for it. And at what particular time he regained it, I cannot say, only, he enjoyed it several months before his death.

He exemplified, in his moral behaviour, the sincerity of his religious profession, and the reality and excellency of the Christian religion. He loved the gospel, felt its transforming power in his heart, and justified its divine pretensions in his life ; *being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ*

unto the glory and praise of God;—*Wisdom is justified of her children.* And as he loved the gospel himself, so he wished all its professors to walk worthy of their high vocation. He considered this as the greatest proof, and most powerful recommendation of true religion. And if he saw, or heard, of any thing, in any religious professor, contrary to this, he was much grieved; and his zeal for God and hatred to sin, led him sometimes into what some might call severity towards those, who, through unwatchfulness or temptation had been overcome of evil. Pride, the first-born of the devil, he could not endure. He viewed it as being opposite to the disposition and injunction of our blessed Saviour. Such are the blessed effects of real religion, that in this respect he was *a new creature*. And when he saw it in any one, he would, either directly, or indirectly, have a stroke at it, and endeavour to bring it down, and, if possible, cut it up by the roots. It has a baneful influence: *Only by pride cometh contention; and where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* It often introduces schism into religious society: and, O what a horrid thing is schism! “It has, I believe,” says Dr. Coke, “injured the work of God in the different ages of the world, more than all the outward vices of mankind. It signifies but little to the individuals themselves, whether they be gross sinners or painted sepulchres: But the spirit of schism enters within the veil, nips in the bud all the fair blossoms of grace, eats up the vitals of religion, quenches the whole spirit of a revival, and

and substitutes the spirit of party for the life of God."

He was always diffident in speaking of himself, and extremely careful not to overshoot the mark; he would be under, and not over, when speaking of his religious experience. He believed, and therefore spake; and when the fire of devotion burned within him, would speak of what he felt. He would not live without the fervour of piety; nothing less could satisfy him. However much unbelievers, formal professors, or mere outward-court worshippers, may speak against frames and feelings in religion, as unnecessary or enthusiastic, the scriptures speak expressly and pointedly for them. St. Paul says, *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, or rather, in all inward experimental sense of God in your own souls.* And, surely, there is no absurdity in a person feeling, in his heart, the love of God as the grand commanding principle of his life, or feeling the flame of love to God in the use of religious means! *The kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power; ---in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

In sentiment, he was strictly what is called Methodistical. He believed in the doctrine of original sin, and the universal depravity of mankind; and also, with David, St. Paul, and the rest of the Apostles, that God is loving to every man—that Christ gave himself a ransom for all—that he *willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth—that we are justified freely by his grace, through the re-*  
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*demption that is in Christ Jesus,*—and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, powerfully working and abiding in our hearts. And his conformity and cordial attachment to the various branches of discipline exercised among the Methodists, was no less observable. He viewed them as necessary, and well calculated, to guard and promote the interests of religion in general, and the welfare of individuals in particular. Living and dying witnesses abundantly prove, that to walk in the narrow path of discipline is safe, and attended with happy effects; while others, who have grown lax, or have broken over the hedge, are awful examples of decaying piety, or open profaneness. May we, in this our day, fully understand our privileges, and the things belonging to our present peace and future happiness.

As a Class-leader, he greatly excelled; he was very useful, and much beloved. He knew the spiritual state of his little flock—had great love to their souls—watched over them with a fatherly care—was lively, faithful, and tender in the discharge of his duty—and urged them to *press toward the mark for the prize*. As a Circuit-steward, he was well qualified; was dexterous in managing the temporal affairs of the church, and greatly respected in his office: and he was well pleased when there was much spiritual conversation, singing and prayer, intermixed with the business.

His zeal for Christ, in confessing him before men, and promoting his cause, was proverbial. It was not a blind, uncharitable, persecuting disposition, the effect of ignorance, prejudice, or depravity of

heart; but proceeded from an enlightened, expanded, and renewed mind, and was the pure flame of holy, humble, fervent love. This moved him to diligence, and inspired him with fortitude in the cause of God. He not only attended to the duties of religion in his own family, but he had public prayer-meetings in his house, and was glad when it was crowded with attentive and serious persons. He was instrumental in bringing some of his relatives into the way of salvation; particularly his aged mother, who had lived a moral life, and, like the pharisee, trusted in herself that she was righteous by the merit of her own works. Yet, through the blessing of God, on his faithful and pointed instructions and earnest prayers, she was made sensible of her need of mercy in Jesus Christ; and she sought it with all her heart, and found it in his presence. And, when called out in the line of his profession, his conduct was almost unexampled. It was customary with him, not only to prescribe and administer relief to the bodies of his patients, but also to endeavour to be useful to their souls; particularly when employed on the midwifery business, it was usual with him, either before or after delivery, and frequently both, to bend his knees, with all the company present, to the Father of mercies, for his blessing on the occasion, or return him thanks for mercies received; and so directed all around him to the Author and Giver of all good. And his *labour was not in vain in the Lord*:—he had many answers to prayer; persons were awakened and converted to God, by his instrumentality, some  
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of whom have fallen *asleep in Jesus*, and others are now on their way to glory.

We come now to the concluding scene of his short but useful life. About three months before his death, he was attacked with violent and threatening symptoms of the disorder which terminated his existence in this world. In the letter to Mr. Battinson, which has already been mentioned, he describes it as follows:—"I am at present a little better, but such are the flattering appearances which my complaint puts on, that I cannot yet have any great expectation of a perfect recovery. I have had a fever, which has attacked me very irregularly in the forenoon and night, and sometimes very severely. The medical gentlemen whom I have consulted, are now, I think, unanimously of opinion, that it is of the hectic kind, which kind always accompanies diseases of the lungs." And, as a man of reason, reflection, and experience, he adds, "A little time, however, will show how it will be with me: I intend using every means which men in repute can recommend unto me, and afterward leave the event." And respecting his happy frame of mind, and his confidence of obtaining a state of future blessedness, he says, "Since my attack, I have in general found my mind quite resigned, and have had an abundance of peace at times. I am surrounded with mercies; I lack no manner of thing that is good. I see no cause for complaining. I have not a doubt, if I am to go in this sickness, but that the Lord will perfect what is lacking in my soul, and fit me for himself.

Sickness, when accompanied by the Lord, greatly alters our views of things, and wonderfully shews us how defective our attachments to the Lord, his cause and people, have been while we were in health. And this I have found to be done, by every tie seeming to be so much closer, my Father so much dearer, his cause and people so much more my own in affection." The members of his class, and the societies in the town and circuit, and his acquaintance at Coln, prayed earnestly to God for his recovery, if consistent with the order of divine Providence. Of this he says, "In this respect, I am surely, of all men, most favoured; to see and hear of the numbers of God's children who are daily pleading for me, it would soften the hardest heart, and beget love in the coldest breast."

On Sunday, August 26th, he was particularly blest at the chapel, under the sermon at noon, the subject of which was, blind Bartimeus' coming to Christ. His soul was melted into tenderness, glowed with divine love, and rapturous praises and hearty and loud "Amens" poured from his lips. The preacher, in one part of the sermon, had a participation of his happiness, and viewed him as being in an enviable situation, going to God, angels, and glorified spirits; and from that time believed he would not recover of his affliction. When the service was over, he said to a friend, that he had not been so happy for years before. The power of the invisible God was present with the assembly, and Jesus performed his miracles of grace.

In this state of holy resignation, unshaken confidence, and triumphant joy in God, on Monday the 3d of September he set out for Liverpool, attended by Mrs. Aspden and Miss Nuttall, intending to make a voyage to the Isle of Mann, which a gentleman of great medical skill had warmly recommended to him, as the last expedient in his case. But, alas! when he got to Liverpool, his weakness was so great, and his decline so rapid, that a physician, whom he there consulted, judged it very improper for him to proceed any farther, and urged him to return home immediately. From Liverpool he wrote to his brother in Blackburn, as follows: "We got well here without any accident, and I bore the journey better than I was likely at first. Respecting myself I cannot say much. My cough sometimes is violent beyond description, and my fever is increased most amazingly, so that my nights are become restless. My dear mother wished me to write, as she could read it herself; it would give me pleasure to do so; but so weak is my head and trembling my hand, that it is with difficulty I write at all. Tell her not to be dejected, but trust the Lord with me. The tie is near, but he whose I am, and in whose care I daily dwell, will terminate mine affliction that way, and at that time, which will most advance his glory, and be best for myself. Whilst I believe this without wavering, I enjoy uninterrupted peace. Remember us with our warmest affection to our dear family. My wife often talks of her little girls, and does not forget to commend them

to His care who can keep his own in safety. May God preside over the house, and safely keep from harm all that are in it. Remember me to my class: O! the union of soul I feel just now with them, and all my dear guides and brethren at Blackburn: the Lord preserve them for ever in peace. I have a deal to say: my heart is softened while I write. I would say again, encourage my mother, lest so unexpected a stroke should injure her tottering frame. O! may Jesus enable her to cast her care upon him; and may she be blest with peace. Speak comfortably and frequently to her. Give our duty to her. Our love to you all as though named: likewise to the preachers. If you should see brother, give him my best love. O! what is equal to the love of God. Farewell: and should we meet again, may we be more meet for heaven."

On Thursday the 13th, he returned home with very great difficulty; and in consequence of the fatigue of the journey, and the medicine he had taken to give him rest and ease, while on it, he had a degree of stupor for two or three days; during which time he was a little disturbed in his mind, but soon became calm and victorious. His domestic connections and religious friends, seeing his great debility, were much alarmed, and, with inexpressible sorrow, were forced to relinquish the fond hope they had entertained of his recovery: and sighing grief, pensive sadness, vocal lamentation, and eyes as watry fountains, succeeded in its place, and were visible on every side. The house was a house of mourning indeed! They did not mourn  
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for his fate, but their own irreparable loss; for they viewed him as belonging to a better world, where he would soon shine with resplendent beauty and glory for ever. Amid this general distress, he felt keenly for those he was leaving behind, yet was resigned to the stroke of providence; and his placid looks and chearful countenance, were expressive of his confidence, his serenity, his consolation, and his hope. He knew from experience and the word of God, that death could not hurt him, that it had lost its deadly sting, and was disarmed of its frightful terrors; nay, that it would, in drawing the curtain of mortality aside, unveil the eternal world to his view, and open a passage for his soul to go to his redeeming God, and the society of holy angels and glorified spirits, where he would enjoy the full fruition of his highest wishes, without interruption, diminution, or end.

On Monday the 17th, one of his sisters, at parting with him, said, "Brother, have you any thing to say to me?" He answered, "Have you any thing to say to me?" She said, "Nothing more than I wish you a happy change." He replied, "What will my happiness or misery avail you? Sister, you must have Christ formed in you the hope of glory, or where Christ is you must never come. It will avail but little to be among the people of God, and to assume the form of godliness without the power. You must be born again, or were God is you can never come: you must be born again. And when you have got this inward religion, it will make you truly happy, and support you under all your trials and difficulties in this world, and  
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land you safe in heaven at last." He spoke these words with remarkable energy and solemnity: and on Mrs. Aspden's coming to him, and seeing him much fatigued thereby, he said, as an apology for his great exertion, "My dear, the Spirit of the Lord was upon me."

On Tuesday, September the 18th, he awoke about seven o'clock praising God. He said to Mrs. Aspden, "The Lord is very good, I feel him near." He expressed himself as having received a large foretaste of future glory; and added, "Help me to pray and praise." When he got down stairs, his brother asked him if he was happy. He answered, "O yes; the Lord passes by indeed and blesses my soul: he came skipping over the mountains. What an amazing support is it to the body as well as the mind! What should I do now without religion? O bless the Lord!" During the whole of the day, he was in the same heavenly frame of mind; continually lifting up his heart to God in holy ejaculation and rapturous praise, and conversing freely and profitably with those who called to see him.

On the three succeeding days, he was much in the same spirit—praying and praising God. During this time, I had much serious conversation with him. He asked me, what I thought were certain proofs of sincere love to Jesus Christ; and, after enumerating several, he gave a smile of approbation, and signified that his experience was agreeable to them. He often said, as a song of praise, confidence, and victory, "*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth doth rejoice in God my Saviour.*" And I am informed

formed, it was on one of these days, that he said to one of the members of his class, "Those are blessed words of our Lord, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*" He added, '*It is glory, it is all glory.*' And of himself he said, "*Having nothing, yet possessing all things!*" What a mercy, I ever knew any thing of God!" At another time, a few of his class coming to see him, he said to Nanny Cutler's sister, "I shall soon see Nanny in heaven!"—(a woman who was eminent for faith, prayer, holiness, and usefulness.) And when they took their leave of him, he affectionately said to them all, "Farewell, and pray that I your leader, and you my class, may all come up." And, at another time, after asking his brother the state of his mind, he said to him, "Go on, go on, the end of it will be heaven."

On Saturday morning, the 22d, he was unspeakably happy in God, and asked the family to join in singing a hymn. They fixed upon, "Lord, I believe a rest remains," &c. He began the tune, and joined in singing, with great delight. Then he asked for his favourite hymn, "There is a land of pure delight," &c. And, both at singing and prayer, he repeatedly exclaimed, "Glory be to God." When the meeting was concluded, he said: he had felt the presence of the Lord very powerfully: and it was a very refreshing season to those that were present.

On Sunday, the 23d, in the afternoon, on Mr. Sagar's mentioning Rochdale, he said, "I had once a glorious time there, when hearing Mr. Benson preach from, *Christ in you the hope of glory: Whom*

*we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* When I got from my horse at your door, O! how did my heart overflow with the love of God. Had I strength of body, O! how could I preach it over to you now." This sermon was preached at the opening of the large and convenient new chapel there. When Mr. Sagar parted with him, he took hold of his hand, and said, "We shall meet no more, till we meet above." At night he said, "*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise.*"

And now arrived his last day on earth, Monday, Sept. 24,—though his friends thought he would continue several days. He was perfectly resigned to the will of God, and rejoiced in hope of his glory. He knew that a real Christian is born from above, heaven is his native country, and dying to him is only going home. About five o'clock in the afternoon, on receiving a letter from a friend of his at Coln, he said, "I have a Friend above, an Advocate before the throne of God."

Between five and six o'clock, he and Mr. Timothy Crowther had a conversation upon a subject on which they had not always thought alike, namely, the subject of our behaviour towards such as have been overtaken in a fault. Mr. Crowther, in a letter to me, containing traits on Mr. Aspden's character as a sincere follower of Jesus Christ. to which I have had recourse several times in writing this short memoir, says, "In these things I have sometimes thought him a little too tight, and he thought me a little

little too lax. But on his death-bed, about five hours before he departed, he, to me, seemed greatly changed on this head; most of what he said, at this time, being an exhortation to me, to be merciful to poor backsliders; to bear with, pity, and labour by every means to raise them up again. "Be merciful," said he, "for this is like our heavenly Father."—These words he several times repeated.

About eight o'clock he altered much for the worse. Mrs. Aspden seeing this, kneeled down at the side of the bed, and said to him, "My dear, do you know me?" He answered, "O yes;" and after pausing a little, said, "And I know I must die: and I know I love God: and I know I love Jesus Christ: and I know I am going to glory." He then talked a little about his funeral, and wished it might be a private one. And seeing them all much affected, he said, "Now you young women, if you would but go to the chapel, and lift up your souls to God, that would be the best."

As singing the praises of God was a favourite exercise with him, about ten o'clock we sung several verses of hymns suitable to the solemn occasion, and his soul was all praise and love. From the fulness of his heart he spake expressly of God's universal love to mankind. It has often been remarked, that when persons are happy in God, they are saved from narrowness of soul, and proclaim Christ the *universal* Saviour of men. *Ye have an unction from the Holy One, says St. John, and ye know all things.* This pentecostal fire warms the cold breast, dissolves the adamant heart, expands the contracted mind, and, by its assimilating power, changes

its possessor into a holy similitude of Him, who is *loving unto every man*, and whose *tender mercies are over all his works*.

A little before eleven o'clock, he made one remarkable effort, and it was in effect his last, in shewing the absolute necessity of having our robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. This he urged with great exertion and uncommon pathos, and said, that those so washed, would be admitted through the gates into the city of the New Jerusalem; and, that the final neglect of this, would be attended with inevitable damnation. His whole trust and confidence was in Christ to the last, and he experimentally knew the efficacy of his blood to our salvation.

After this, he repeatedly attempted to speak, but could only get out half sentences, and sometimes only single words. And at last, he could not form words at all; the tongue, after several ineffectual efforts, lost its power of articulation; the flame of life glimmered in its socket; his pulse flagged; the purple current stagnated; the heart refused to perform its office; and the vital functions ceased; and his happy spirit took its flight from these regions of mortality, to be forever with the Lord.

FINIS.