

BATES ON BAXTER

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Born in Bermondsey, Surrey, William Bates (1625-99) was a graduate of Queen's College, Cambridge and later DD of that university. Vicar first at Tottenham, then of St Dunstan's-in-the-West, he was one of the leading Presbyterians in London during the Commonwealth period. If ever a minister may be called 'graciously aristocratic', it was William Bates. Much loved and respected, he maintained a faithful and spiritual pastoral ministry. The diarist Samuel Pepys wrote warmly of him:

Walked to St Dunstons, the church being now finished and is a very fine church; and here I heard Dr Bates, who made a most eloquent sermon. And I am sorry I have hitherto had so low an opinion of the man.¹

¹ See *DNB* (Bates).

Though supportive of the Restoration of Charles II, Bates would not bow to the unbiblical terms of Anglican conformity. Yet, faithful as he was, there was no trace of bitterness in his nonconformity. In his farewell sermon, he remarked:

I know you expect I should say something as to my non-conformity. I shall only say thus much. It is neither fancy, faction nor humour that makes me not to comply, but merely for fear of offending God. And ... if it be my unhappiness to be in an error, surely men will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope God will pardon me in the next.²

The noble Bates was to distinguish himself by standing at Baxter's elbow during the latter's infamous trial by Judge Jeffreys in 1685. However, he early came to love the future hero. A letter from 1659 indicates Bates' warm admiration for Baxter. Through another, he had thanked him for '...those excellent books you were pleased to send me'. His further warm reply speaks well of both these servants of Christ:

...'tis a singularity of your own to excel in every subject: none so movingly speaks to the affections or with greater clearness and power convinces the understanding: and that which puts a lustre upon all your productions is a spirit of holiness and zeal...I assure you without a complement I know not what I value most, either that I love you or am loved by you...³

Despite being 'out in the cold' for his nonconformity after 1662, and suffering occasional persecution, Bates ministered courageously as opportunity allowed. His latter years were spent in Hackney where he was living at the time of Baxter's death. He felt honoured that his deceased brother had asked him to preach the funeral sermon, published as *A Funeral Sermon for the Reverend, Holy and Excellent Divine, Mr Richard Baxter* (1692). It was published at the specific request of one of Baxter's fervent admirers, Sir Henry Ashurst, first Baronet (1645-1711), the eminent businessman and politician.⁴

As Bates indicates in his 'epistle dedicatory', young Sir Henry was one of many who traced their conversion to the reading of Baxter's *Saints'*

² See *DNB* (Bates).

³ N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), i. 400 (Letter 586).

⁴ See *DNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74440?docPos=2>).

Everlasting Rest. Besides having absorbed the presbyterian heritage of his family, he befriended Baxter and other prominent dissenting clergy. He also provided Baxter with legal counsel during his trial in 1685, and Baxter dedicated his *Treatise of Knowledge and Love Compared* (1689) to him. Sir Henry was also an executor of Baxter's will.

The text for Bates' sermon are the words of Jesus: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23: 46). The sermon is valuable in two respects. *First*, it exhibits the kind of theological and pastoral impact Baxter had on many 'moderate' puritan pastors. *Second*, it reveals the depth of affection men like Bates had for their inspiring mentor. Regarding the first, Bates' homiletical elegance is permeated with the kind of Calvinism often lamented as 'moderate Calvinism', but - as I have argued - more accurately known as 'authentic Calvinism'. Less vivid than Baxter's gripping and dynamic style, Bates' smooth eloquence does full justice to the biblically-balanced Gospel truths espoused by such men. Avoiding the overstrained orthodoxy of the 'Owenite' ultra-Calvinists, Bates does not suppress election in the midst of providing pastoral encouragement:

[God the Father's] sovereign free love was the principle of His electing any to the dignity of being His children: this love is as unchangeable as free; and election that proceeds from it, is as unchangeable as His love. What can induce Him to alter His affection towards them? ... He foresaw all the sins of His people, with their provoking aggravations. Now if the foresight of them did not hinder His electing love in its rise, can they frustrate its end, the bringing of them to glory?⁵

In his 'Application', Bates was every bit as concerned as Baxter had been to insist, like the Apostle Paul, that the elect are chosen 'to be holy and without blame before' God (Ephesians 1: 3). Thus any antinomian interpretation of election is nipped in the bud:

[The] Scripture account distinguishes between that substantial faith that is proper to the elect children of God, and the shadow of it in the unregenerate; the one is the intimate and active principle of obedience, the other is a dead assent without efficacy, a mere carcass and counterfeit faith....'Tis strange to astonishment, that men who have reason and understanding, should presume in a high degree of the present favour of God, and their future happiness, as if they were His dear children, when their enmity against His holy name and will is evident in their lives.⁶

⁵ Bates, *Funeral Sermon*, 19-20.

⁶ *Ibid.* 69-70.

Like Baxter, Calvin and numerous other ‘authentic Calvinists’, Bates does not cramp the Gospel offer with the Owenite ‘limited atonement’ dogma:

The Lord Jesus is the only peace-maker of the righteous and holy God to sinners...Our reconciliation only is by *redemption in His blood* [Col. 1: 20]...*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself* [2 Cor. 5: 19]. There is now an act of oblivion offered in the Gospel to all that come to God by Him. We have sure salvation in His name: But we must with consenting wills, close with Him as our Lord and life.⁷

In line with Baxter’s view of saving faith, Bates is careful to avoid any semblance of what is now known as ‘easy-believeism’:

We must not separate between Christ the Saviour, and Christ the Lord; between His salvation and His dominion. God indispensably requires we should resign ourselves to His Son as our King, and rely upon Him as our priest to atone His displeasure.⁸

Before Dr Bates directed his hearers to the legacy of Richard Baxter, he concluded with a beautiful and appropriate example of pastoral encouragement, too good to ignore:

Old Simeon is a leading example to believers: after he had embraced Christ in his arms, how earnestly did he desire his dissolution? *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* St Stephen in the midst of a shower of stones, with a blessed tranquillity, makes his dying prayer, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* If the fears of humble souls arise in that hour, because they have not the conspicuous marks of God’s children, the graces of the Spirit in that degree of eminency, as some saints have had: Let them consider, there are different ages among the children of God: some are in a state of infancy and infirmity; others are more confirmed: but the relation is the same in all, and gives an interest in His promised mercy. The weakness of their faith cannot frustrate God’s faithfulness. ’Tis the sincerity, not the strength of grace, that is requisite to salvation. If faith be shaking *as a bruised reed*, and but kindling *as the smoking flax*, it shall be victorious. O that these powerful comforts may encourage dying Christians to commend their souls with ardency and assurance to God, their Father, and felicity.⁹

The eloquence of the preacher then gave way to the eloquence of the admirer. While two-thirds of Bates’ sermon consisted of exposition and application, the final third was devoted to eulogy and biography. It is

⁷ Ibid. 80-1.

⁸ Ibid. 81.

⁹ Ibid. 84-5

abundantly clear that Bates saw Baxter not as an idolized ‘celebrity’ but as a trophy of Grace in the purposes of Grace:

I have now finished my discourse upon the text, and shall apply myself to speak of the other subject, the Reverend Mr Richard Baxter, that excellent instrument of Divine Grace, to recover and restore so many revolted souls to God, out of the empire of his enemy:...¹⁰

Dr Bates was concerned to make the right impression. Indeed, he was aware of a double problem:

For those who perfectly knew him, will be apt to think my account of him to be short and defective, an imperfect shadow of his resplendent virtues: others who were unacquainted with his extraordinary worth, will from ignorance or envy be inclined to think his just praises to be undue and excessive.¹¹

Yet, Bates was undaunted:

Indeed if love could make me eloquent, I should use all the most lively and graceful colours of language to adorn his memory: but this consideration relieves me in the consciousness of my disability, that a plain narrative of what Mr Baxter was, and did, will be a most noble eulogy: and that his substantial piety no more needs artificial oratory to set it off, than refined gold wants paint to add lustre and value to it.¹²

Thus far, my own handling of the material might be seen - like Bates’ own enthusiasm - somewhat ‘over the top’, at least to cool academics and those theologically prejudiced. I too remain undaunted, as I proceed to cover, not the biographical facts easily available elsewhere, but a selection of details from Bates’ eulogy.

We are reminded that at Kidderminster, Baxter’s ‘ministry by the divine influence, was of admirable efficacy’.¹³ Determined as he was ‘to glorify [God] in the saving of souls, this was the reigning affection in his heart’. His prayers melted the hearts of the worshippers. ‘His soul took wing for heaven, and rapt up the souls of others with him. Never did I see or hear a holy minister address himself to God with more

¹⁰ Ibid. 85.

¹¹ Ibid. 86.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. 88.

reverence and humility'.¹⁴ As Baxter prayed, so he preached:

In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart: All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style: for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words: he despised flashy oratory: but his expressions were clear and powerful, so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders, who were not charmed by so wise a charmer. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs.¹⁵

Baxter's ministry was as effective out of the pulpit as in it. His insistence on catechising, both in families and one-to-one, is well known. He published 'that accomplished model of an evangelical minister, styled *Gildas Salvianus*, or the Reformed Pastor' in which he shows that 'the duty of ministers is not confined to their study and the pulpit'.¹⁶ By this means he was fruitful in establishing souls in the faith. Often those instructed and exhorted would leave his presence in tears. As surely as love begets love, Baxter's Kidderminster congregation loved their loving pastor. 'His unwearied industry to do good to his flock, was answered by a correspondent love and thankfulness. He was an angel in their esteem'.¹⁷

Sadly, Baxter's pastoral success had too-little an impact upon the whole ecclesiastical establishment. The traditional Anglican mind-set was incapable of considering the kind of reforms Baxter believed both Scripture and antiquity demanded. As we have seen, the Savoy Conference was a disaster. He was equally grieved at the sectarian tendencies of Puritanism. All things considered, while he rejoiced in fellowship with godly souls whatever their churchmanship, Baxter's zeal for saving sinners was matched by his zeal to unite saints. His paraphrase on Christ's prayer for unity (John 17: 21) perfectly sums up his numerous treatises on the subject:

May all speak the same thing which they have heard from Thee by me,

¹⁴ Ibid. 89.

¹⁵ Ibid. 90-1.

¹⁶ Ibid. 92-3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

and may love what we love, and do our work and not their own: That by their concord in faith, love and practice the world may be won to Christianity, and not scandalized by their discord and factions, or by forsaking the true unity, and combining for worldly interest on worldly terms.¹⁸

Too few shared Baxter's vision, with all its tragic consequences. Yet, as Dr Bates reminded his hearers, Baxter's ideals and hopes had found expression in Worcestershire Association:

While he remained at Kidderminster, his illustrious worth was not shaded in a corner, but dispersed its beams and influence around the country. By his counsel and excitation, the ministers in Worcestershire, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational were united, that by their studies, labours, and advice, the doctrine and practise of religion, the truths and holiness of the Gospel might be preserved in all the churches committed to their charge. This Association was of excellent use, the ends of church-government were obtained by it: and it was a leading example to the ministers of other counties. Mr Baxter was not above his brethren ministers, by a superior title, or any secular advantage, but by his divine endowments and separate excellencies, his extraordinary wisdom, zeal, and fidelity: he was the soul of that happy society.¹⁹

That said, for Baxter, evangelism took priority over ecumenism, as Bates made clear: 'Mr Baxter, after his coming to London [in April 1660], during the time of liberty, did not neglect that which was the principal exercise of his life, the preaching of the Gospel, being always sensible of his duty of saving souls'.²⁰ As with his first preaching in London in 1654 (when old St Paul's cathedral was packed out!²¹), so now, Baxter always drew large crowds, sometimes with more than a touch of the dramatic:

He preached at St Dunstons on the Lord's-days in the afternoon. I remember one instance of his firm faith in the divine providence, and his fortitude when he was engaged in his ministry there. The church was old, and the people were apprehensive of some danger in meeting in it: and while Mr Baxter was preaching, something in the steeple fell down, and the noise struck such a terror into the people, they presently, in a wild disorder, run out of the church: their eagerness to haste away, put all into a tumult: Mr Baxter, without any visible

¹⁸ *A Paraphrase on the New Testament*, John 17: 21.

¹⁹ Bates, *Funeral Sermon*, 94-5.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 99.

²¹ 'the greatest congregation that ever I saw', *Sermon on Judgement* (London, 1658), Epistle dedicatory, ii.

disturbance, sat down in the pulpit: after the hurry was over, he resumed his discourse, and said, to compose their minds; *We are in the service of God to prepare ourselves, that we may be fearless at the great noise of the dissolving world, when the heavens shall pass away, and the elements melt in fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein shall be burnt up.*²²

With the events of the Restoration (1660), and despite every endeavour to return to his beloved people at Kidderminster (1661), Baxter's hopes for a comprehensive and reformed English church were dashed by the Act of Uniformity (1662). Along with other brethren, Baxter - 'who was their brightest ornament'²³ - had done his best to avert the calamity, being 'of Calvin's mind',²⁴ not over-hastily to expect too much by human means. That said, it was a monstrous crime against God to deprive the people of England of so many fit, able and godly pastors. Baxter spoke thus of the Episcopal misdeeds: 'For ought I see, the Bishops will own the turning of us out, at the tribunal of Christ, and thither we appeal'.²⁵ So, his public ministry was virtually over. He actually preached his farewell sermon a few months before the 'fateful day' of the Great Ejection - 'black Bartholomew', 24 August - when near two-thousand ministers lost their livings and ministries.

While there were occasional opportunities to preach thereafter, Baxter proceeded to pour his energies into his books - although he'd published many up until then. Understandably, William Bates drew his hero's remarkable literary labours to the attention of his hearers:

His books, for their number and variety of matter in them, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, positive and practical divinity. Of them I shall relate the words of one, whose exact judgement, joined with his moderation, will give a great value to his testimony; they are of the Very Reverend Dr Wilkins, afterwards Bishop of Chester: he said that "Mr Baxter had cultivated every subject he handled; and if he had lived in the primitive times, he had been one of the Fathers of the Church." I shall add what he said with admiration of him another time, "That it was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr Baxter."²⁶

Bates' assessment is strikingly free from any trace of the negativity of

²² Bates, *Funeral Sermon*. 99-100.

²³ *Ibid.* 103.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 97-8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* 105-6.

contemporary and later critics. Not simply concerned to say nice things in a funeral sermon, he states the biblical basis of Baxter's books: 'He adhered to the Scriptures as the perfect Rule of Faith, and searched whether the doctrines received were consonant to it'.²⁷ Bates then alludes to Baxter's 'several books against the Papists' written 'with that clearness and strength as will confound if not convince them'.²⁸ Baxter also 'wrote several excellent books against the impudent atheism of this loose age'²⁹ as well as 'some warm discourses, to apologize for the preaching of Dissenting ministers'.³⁰

Dr Bates then turned his attention to Baxter's stance on the 'modern controversy' over Calvinism and Arminianism, Baxter having 'advised young divines' to follow the 'middle way'.³¹ As I have argued elsewhere, this expression, repeatedly used by historians, is as misleading as the label 'moderate Calvinist'. In view of Baxter's confessed concurrence with the 'authentic Calvinism' of John Calvin, his was a 'middle way' between Arminianism and *Owenism*, the 'over-orthodoxy' of John Owen being an exaggerated form of Calvin's teaching, especially regarding the atonement. In other words, Baxter was not moderating *true* Calvinism. Doubtless Bates was aware of this, while unhelpfully using the standard categories of contemporary discussion. Certainly, his summary of Baxter's theology is 'consonant' with 'the Scriptures as the perfect Rule of Faith' and all that Calvin *actually* taught about the Gospel. Unless one is to say from an *ultra*-Calvinist perspective that 'proto-Arminian' elements are discernable in Calvin's teaching (which is true!), only in this sense may one admit that Baxter had some sympathy with Arminianism. Bates speaks thus for Baxter:

He was 'a clear asserter of the sovereign freeness, and infallible efficacy of divine grace in the conversion of souls' and that 'Divine grace makes the rebellious will obedient, but does not make the will to be no will... He preached that the death of Christ was certainly effectual for all the elect to make them partakers of grace and glory, and that it was so far beneficial to all men, that they are not left in the same desperate state with the fallen angels, but are made capable of salvation by the grace of the Gospel: not capable of efficiency to convert themselves, but as subjects to receive saving grace. He did so honour the sincerity of God, as entirely to believe His will declared in His Word: he would not

²⁷ Ibid. 106.

²⁸ Ibid. 106-7.

²⁹ Ibid. 108.

³⁰ Ibid. 109.

³¹ Ibid. 110.

interpret the promises of the Gospel in a less gracious sense than God intended them: therefore if men finally perish, 'tis not for want of mercy in God, nor the merits in Christ, but for their wilful refusing salvation.³²

It is interesting that Bates doesn't mention Baxter's much-controverted views on Justification. From his own teaching in the funeral sermon on the believer's obedience to the Lordship of Christ,³³ he obviously found no problems with it. Consequently, unlike those who question Baxter's 'soundness' yet applaud his 'success', Bates is happy to see a consistency between his teaching and his preaching. 'His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God, than any printed in our time'. What an astonishing claim! Bates then adds that 'there is a vigorous pulse in them that keeps the reader awake and attentive'.³⁴ Not surprisingly, the preacher - with his own eloquence - highlighted the two most popular works of Baxter:

His book of the *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death, but has the signatures of his holy and vigorous mind. To allure our desires, he unveils the sanctuary above, and discovers the glory and joys of the blessed in the divine presence, by a light so strong and lively, that all the glittering vanities of this world vanish in that comparison, and a sincere believer will despise them, as one of mature age does the toys and baubles of children. To excite our fear he removes the screen, and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in those dreadful colours, that if duly considered, would check and control the unbridled licentious appetites of the most sensual wretches.³⁵

Of the *Call to the Unconverted*, we are reminded by a snippet of evidence of its fame:

He told some friends, that six brothers were converted by reading that Call; and that every week he received letters of some converted by his books. This he spake with most humble thankfulness, that God was so pleased to use him as an instrument for the salvation of souls.³⁶

Indeed, it is remarkable that such success did not go to his head, as a

³² Ibid. 110-11.

³³ Ibid. 69-70, 80-1.

³⁴ Ibid. 111-12.

³⁵ Ibid. 112-13.

³⁶ Ibid. 113.

statement from the *Saints' Rest* indicates:

Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I must most joyfully bless Him for the plentiful success of my endeavours upon others. O what fruits then might I have seen, if I had been more faithful!³⁷

Consistent with this reflection, Dr Bates then proceeded to speak of Baxter's character as a Christian:

In him the virtues of the contemplative and active life were eminently united. His time was spent in communion with God, and in charity to men. He lived above the sensible world, and in solitude and silence conversed with God...His life was a practical sermon, a drawing example. There was an air of humility and sanctity in his mortified countenance; and his deportment was becoming a stranger upon earth, and a citizen of heaven.³⁸

Bates supplies a striking example of Baxter's genuine humility. When most men would be flattered to be thought well of by godly souls, Baxter's reply to a letter from a well-meaning admirer is revealing:

*You do admire one you do not know; knowledge will cure your error. The more we know God, the more reason we see to admire Him; but our knowledge of the creature discovers its imperfections, and lessens our esteem. To the same person expressing his veneration of him for his excellent gifts and graces, he replied with heat, I have the remainders of pride in me, how dare you blow up the sparks of it?*³⁹

Bates further reminded his hearers that 'the offer of a bishoprick was no temptation' to Baxter, and 'he valued not an empty title upon his tomb'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, probably no Christian pastor in England had to put up with more fierce and unjust aspersions than Richard Baxter. The cruel indignity he suffered at the hands of Judge Jeffreys is well known. Accused, convicted and imprisoned for alleged 'non-PC' aspersions against Church and State in his *Paraphrase on the New Testament* (1685), we are reminded of Baxter's humble and heroic spirit: 'What could I desire more of God, than after having served Him to [the utmost of] my power, I should now be called to suffer for Him'.⁴¹

³⁷ *Saints' Everlasting Rest* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1833), 193.

³⁸ Bates, *Funeral Sermon*, 114.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 115-16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 117.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 118.

Criticism and persecution were not Baxter's only sufferings. His life-long battle with ill-health is also well known, especially the frequent and acute agonies of a kidney-stone. Bates' narrative includes a pertinent point: 'But his patience was more eminently tried by his continual pains and languishing. Martyrdom is a more easy way of dying, when the combat and the victory are finished at once, than to die by degrees every day'.⁴² One may therefore forgive Baxter's occasional outbursts of irritability when every hour is punctuated by sharp pain. It is thus all the more remarkable - if not miraculous - that his dominant characteristic was 'love', not least when relations between too many Christians were defective in this respect:

Love to the souls of men was the peculiar character of Mr Baxter's spirit. In this he imitated and honoured our Saviour, who prayed, died, and lives for the salvation of souls...He said to a friend, *I can as willingly be a martyr for love, as for any article of the Creed.*⁴³

We have noted Baxter's last days and dying moments in Sylvester's sermon. Bates' narrative reminds us that the full account of his last words are compiled from the testimonies of separate visitors including Bates and Cotton Mather of New England. Perhaps the most memorable Baxter statement is his reply to one who commended our hero for his preaching and books: "I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen?"⁴⁴ Of course, fuller if less-memorable things were said. Indeed, never was Baxter's soul more visible at such a time, as Bates makes clear:

Not long after his last sermon, he felt the approaches of death, and was confined to his sick bed. Death reveals the secrets of the heart, then words are spoken with most feeling and least affectation. This excellent saint was the same in his life and death: his last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to appear before God. he said to his friends that visited him, *You come hither to learn to die, I am not the only person that must go this way, I can assure you, that your whole life be it never so long is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this vain deceitful world, and the lust of the flesh: be sure you choose God for your portion, heaven for your home, God's glory for your end, His Word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we shall meet with comfort.*⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid. 119.

⁴³ Ibid. 121, 120.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 125.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 123-4.

To the last, Baxter's testimony is astonishing. His eloquence challenges, instructs and inspires us, not least in the face of those who dismiss Christianity on account of suffering:

Being in great anguish, he said, *O how unsearchable are His ways and His paths past finding out! The reaches of His providence we cannot fathom: and to his friends, Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer.* Being often asked by his friends, how it was with his inward man, he replied, I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within; but it was his trouble he could not triumphantly express it, by reason of his extreme pains...⁴⁶

When asked if he experienced 'joy from his believing apprehension of the invisible state', Baxter replied:

What else think you Christianity serves for? The consideration of the Deity in His glory and greatness was too high for our thoughts, but the consideration of the Son of God in our nature, and of the saints in heaven, whom he knew and loved, did much to sweeten and familiarize heaven to him.⁴⁷

The former 'Apostle of Kidderminster' was an evangelist to the last:

At other times he gave excellent advice to young ministers that visited him, *and earnestly prayed to God to bless their labours, and make them very successful in converting many souls to Christ.*⁴⁸

The day before he died, Bates and Cotton Mather visited him:

I went to him with a very worthy friend, Mr Mather of New England, the day before he died, and speaking some comforting words to him, he replied, *I have pain, there is no arguing against sense, but I have peace, I have peace.*⁴⁹

Bates finally adds:

When asked how he did, his reply was, *almost well.* His joy was most remarkable, when in his own apprehensions death was nearest: and

⁴⁶ Ibid. 126.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 126-7.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 128.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 129.

his spiritual joy at length was consummate in eternal joy.⁵⁰

Dr Bates was doubtless on the edge of tears as his discharged duty drew to a close:

Thus lived and died that blessed saint. I have without any artificial fiction of words, given a sincere short account of him. All our tears are below the just grief for such an unvaluable loss. It is the comfort of his friends, that he enjoys a blessed reward in heaven, and has left a precious remembrance on the earth. Now blessed be the gracious God, that He was pleased to prolong the life of His servant, so useful and beneficial to the world to a full age: that he has brought him slowly and safely to heaven.⁵¹

In his concluding paragraph, we get a glimpse of the gentle preacher, so obviously and deeply moved by the life, labours and passing of a brother beloved:

I shall conclude this account with my own deliberate wish: may I live the short remainder of my life, as entirely to the glory of God, as he lived; and when I shall come to the period of my life, may I die in the same blessed peace wherein he died; may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love forever.⁵²

Surely this is the aspiration of every true Christian. May it be so for all who have read this display of brotherly devotion. AMEN.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 130.

⁵¹ Ibid. 131.

⁵² Ibid.