



GODLY CONVERSATION | *From a sermon by John Eliot (1691)*

Behold, said he, the ancient and excellent character of a true Christian; 'tis that which Peter calls "holiness in all manner of conversation"; you shall not find a Christian out of the way of godly conversation.¹ For, first, a seventh part of our time is all spent in heaven, when we are duly zealous for, and zealous on the Sabbath of God. Besides, God has written on the head of the Sabbath, *REMEMBER*, which looks both forwards and backwards, and thus a good part of the week will be spent in sabbatizing.

Well, but for the rest of our time! Why, we shall have that spent in heaven, ere we have done. For, secondly, we have many days for both fasting and thanksgiving in our pilgrimage; and here are so many Sabbaths more. Moreover, thirdly, we have our lectures² every week; and pious people won't miss them, if they can help it.

Furthermore, fourthly, we have our private meetings, wherein we pray and sing, and repeat sermons, and confer together about the things of God; and being now come thus far, we are in heaven almost every day.

But a little farther, fifthly, we perform family-duties every day; we have our morning and evening sacrifices,³ wherein having read the Scriptures to our families, we call upon the Name of God, and ever now and then carefully catechise those that are under our charge.

Sixthly, we shall also have our daily devotions in our closets; wherein unto supplication before the Lord, we shall add some serious meditation upon his word: a David will be at this work no less than thrice a day.⁴ Seventhly, we have likewise many scores of ejaculations⁵ in a day; and these we have, like Nehemiah, in whatever place we come into.

Eighthly we have our occasional thoughts and our occasional talks upon spiritual matters; and we have our occasional acts of charity, wherein we do like the inhabitants of heaven every day. Ninthly, in our callings, in our civil callings, we keep up heavenly frames;⁶ we buy and sell, and toil; yea, we eat and drink, with some eye both to the command and honour of God in all.

Behold, I have not now left an inch of time to be carnal; it is all engrossed⁷ for heaven. And yet, lest here should not be enough, lastly, we have our spiritual warfare. We are always encountering the enemies of our souls, which continually raises our hearts unto our Helper and Leader in the Heavens.

¹First Peter 1:15, "as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [ἀναστροφῆ]."
(AV) ἀναστροφή, "behavior, conduct, or manner of life."

²Archaic: *lecture*, "discourses of the nature of sermons delivered on occasions other than those of the regular order of church services."

³Archaic: *sacrifices*, "services of worship."

⁴Ps. 55:17.

⁵Archaic: *ejaculate*, "to utter suddenly a short prayer."

⁶Archaic: *frame*, "a mental or emotional disposition or state."

⁷Archaic: *engross*, "to buy all of so as to monopolize."

Let no man say, "Tis impossible to live at this rate"; for we have known some live thus; and others that have written of such a life have but spun a web out of their own blessed experience. New-England has examples of this life: though alas! 'tis to be lamented that the distractions of the world, in too many professors, do becloud the beauty of an heavenly conversation.

In fine, our employment lies in heaven. In the morning, if we ask, "Where am I to be to-day?" our souls must answer, "In heaven." In the evening, if we ask, "Where have I been to-day?" our souls may answer, "In heaven." If thou art a believer, thou art no stranger to heaven while thou livest; and when thou diest, heaven will be no strange place to thee; no, thou hast been there a thousand times before.

* * * * *

Pietie hath a wondrous virtue to change all things into matter of consolations and joy. No condition in effect can be evil or sad to a pious man: his very sorrows are pleasant, his infirmities are wholesome, his wants enrich him, his disgraces adorn him, his burdens ease him; his duties are privileges, his falls are the grounds of advancement, his very sins (as breeding contrition, humility, circumspection, and vigilance), do better and profit him: whereas impiety doth spoil every condition, doth corrupt and embase all good things, doth embitter all the conveniences and comforts of life.

Isaac Barrow

SELECT WRITINGS ON CHRISTIAN "CONVERSATION"

- Baxter, Richard. *A Christian Directory*. London, 1673. Printed in vol. I of *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*. London, 1707. Reprint, of the 19th century ed. Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990.
- . *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*. London, 1650. Reprint in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter. Select Treatises*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981, pp. 1-122.
- Bayly, Lewis. *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk, That He May Please God*. 3rd ed., 1613 [date of 1st ed. unknown]. Reprint, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995.
- Bolton, Robert. *Generall Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God*. London, 1626. Reprint, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1991.
- Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress. From This World To That Which Is To Come Delivered Under the Similitude Of A Dream; Wherein Is Discovered The Manner Of His Setting Out; His Dangerous Journey; And Safe Arrival At The Desired Country*. London, 1678. Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979.
- . *Praying in the Spirit*. London, 1661. *The Throne of Grace*. London, 1692. Reprinted together as *Prayer*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965.
- Burroughs, Jeremiah. *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. London, 1648. Reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964.
- Calvin, John. *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*. 1550. A Modern translation from the French and Latin by Henry J. Van Andel. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952.
- Dabney, Robert L. "Meditation a Means of Grace." In *Discussions. Theological and Evangelical*. Richmond, 1890. Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1982, 1:643-653.

- Dent, Arthur. *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven. Wherein every man may clearly see, whether he shall be saved or damned. Set forth Dialogueswise, for the better understanding of the simple.* London, 1601. Reprint, Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, [1994].
- Edwards, Jonathan. "Christian Cautions; or, the Necessity of Self-examination." II:173-185; "Christian Knowledge." II:157-163; "The Christian Pilgrim." II:243-246; "God the Best Portion." II:104-107; "Hypocrites deficient in the Duty of Prayer." II:71-78; "The Prayer-hearing God." II, pp. 113-117. In *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. With a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight. Rev. and cor. by Edward Hickman. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974.
- . *Charity and Its Fruits*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1969.
- . *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984.
- Flavel, John. *Divine Conduct: or, the Mystery of Providence*. London, 1677. Reprint as *The Mystery of Providence*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968.
- Gaffin, Richard B., Jr. "Theonomy and Eschatology: Reflections on Postmillennialism." In *Theonomy. A Reformed Critique*. Williams S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990, pp. 197-224.
- Hambrick-Stowe, Charles E. *The Practice of Piety. Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1982.
- Helm, Paul. *The Callings. The Gospel in the World*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987.
- Heywood, Oliver. *Heart Treasure; or the Furniture of a Holy Soul*. London, 1666. Reprint, Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, n.d.
- Owen, John. "Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers." In *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967, IV:1-86 (Hereafter, *Works*).
- . "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers." *Works*, IV:154-322.
- . "Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It." *Works*, IV:88-153.
- Packer, J.I. *A Quest For Godliness. The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990.
- Ryle, J. C. *Holiness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Scudder, Henry. *The Christian's Daily Walk, in Holy Security and Peace*. London, 1627. Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publ., 1984.
- Steele, Richard. *Religious Tradesman*. Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1989.
- Wakefield, Gordon S. *Puritan Devotion: Its Place in the Development of Christian Piety*. London, 1957.
- Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959.
- Watson, Thomas. *All Things For Good*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986.
- . "A Christian on the Mount, or a Treatise Concerning Meditation." In *The Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson*. Glasgow, 1829. Reprint, Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990, 1:197-291. [Hereafter, *Works*]
- . "The Godly Man's Picture Drawn With a Scripture-Pencil." *Works*, 1:385-383-620.
- Wells, Tom. *A Vision For Missions*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987.
- Westminster Larger Catechism*, Questions 115-121 (Sabbath), 154-160 (the Word), 161-177 (sacraments), 178-196 (prayer).
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines For the Christian Life*. Colorado Spring, CO: Navpress, 1991.
- Winslow, Octavius. *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978.