

In What Does the Crucifying of the World Consist?

A sermon by Richard Baxter

As the world *did* use Christ, or *would* have used him, so we must use the world. Not actually murder the sons of death, as they did murder the Lord of Life: but what Christ was on the Cross in their eye, that must the world be esteemed in our eyes.

To take it in order. 1. The predictions of the Prophets before Christ's coming were not regarded by the unbelieving Jews, but the Prophets themselves persecuted.

So those that would persuade us of the felicity of any worldly enjoyments, & by extolling sensual pleasures, or profits, or honours, would draw our hearts to them, should be despised & esteemed as deceivers by us. No man is more serviceable to the Devil for our destruction, then they that applaud any sensual vanity, and would make us believe what great matters are to be expected from the world, and so would be the Panders of it to entice us to its unchaste embracement. Remember this, when any would persuade you what a fine thing it is to be rich and great, and somebody in the world: what a merry life it is to drink, and sport away your time: These are the Prophets and Apostles of the Devil and the world; and let them be regarded by you accordingly.

2. As soon as Christ was born into the world, his best place of entertainment was a common Inn; and there he could have room but in a stable and in a manger; the world would allow him no better accommodation: and this was the welcome that it first afforded him.

Here you have two notable directions for your usage of the world. 1. Begin to renounce it betimes, as it did Christ. As the world rejected Christ an *Infant*, so we in our Infancy must reject the world. This is to be solemnly performed in Baptism: whereas we are engaged to the saving Trinity, and Baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so must we solemnly Renounce the damning Trinity, even the flesh, the world and the Devil: For so the Church hath ever done, and the nature of the thing doth manifestly require it: for the *motus* must have its *Terminus à quo*, as well as *ad quem*. It's a sad thing that so many well-meaning men should deny our Infant-capacity of this engagement; but much sadder that they should do it with such violent Church dividing zeal, as if the Kingdom of God lay in the exclusion of the seed of Believers out of it! If it be true that all our Infant-seed are excluded

from the Church, I am sure it is so sad a truth that me thinks men should not so eagerly lay hold of it, before they have better evidence to evince it. It was once a mercy for Infants to be in Covenant with God, and members of his Church; and I do not think that it is now a mercy to be out; or that the Kingdom of the Devil is the more desirable state; (and all men are in one of these.) Sure I am, they were once members of the Church by Gods appointment, and they that say they are cast out must prove it, and better than any that yet have attempted it, if they would have judicious, considerate, impartial men believe them. Whoever cast them out, sure Christ would not, that did so much to enlarge the Church and better its state, and manifest more abundant mercy, and chide his Disciples that kept such from him, and proclaimed that his Kingdom was of such. I am not easily persuaded to believe that the Head and King of the Church hath actually gathered a Society of a false Constitution so long and that he that is so tender of his Church, and hath bought it so dearly, and ruled it so faithfully, had never a true constituted visible Church till about two hundred years ago, among a few such as I have no mind to describe, and that we must now have a new and true Church-frame to begin, when the world is almost at an end; and that this glory reserved for our last days, consisteth in casting out our Infant-seed, and leaving them in the visible Kingdom of the Devil till they come to age. I am more out of doubt then ever I was, that God would have our Infants renounce the world, and be dedicated unto him, as the world did renounce Christ an Infant. If an Infant-Christ must be the Head of the Church, I know not why an Infant-sinner may not be a member of it: And as the world without reason through malice rejected our Infant Head; so God will find both Reason and Love to receive and entertain his Infant-members. And as long as we have Gods express approbation in his Word, for parents entering their children into his Covenant, and have the examples of all Nations by the Law of Nature, allowing parents to enter their children into Covenants which are apparently for their good, and to put their names into their Leases with their own, we shall not think our Infants incapable of Covenanting with God, nor of making this early Renunciation of the world.

2. From hence also you may learn what room it is that the world should be allowed by you, even the stable and the manger, as it allowed Christ. This is a point of most necessary consideration. The soul of man hath its several faculties: As vegetative, it hath its natural parts, and spirits, and powers, and a natural Appetite after the creature. This is the stable

and the manger, where the creature as a natural good may be entertained: It hath also as sensitive, its power of sensation, and sensitive appetite. This also may entertain the creature; but not for itself, nor by its own conduct; but under the guidance of Reason to an higher end. But the high and noble faculty of Reason, and the Rational Appetite, may not allow it the least entertainment in its separated capacity, as we are now discoursing of it. It belongeth not to the Natural or sensitive Powers to see and Love God in the creature; and therefore it cannot be required of them; and therefore they may receive their objects, (moderated by reason) upon lower terms. But it's the office of Reason, as to moderate the senses, so to behold God in all the objects of sense; and no otherwise should it have to do with sensual objects, of which more anon.

3. It was not long that Christ had been in the world before *Herod* sought his Life, and caused him to flee into *Egypt*. And as soon as we are capable of assaulting the world, we must actually fall upon it, and seek the extirpation of all its Interest from our hearts, where Christ sets up his throne.

It was for fear of losing his Crown that *Herod* sought the death of Christ. It must be for fear lest Christ should be dethroned in our hearts, and lose his regal Interest, and lest we should lose the Crown of glory, that we must endeavour the crucifying of the world.

When Angels and wise men did worship Christ, yet *Herod* did seek his death, and the more seek it, because of their acclamations, as being brought into jealousies of him by the Titles which they gave him. So, when the Princes and great ones of the earth do extoll the world, and magnify its glory, we must be raised hereby into the greater suspicion of it, and the more resolvedly set against it.

As *Herod* did put to death even the innocent children, lest Christ should escape, that so he might make sure work for his Crown. So must we subdue our sensual desires, by denying them sometimes even in lawful things, lest we should be carried to that which is unlawful before we are aware; and we must avoid the very occasions and appearances of evil, and restrain ourselves in the liberty that we might take, and not go as near the brink of danger as we dare: For it concerneth us to make sure work where the Reign of Christ and our own salvation is so much concerned, as in our victory over the world it is.

4. The whole life of Christ on earth was one continued conflict with the world. They believed not on him even when they saw his Miracles. They hated him even while he did them good. They afforded him not a settled habitation. So in the height of its Glory, the world must not be trusted by us. Though it affords us sustenance for our outward man, yet must we hate it; and we must allow it no settled entertainment in our hearts.

Christ was in the world, and the world was made by him, and yet it knew him not, *John* 1. 10. We converse in the world, and our outward man must live by it, as in it we received our life, and yet we must not know it in its separated capacity: The world could not hate them that were of the world, but Christ it hated, because he was not of it, *John* 7. 7. and 15. 18, 19. and 17. 14. So must we hate the world, because it is not of that nature, nor for that Interest as the new creature is, though worldlings that are of it cannot hate it.

The nearer Christ was to the end of his life, the more cruelly and maliciously did the world use him. And the nearer we are to our parting with the world, the more must we condemn and hate it.

5. The world did arraign and condemn Christ as a Malefactor; they charged him to be a Deceiver, and one that did his mighty works by the power of *Beelzebub*. So must we justly charge the world to be a Deceiver, and work its strange stupendous delusions by the power of Satan the great deceiver, and as a Malefactor must we attach, arraign and condemn it. They came out against Christ as a thief with swords and staves, *Mat.* 26. 55. We must come out against the world as that great thief that would rob God of his honour and interest, Christ of his Kingdom, and us of our salvation and by the sword of the Spirit must disarm and conquer it.

The world judged Christ to be a blasphemer and guilty of death, because he said that he was the Son of God, and should sit at his right hand. We must condemn the world of Blasphemous usurpation, that would needs become our God, and usurp the Divine prerogatives and honours.

They spit upon Christ in token of hatred and contempt. And we must as it were spit at the pleasures, and profits, and honours of the world, and manifest our defiance, and hatred, and contempt of them.

They buffeted Christ in manifestation of their malicious enmity. And the world and our flesh must not scape our hands, though our war be but defensive, yet must we offend that we may defend. [*So fight I, (saith Paul, 1 Cor. 9. 26, 27.) not at one that beateth the air, (that maketh a show of enmity when there is none, as children in sport, or sencers that have not intent to kill) but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*] [in non-Latin alphabet] The first verb signifieth to buffet and beat black and blue, as we say, *Et valid is ictibus subicere reluctantem*, as *Beza* speaks: and the second verb signifieth, to bring into servitude, or into the state of a servant, which is indeed the very work that we have to do with the flesh, and the world.

They reproached Christ when they had smote him, and tauntingly bid him, *Prophecy who smote him*. And the world and all the Idols of it deserve no better of us, when they will usurp the place of God; and we may well scorn such a God as *Elias* did *Baal*, and as God useth to do by the Idols of the heathen. Fine gods indeed, that can neither save themselves nor us.

The world did strip Christ and put on him a robe and a Crown of thorns, and a reed into his hand, and again spit upon him and mocked him. And this contempt in our apprehensions must we cast upon the arrogant world; we must strip it of its vain shew, and give it the honour of a reed for levity, and of thorns for unprofitableness and vexation; for as thorns it vexeth when it promiseth felicity, and as thorns it choaketh that word of truth, and as a reed it is shaken with every wind.

No backwardness of the Judge, and no intercession of his wife, could rescue Christ from the malice of the Jews, but the more is said for him, the more they cry, *Crucify him*. And as resolvedly-must we persecute the world. No intercession of our flesh, or backwardness of carnal Reason, must take us off; but we must be content with nothing but its *Crucifying*. When *Pilate* drew back, they knocked all dead with this malicious voice, *John 19. 12. [If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesars friend: whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Caesar:]* So must we quicken and provoke our Reason by arguments drawn from our fidelity to Christ, and say, *If we favour this world, we are not also friend of Christ; for whatsoever would make it self our King, and our felicity, and would steal away our hearts, is not Christ's friend*.

When *Pilate* saith, [*Shall I crucify your King?*] they cry out, [*we have no King but Caesar.*] And when the flesh or carnal Reason saith, [*Will you cast away your comforts, your peace, your happiness, your lives?*] We must say, [*We have no comfort but Christ, no peace but Christ, no happiness, no life but what's in Christ.*]

The world crucified Christ between two thieves. And we must crucify the world between two thieves; viz. the flesh on the one hand, and the Devil on the other; which would both have robbed God and us; Though through the power of a Crucified Christ, the one of these even the flesh, may be so refined as to be admitted into Paradise.

The world wrote over the head of Christ as the cause of his death [*King of the Jews.*] And we must write this over the Crucified world, [*This is it that would have been our King, and God, and Happiness so let all thine enemies perish O Lord.*] We must pierce the very sides of it, and let out its heart-blood. We must nail its hands and feet, the very instruments or means by which it executed its deceits. We must give it the Gall and Vinegar of penitent tears, and threatened judgements. The world thus *despised and rejected Christ, making him a man of sorrows, and acquainted with our grieves; they hid their faces and esteemed him not*, Isa. 53. 3. *He had no form or comeliness in their eyes, and when they saw-him, there was no beauty that they should desire him*, Vers. 2. So must we despise and reject the world, and hide our faces from it, and not esteem it, disdaining even to look upon its pomp and vanity, and to observe its gawky alluring dress, or once to regard its enticing charms. We must *think* it all into a loathsome vanity, till there appear to us no form or comeliness in it, nor any beauty for which we should desire it, and wonder what they can see in it that so far dote upon it; as to part with Christ and salvation to enjoy it.

The world did even *triumph* over a crucified Christ, and shake their heads at him, and say, *He saved others, but himself he cannot save.*] And we must *triumph* through Christ over the crucified world, and say, This is it that promised such great matters to its deceived followers; that men esteemed before God and glory; and now, as it cannot save them from the dust, or the wrath of God, so neither can it save itself from this contempt that Christ doth cast upon it. Cast down this Idol out of your hearts, and say, If he be a God let him help himself.

Lastly, the world when they had crucified Christ did bury him, and roll a stone on his Sepulchre, and seal it up, and watch it with soldiers to secure him from rising again, if they

could. And we must even bury the crucified world, and be buried to the world, and lay upon it those weighty considerations and resolutions, and seal thereto with Sacramental obligations, and follow all this with persevering watchfulness that may never permit it to revive and rise again.

And thus must we learn from the Cross of Christ, how the world is to be crucified; as it used Christ, we must use it. For it is the whole course of Christ's humiliation that is meant here by his Cross, the rest being denominated from the most eminent part; and therefore from the whole must we fetch our pattern and instructions, by the direction of the Allegory in my text.