

BELIEVERS' COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER AND SON.

And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.
—1 JOHN I. 3.

HERE is heaven in the text, as much happiness as men and angels do or can desire, happiness both formal and objective; and the sweet issue of both in the words following: 'These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' Joy, fulness of joy; joy, which is the smile of happiness and the flower of glory.

The object of this happiness, or the object which is our happiness, is God in Christ, the Father and the Son, the Father of Christ, and the Father of believers. 'I go to my Father and your Father;' his Father by eternal generation, ours by adoption; his, *quoad rem et modum subsistendi*; ours, *quoad effectum, et modum operandi*; which shews itself in indulgence, love, care, pity, providence. 'And his Son Jesus Christ,' that is the other object of our happiness; he who, ver. 1, is called 'the Word of life,' and, ver. 2, 'eternal life.' Now eternal life and happiness are reciprocal, and used as convertible terms in Scripture. Christ is the word of life in himself, eternal life to us: the word of life, *essentialiter*; eternal life, *causaliter*. And this is that happiness, that eternal life, which we have from him and by him. This fellowship in the text, which we call formal happiness, the word *κοινωνία*, is rendered by some *consortium*, converse; by others, *societas*, fellowship; by others, *communio*, so Beza. And this does best express the word, and therefore we will use it, and the rather because it includes both the former. And from the connection we might observe that fellowship, or communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, is eternal life or happiness; for what is happiness but the enjoyment of the chiefest good? Now the Father and the Son are the chiefest good, and communion with them is the enjoyment of them; for then we enjoy the chief good, when we are united to it, when we have interest in it, and when we partake of it. But communion includes all these, as will appear in the explication.

And thence we might infer that eternal life is not confined to heaven. If we take eternal life for happiness, a man may have eternal life on earth. Heaven is not so much local as we imagine. Communion with God is heaven, and happiness, and eternal life. He that hath communion with

God is in heaven while he is on earth; and if a man could be there without this, he would want heaven even in heaven. There is no essential difference betwixt happiness on earth and happiness in heaven; they differ but gradually. If a man on earth could enjoy perfect communion with God, he would be perfectly happy. But I pass by this to that which is express in the text, and I shall insist upon this.

Obs. Believers have communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. We need not seek out more proofs. That which will be most profitable is an inquiry into the nature of this communion, wherein it consists. Take an account of this in three particulars. Communion includes, 1, real union; 2, reciprocal community; 3, familiar converse.

1. Union. This is the basis of communion. Believers are united to the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son to them. They are united morally, conjugally, mystically. The bond of moral union is love, *gluten animarum*, by which spirits cleave to one another, nay, penetrate into one another and mix together so as they become one. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, as though one soul had informed and animated both bodies. Thus friends are united. Now believers are the friends of God. Abraham was called the friend of God, James ii. 28. 'Ye are my friends,' says Christ to his disciples, and in them to us, John xv. 14, 15.

There is also a conjugal union. By this men are *ἑν ὁμα*, as by the other they are *μία ψυχή*. And thus we are united to the Father and the Son. We are the spouse of Christ, and the Father has married us in an everlasting covenant. Christ, by assuming our nature, became *ἑν ὁμα*, with us, Eph. v. And by this conjugal conjunction we are *ἑν πνεῦμα* with him, 1 Cor. vi. 17. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.'

There is also a mystical union, which is set forth frequently, though not fully, by physical unions. We are united to Christ as the branches to the vine, John xv. 15; as the members to the head, Col. i. 18, Eph. v. 23; as the building to the foundation, 1 Cor. iii.; and, which is nearer than all these, as the soul and body. Christ is wholly in every believer, and wholly in every part, as *anima is tota in toto corpore, et tota in qualibet parte*; therefore, Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' As the soul liveth in the body, and the body is animated by the soul, so is the soul animated by Christ, and depends upon him as much for spiritual life, as the body depends upon the soul for natural life. He is the *actus primus*, the principle of our supernatural being and operations; and, abstracting all imperfection from the word, Christ may be called the *forma informans* of a sanctified soul, as it is sanctified. But there is an expression beyond all this, John xvii. 21, 22, 'That they all may be one, as thou art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us'; and ver. 22, 'that they may be one, even as we are one.'

2. Community. The Lord and believers have all this in common. And this seems to be the proper signification of *κοινωνία*. It may be rendered as well community as communion, if we may conclude from its original. *Πάντα τῶν φίλων κοῖνα*, says the philosopher, and gives the reason in his Ethics, *ἑν κοινωνίᾳ γὰρ ἡ φιλία*, friendship consists in community, and so does fellowship. Now there is betwixt the Lord and believers a fourfold community. (1.) Of enjoyment; (2.) Of affections; (3.) Of interests; (4.) Of privileges. There is a community,

(1.) Of enjoyments. The Lord is ours, and we are his. 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' That is the covenant. The 'Lord is their portion,' Ps. xvi. 5, Lam. iii. 24. And they are the Lord's portion: Deut. xxxii. 9, 'The Lord's portion is his people.' We have interest in his

glorious essence and attributes. In his omnipotency, that is our safety. By it we are more secure than if all the hosts of heaven and earth did surround us. And if we could use faith when we seem most deserted in the world, we might see more with us than against us; we might behold, with Elisha's servant, 2 Kings vi. 17, the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire about us.

His wisdom is for us. That laid the plot of our happiness from eternity, and does carry it on successfully, manure all the plots and stratagems of men and devils; and we, relying upon the conduct of omniscency, are further from miscarrying than if all the wisdom of angels and policy of men were engaged for us.

We have interest in mercy. Mercy is peculiarly the saints'; no creatures partake of mercy but they, and they have nothing but mercy. All the ways of God are mercy to them, Ps. xxv. 10. The greatest afflictions, yea, in some sense the greatest sins, the issue makes it *felix culpa*. The saints are vessels of mercy; it falls into them here, but they shall fall into it hereafter, and be filled therewith, as a vessel cast into the sea. We swim in streams of mercy from one condition to another, till at last we be swallowed up in the ocean of mercy.

In all-sufficiency. This is our riches, and we are richer in this interest than if we were actually possessed of the whole world. I am אֱלֹהִים, says God to Abraham. And he is the same to all the faithful. 'To him that overcometh I will give to inherit all things,' Rev. xxi. 7. And he giveth us πάντα ελευσίαις, 'all things richly to enjoy,' 1 Tim. vi. 17. Thus God, and with him all things, are ours; and so, reciprocally, we are his, and every part of us, our body, soul, and spirit. A saint is the temple of God, 1 Cor. iii. 16, and every part of him is dedicated and consecrated to God; he is ἀνάθημα, that is not ἀνάστημα. Our body, that is the outer court; our souls, that is the holy place; our spirits, that is the holy of holies. God is most in this, and manifests himself most gloriously to it. 'This is my resting place, here will I dwell.' All the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies must be weapons and instruments of righteousness.

And as there is this community betwixt us and the Father, so also betwixt us and the Son. His nature is ours, and ours is his; he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. His riches is ours, and our poverty his: 2 Cor. viii. 9, 'He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.' His righteousness is ours, and our sins are his; he made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. His happiness is ours, and our curse is his, Gal. iii. He was made a curse for us, that he might free us from the curse of the law. His glory is ours, and our shame was his; he took upon him the form of a servant, that we might be made the sons of God. He was made the most contemptible and abject of men, for so Isa. liii. 8 is rendered *contemptissimus abjectissimusque virorum*, הוֹרֵל אִישִׁים, *desitus virorum*, i. e. *in quo desinunt viri, ita ut ipse non habeatur pro viro*. He was brought so low, as he seemed not to be a man; and we are exalted so high, as we seem not to be men. He was the reproach of men and shame of the people, and we are the glory of Christ: John xvii. 22, 'And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them.'

(2.) Community of affections. The Lord and his saints have the same affections, running in the same channel, fixed on the same objects. There is mutual love. The saints love the Lord, and are beloved of him. 'I love those that love me,' says Christ, the Father's Wisdom, in Proverbs. And John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I

will love him,' &c. A saint loves whatever resembles Christ, whatever belongs to him: his image, his people, his ordinances. And the Lord loves whatever belongs to a saint as a saint; his love extends itself to his friends, his goods, his posterity; he shews mercy unto thousands of those that love him.

There is also a reciprocal delight. The Lord takes pleasure in his saints, and in their services; they are all his Hephzibahs, his rest, his joy, his peculiar treasure. And they delight in him and his administrations; they prefer him before their chief joy. The soul says, 'Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I can love in comparison of thee.' And the Lord says to his saints, 'Whom have I on earth but thee? and there is none in the world that I love like thee.'

So mutual desires. The soul desires God's glory, and the Lord desires the soul's happiness. The soul desires to be with Christ, and cries, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of spices. And Christ desires the soul should be with him, and calls, Cant. ii. 10, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' John xvii. 24, 'I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me.'

So for hatred. The Lord hates sin and sinners, and so does a saint: Ps. cxxxix. 21, 'Do not I hate those that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?' Here is an exact compliance, they do *idem velle, et idem nolle*; love the same things, and hate the same things.

(9.) A community of interest. The Lord and saints have the same ends, the same designs, the same friends and enemies. So Jehoshaphat expresses his society with Ahab, 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my chariots as thy chariots.' The Lord aims at his own glory and our happiness, and we aim at his glory and our happiness. And though he may seem more to seek his glory than our happiness, and we may fear we seek our happiness more than his glory, yet indeed these two are inseparable and almost coincident. That which advances his glory promotes our happiness, and that which makes us most happy makes him most glorious. Wisdom and mercy have made a sweet connection betwixt his honour and our happiness, so that they cannot be disjoined. We need no more fear to come short of happiness than we need to fear that the Lord will come short of his glory, for these two are embarked together.

And as they seek the same ends, so they choose the same means. There is not only *μία βούλησις*, but *προαίρεσις*. A saint will use no means but what the Lord prescribes and approves; he will rather depend on the wisdom of God for the success of those means which seem most improbable, if the Lord has prescribed them, than consult with or rely upon carnal reason; rather hazard the loss of a kingdom than set up a golden calf, though Jeroboam, a stranger to God, did; rather die than deny the truth, to save his life; rather lose the world than tell an officious lie.

And as they have the same end and means, so in the prosecution of these they have the same friends and enemies. He is not a friend in the Lord's account that is an enemy to the saints; nor is he the saint's friend that is the Lord's enemy. Those that hate thee (says David), and rise up against thee, I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them my enemies. And they have the same account of things as of persons; what is done against one is done against both, and what is done for one is done for both. The wicked they persecute the saints, and the Lord looks upon them as persecutors of him: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And Saul need

not wonder at this, if he had considered that of the psalmist, 'He that toucheth you, touches the apple of my eye.' And therefore the sufferings of the saints are called the sufferings of Christ. The saints they do good to their brethren, feed, clothe, and visit them, and the Lord takes it as done to himself: Mat. xxv. 34, 35, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father; I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and ye visited me: in prison, and ye came unto me.' But how could this be, think the saints, seeing Christ is above these kindnesses? He tells: ver. 40, 'The King shall say,' and he says it with an asseveration, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

(4.) Community of privileges. The Lord condescends to make the saints, so far as they are capable, partakers of his own privileges, even those which no creatures else partake of.

It is his privilege to be omnipotent, and the saints have something that resembles this. One would think Paul speaks as much, when he glories that he can do all things, Christ strengthening him. And every saint may presume as much.

It is the Lord's privilege to be omniscient, yet he vouchsafes some shadow of this to us, when he promiseth the Spirit shall lead us into all truth, and that the Spirit should teach us all things, 1 John ii. 20.

It is his privilege to be all-sufficient. And what does he promise less to us, when he assures us we shall want no good thing, we shall have all things richly to enjoy, we shall inherit all things? Who would desire more all-sufficiency than to have all things sufficient, all things that are good? 2 Cor. ix. 8.

And as we partake of the privileges of the Father, so also of the Son. He is *ῥεσμενίζων*, king, priest, and prophet, and so are we; he has 'loved us,' &c., 'and made us kings and priests,' enables us to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptably; and has prepared crowns, and sceptres, and kingdoms for us. We are prophets too, for we are all taught of God; we have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. i. 17. The same Spirit, which was a Spirit of prophecy, is in us; and though it do not enable us, as formerly them, to foretell future contingencies, yet something future we know. Every saint, who has attained assurance, knows he shall be saved; and this is a contingency in respect of second causes.

Again, Christ is the Son of God, and so are we. What honour is this! 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John iii. 1. Christ is the heir of all things, and we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. Christ is the object of his Father's love, and so are we, Lev. xxvi. 11. Christ is the glory of God, the brightness of his glory, and we are the glory of God, Ps. xi. 10. It is rendered, 'His rest shall be glorious.' Now, the saints are they in whom God rests. *Ecclesia, in qua aquiescit Deus*, says one on the place. Therefore they are his glory. Christ is a conqueror, and so are we; conquer the world, John v. 5; and the god of this world, Satan, who also commands another world, prince of the power of the air; him we conquer, and all his legions of darkness. Yea, we conquer that which is more potent than both the world and the devils, and this is sin; it overthrew both the former, and we subdue this. Nay, in all this, *ὑπερνικῶμεν*, we are more than conquerors.

Christ is a judge, and so are we: 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?' Nay, the chiefest part of the world, the

angels: ver. 8, 'The saints shall judge the angels.' This is the second head, wherein this communion is expressed.

8. Familiar converse, which we may make out in four particulars:

(1.) Visits; (2.) Walking with God, and he with us; (8.) Conference; (4.) Feasting.

(1.) Visits. The Lord visits us, and we visit him; he comes to us, stands at the door and knocks, and if we open he will enter, Rev. iii. 20; he will come in and manifest himself to us. This is the end of visiting, to see whom we visit; and this is it the Lord desires, Let me see thy face, and hear thy voice, Cant. ii. 14. There are sweet interviews betwixt God and the soul; he shews himself in part, withdraws the veil a little, that we may have some glimpses of his glorious excellencies. The day of glory dawns here, though the meridian be only in heaven; and though we see but darkly, as in a glass, yet we see more clearly than his ancient people. The object was far off from them, and the medium was darkened by the interposition of a cloud of ceremonies; but the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, and made them vanish. Abraham saw but his day, and that afar off; we see himself, he is set forth crucified before our eyes, Gal. iii. Moses's face was veiled, nor was he permitted to see anything of God but his back parts; but we, 2 Cor. iii. 16, with open face behold the glory of God, yea, the brightness of his glory shining in the face of Christ. These interviews, these visits are in the ordinances.

He visits us also in his providences. There is no condition so sad and forlorn, which can estrange him from us, hinder him from visiting us; nay, he takes those opportunities to be most kind and frequent in seeing us, when a visit will be most welcome; nor does he visit us merely to see us, but to do us good. In trouble of conscience, he visits us with his loving-kindness; in darkness and perplexities, with comforts makes his face to shine upon us. In troubles and dangers, he visits us with his salvation; in sickness and restraint he comes to us, and performs all the acts that love can put forth to a sick friend, he makes our beds in our sickness, Ps. xli. 3; his left hand is under our head, and his right hand sustains us. Nor need we fear to be troublesome to him with too frequent visits; he takes nothing more unkindly than when we withdraw and grow strange; he invites us: Cant. ii. 10, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.' 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary.' And when he cannot draw us up with his cords of love, he drives us with his rod; and that is one end why he exercises his people with sickness, losses, disappointments, wants, desertion of friends, and other afflictions, to draw them more to himself.

(2.) Walking with God. A saint walks with God, and God with him; so he promises, 'I will walk in the midst of you, 2 Cor. vi. 16; Lev. xxvi. 12, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Nor is this only in fair way: 'When thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee,' &c., Isa. xliii. 2. The familiarity of this walking, methinks, is held forth in this expression, Ps. lxxiii. 28, 'Thou holdest me by thy right hand.' What more familiarity than to walk hand in hand? Thus Enoch walked with God, Gen. v. 22; and Noah, Gen. vi. 9; the whole conversation of a saint is a walking with God. He sets God always before him, Ps. xvi. 8; walks, as seeing him who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27; makes God his meditation day and night, and says with David, 'I am continually with thee,' Ps. lxxiii. 28. He observes God in all his ways, looks upon the world as an engine acted by the Lord's influence, acknowledges no other *animam mundi*, he sees providence act and move the whole universe. He sees God in everything visible, *qualibet herba Deum*, tastes God's sweetness in every comfort, hears God's voice in every

one that speaks to him. David heard God speak, when his companions heard none but Shimei. Job's carnal acquaintance would blame the Chaldeans, Satan, and other second causes for his losses; but he looks higher, 'The Lord giveth,' &c. Others may refer sickness to the distemper of the humours, and blame the malice of men for their afflictions; but a saint says, with Eli, 'It is the Lord.' He rests not in the surface of things, but penetrates through them to the first mover; his sight is not terminated in second causes, he knows they are dead and without motion, till moved by the first; nor do any give a firmer, at least a more practical, assent to that metaphysical principle, *causa secunda non movet, nisi mota*.

And as he observes God in all, and ascribes all to God, so he depends upon God for all; the arm of the flesh supports not him except he see the strength of God in it. Ordinances are in his account empty cisterns, till the Spirit of God fill them; the staff of bread cannot strengthen him till the Lord strengthen it; the word is a dead letter unless the quickening Spirit enliven it. He esteems these because they are means of God's appointing, but he knows they are arbitrary means; God can give the end without them, but they can never attain the end without him.

As he walks with God in respect of thoughts and judgment, so also in respect of his affections. These are *animi pedes*, ῥῆς ψυχῆς πτερήματα.* Desire draws us towards him, love joins us to him, delight continues us with him; by desire we move to God, by delight we rest in God. Desire acts thus: Oh when shall I come and appear before God? How long will the Lord be as a stranger, and as a wayfaring man? How long shall there be such a distance betwixt me and him whom my soul loves? Oh draw me, and I shall run after thee; nay, draw me, that I may run with thee, for nothing short of thyself can content me. Then, when desires are answered, love acts thus: it closes with Christ, and twines itself into a strict embrace with him; it is jealous of everything that might estrange, and counts it death to hear of parting. It says, with Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16, 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.'

Being thus united and resolved, delight acts thus: Oh then, and have I found him whom my soul loves? I have enough: 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee; whom have I in heaven but thee?' &c. There is more beauty in the light of his countenance than in all the glory of the world; there is more sweetness in thy presence than in all worldly pleasures; there is more riches in the enjoyment of thyself than in all the kingdoms of the earth. So in practice, as in judgment and affection, our conversation is a way, a pilgrimage. Now because our weakness is much, the difficulties and dangers many, the Lord promises his presence shall go along with us; he walks with us, Isa. xlix. 10, 11, nay, in us; before us, so he is our guide, Ps. xlviii. 14; behind us, so he is our guard, our rearward, Isa. lviii. 8; beside us, on our right hand, Ps. cxxi. 5, Ps. cx. 5; lest we should err, he leads us, Isa. lviii. 11, takes us by the hand, *cum apprehensione manus*, i. e. *apprehendendo manum meam*. When we grow weary, he bids us lean upon him: Cant. viii., 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' he holds us up, Ps. lxxi. 8. Faith is expressed frequently by this notion, leaning upon God, ἰσθῆ, recumbency. When we faint, and can walk no longer, he bears us, his everlasting arm supports us, Isa. lxiii. 9, xlv. 8, 4: a full place, Isa.

* Qu. πτερήματα?—Ed.

xl. 11, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.'

(3.) Friendly conference. The Lord talks with us, and we with him; friendly and familiar colloquies; he speaks to us by his word, by his providence, by his Spirit; the sweet whisperings of the Holy Ghost, that still voice comforts, directs, encourages. This answers all objections by which we would deprive ourselves of comfort; this tells us the non-consequence of all Satan's fallacies, and does nonplus that arch-sophister. When he presents hell and wrath, it says, 'I am thy salvation;' when he brings us into the valley and shadow of death, it saith, 'Be not afraid, I am with thee,' I will not leave thee. When we have lost our way, and know not how to return, then we hear a voice behind us, nay, in us, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.' And when the word that he hath writ to us seems obscure, he instructs us *viva voce*. The Spirit, as Philip to the eunuch, not only joins himself to the chariot, but comes in; and this voice the saints know: 'My sheep know my voice,' John x. 5; others are strangers to it.

Nor does he only make known, tell us the secret of his word, but the secret of his providence: 'The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him,' Ps. xxv. 14; 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?' Gen. xviii. 17, 'The Lord will do nothing, but will reveal his secret to his servants the prophets,' Amos iii. 7. Oh what familiarity is here! What more amongst the dearest friends than communication of secrets? These God communicates, yea, those which were locked up from eternity, even from the angels, the salvation of particular souls. So he speaks to us.

And we speak to him in prayer and meditation. We may speak at any time: the King's ear is never denied us; the chamber of presence is always open, and we may speak with boldness and confidence, though we be poor worms. The Lord delights in such dialogues, and is much displeased when we estrange ourselves: 'Let me see thy face,' &c. And therefore when he sees us so busy in the pursuit of other things, and so much taken up with outward comforts, as we neglect him, he many times deprives us of these comforts, that when we have less of them he may have more of our company. See a pregnant place, Hosea ii. 10, 'I will allure her into the wilderness;' she shall be in a wilderness in respect of friends, comforts, riches, honours; these shall desert her, or be taken from her. And what then? 'Then I will speak comfortably to her.' The noise of the world was before so loud in her ears as she would not hear me, no, not when I spake comfortably to her; she was so busy in parleying with the world, as she had no leisure to confer with me. But I will bring her into the wilderness, far from these incumbrances that have interrupt our communion, and then we shall enjoy one another; he will speak comfortably, and we may talk familiarly with him. He oftentimes breaks the cistern, that we may have recourse to the fountain; lets our corn, wine, and oil be plundered, that we may more delight in the light of his countenance; lets the swine devour our husks, that we may learn to prize the pleasures of our Father's house. He deals with us, as Absalom did with Joab, when he desires conference with him; he sets our corn on fire, for, says he, in their affliction they will seek me diligently, Hosea v. 15, 2, Lam. xiv. 80.

(4.) Kind entertainments. The Lord feasts the saints, and they feast him: Isa. xxv. 6, 'And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.' Christ leads his spouse into his banqueting house, Cant. ii. He satisfies them with the fatness of his

house, Ps. xxxvi. 8, and makes them joyful in the house of prayer ; fills our souls as with marrow and fatness, Ps. lxiii. 5 ; feeds us with manna from heaven, with angels' food. All truths are *pabulum animæ* ; but divine truths, they are delicacies, sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb to a renewed soul. He gives us sweet intimations of his love, peace that passes all understanding, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The full fruition of these joys are reserved for heaven, yet some drops fall from those rivers of pleasures that are at his right hand, to refresh us in our pilgrimage. He conveys to us in this wilderness some clusters of grapes and figs, though we must stay for a full vintage till we come to Canaan. We break our fast here, but stay for the marriage-feast till we be taken up to our glorious bridegroom. Some of our master's joy enters into us here, but there we shall enter into our master's joy, and shall bathe ourselves in that boundless and immense ocean of pleasure and sweetness to all eternity.

And as the Lord feasts us, so we him. 'Behold,' says Christ, Rev. iii., 'I stand at the door and knock ; if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.' And what is that which the Lord counts a feast ? A broken heart, that is a sacrifice well pleasing ; a humble spirit, he dwells with such a spirit, Isa. lvii. 15. He does not sup and depart, but is at a constant diet with such a spirit. So also high thoughts of God ; these he delights in, they are as a feast to him. When they are so elevated as they make us tremble at his word, Isa. lvii. So also graces exercised, affections rightly fixed and elevated ; for when affection is down, and grace unexercised, the soul is asleep, and cannot entertain Christ, as the spouse, Cant. v. 12 ; will not admit him, will not open to him, though he tell her he has gathered his myrrh with his spices, and prepared the honeycomb with the honey, and brought wine and milk, brings his entertainment with him, will not put her to the charge and trouble of providing it. Yet, in the drowsy condition, she opens not, though he use such powerful rhetoric to get entertainment : 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled : for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.' What sweeter compellations, what stronger arguments, could be used ? Yet he prevails not ; the spouse was slumbering, the exercise of grace was suspended. A sleeping soul will not, cannot, feast with Christ. It is an awakened soul, whose graces and affections are exercised, that entertains Christ ; these he counts a feast.

Use 1. If believers have communion with the Father and the Son, then unbelievers hath communion with the devil and his angels. Your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. There is happiness, here is your misery. I might enlarge it in analogy to the particulars formerly insisted on. As believers are united to Christ, are one with him, so wicked men with the devil. As all things are common between God and believers, so are all things common between the devil and unbelievers.

Briefly thus. Unbelievers are one with the devil. There is a physical union ; they are his members, he their head. There is a moral union betwixt them, such as is betwixt friends ; the bond of that union is love ; and though they defy him, and pretend much hatred, yet the argument of Christ proves unanswerably that they love him. 'He that keeps my commandments, he it is that loveth me,' John xiv. 21. And so answerably, he that keeps the devil's commandments, he it is that loves him ; but these keep his commandments, comply with his will, do what he suggests. The power of the devil is absolute over these, as the centurion's over his servants. He says to one, 'Go, and he goeth ; to another, Come, and he cometh ; to all his servants, Do this, and they do it.' Nay, which is more, there is an

essential union betwixt these ; not because his essence, as he is a spirit, belongs to them, or their essence, as they are men, belongs to him ; but because those qualities, which make him a devil, and are essential to him as he is so, are in wicked men ; and those sinful qualities which make them wicked, and are essential to them as they are wicked, are in the devil. Pride, malice, averseness to God, hatred of his people, antipathy to his ways, ordinances, and administrations, these are the same in both, and do only differ in degrees. Further, the nearness of this union is evident, in that the devil is in them, keeps possession of them. He is the strong man that keeps the house. He is the prince of the power of the air, that not only rules *over*, but rules *in*, the children of disobedience. Wicked men may more properly be called demoniacs, than those whose bodies are possessed of the devil, of which we read in the Gospel ; for he possesses wicked men's souls, and being a spirit, can join himself more intimately to a soul, and mix his being more nearly with it, than with a body.

And as they are united, so they have all things common. He is theirs, and they are his, Rom. vi. 16. The apostle's argument proves it. ' Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his ye are to whom ye obey ?' He is their god, ' the god of this world ;' their prince, he ' rules in the children of disobedience ;' their father, ' You are of your father the devil,' John viii. 44 ; and they are his people, his slaves, his children : Acts xiii. 10, ' Thou child of the devil.' They have the same interests, the same designs ; they both drive on this design, to dishonour God, and destroy souls ; they have the same affections ; they love, hate, delight in, and desire the same things ; they love, and delight in, the works of darkness, hate God, his image, his people, his ways and ordinances. So for converse, they walk and confer together ; for as the Lord does talk with his people, by his Spirit suggesting his will to their souls, so Satan talks with wicked men by his suggestions, making his will known to them.

And as they have all things alike in communion here, so they shall have the like condition hereafter ; the like torments, and eternal woful fellowship in them. That is the doom which you must hear pronounced : ' Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' ' Consider this, O ye that forget God ;' see and bewail the misery of your condition. Think you are in hell, while you are so near to, and so familiar and intimate with, the devil. Renounce this cursed fellowship with the prince of darkness, and with the unfaithful* works of darkness, and never give rest to your souls till ye be in that happy condition on which you may be admitted to fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Use 2. An exhortation to get this fellowship, and continue it. This we shall urge by some motives, and shew the way to it, prescribing the means whereby it may be attained. The motives I shall reduce to two heads, the two ends for which we were sent into the world, and therefore the most powerful to move and excite desire and endeavours, God's glory, and our good. 1. It is most for God's glory. 2. It is best for us.

1. It is most for God's glory. God is most glorified in heaven. Now to have communion with God, is to be in heaven. This is the gate of paradise, and puts us into the suburbs of heaven. Besides, it is true, God's absolute glory is indivisible, admits of no addition or diminution ; it is, as Chrysostom calls it, ἀαλλώματος καὶ ἀκίνητος δόξα, admits of no change, no alteration, for in this respect he was infinitely glorious from all eternity, and nothing can be added to infiniteness, *Infinito non datur majus*. But his relative

* Qu. 'unfruitful'?—Ed.

glory, that may be augmented; he may be more glorious, though not in himself, yet in reference to us. And in this sense he is glorified, or (as we speak) made more glorious, both by himself and by his creatures: by himself, when he manifests his glorious excellencies to the world; by us, when we acknowledge and take notice of those excellencies. Both ways God is glorified by our communion with him. He manifests many glorious attributes hereby in admitting us to this fellowship: his truth in performing, whereby he is engaged to grant it; justice, in excluding others; power and wisdom, in fitting us poor pieces of clay for it; and that which is the darling of his attributes, to which he seems in the gospel to have designed a peculiar glory, his mercy, love, and free grace, so far condescending as to advance us, who are less than worms, worse than nothing, to such a glorious fellowship.

And as God glorifies himself, &c., so those that have fellowship with him hereby glorify him; for he is glorified when he is acknowledged to be glorious, and none can do it with such advantage as these, for it is grace by which God has most glory. Every grace exercised gives a testimony to all, or some of God's excellencies: love to his beauty and goodness, fear to his justice and holiness, faith to his truth, all-sufficiency, wisdom, power, and faithfulness, humility to his majesty, patience to his sovereignty. Now none exercise these graces but those who have this fellowship; and those who have most intimate communion have the most constant and vigorous exercise of them.

And as the Father, so the Son is hereby glorified. It is the honour of any person to attain his principal end, and this is it in which he most glories. The end not only crowns the actions, but the agent. Now the end of Christ's glorious undertakings on earth, the end of all his actions and sufferings, was to glorify himself and his Father, in bringing us to communion with both. He suffered so many things of God and man, that he might make reconciliation, Heb. ii. 17; that, being reconciled, we might meet and converse in a sweet and blessed fellowship here and hereafter.

And as the Father and Son are glorified hereby, so the Holy Ghost; the Scripture holds forth this as his peculiar glory. Hence that phrase in Paul's prayer, 'the communion of the Holy Ghost,' 2 Cor. xiii. 14. The Spirit is no less glorified by this communion (which seems to be ascribed to him as an attribute) than the Father by the manifestation of his love, or the Son by the dispensation of his grace. This then is the glory of God, and this renders it most desirable to all generous and self-denying spirits. The end is the *primum mobile*, the first principle of motion, and the motion is swifter and nobler, according to the value and excellency of the end. Heroic actions aim at glory, as that which is the noblest end. But no glory comparable to the glory of God, which seeing this communion so much advances our desires and endeavours after it, should be no less strong and indefatigable than they are noble and glorious. There is nothing more glorious than that which most glorifies God; and there is nothing so worthy of our desires and endeavours, as that which is glorious; and therefore we should desire and endeavour nothing more in the world than this fellowship, since hereby God is so eminently glorified, both in his attributes and relations. But if our spirits be so low, as we cannot rise to this highest and supreme end; though those, who are elevated by grace, neither can nor* ought; if this last end seem too remote, to have any strong influence upon us by way of motive, though indeed nothing is nearer or dearer to those to whom grace hath endeared the glory of God, there are other motives near us, yea, within us,

* Qu. 'either can or'?—ED.

not only the glorious concernment of God, but our own may move us. It is not only most for God's glory, but best for us.

2. Most for our good. The sweetest pleasure, the highest honour, the greatest advantage, and the chiefest happiness.

(1.) The sweetest pleasures are in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Every step in communion with God is a paradise. And how can it be less, since they are led by that hand, at which are rivers of pleasures; lie in that bosom, which is infinitely sweeter than myrrh, aloes, and cassia; walk in the light of that countenance, from whose smile spring all the delights of heaven, are always in the view of that beauty which makes heaven glorious, and all that behold it happy? They sit under the shadow of the tree of life, and have the banner of Christ's love for their canopy; feast daily with the choicest delicacies of Christ's banqueting-house, and drink of that pure river of the water of life, which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Pleasure is the result of those acts, which well tempered faculties exercise upon the best object. Now what faculty can be of a rarer temper, than that which is refined and elevated by grace, the most excellent accomplishment that ever omnipotency created; grace, I say, which informs the whole soul of him who has this privilege? And what more excellent, more glorious, more delightful object, than God in Christ, the Father and the Son? God in Christ is the ocean of all sweetness and pleasures, in comparison of whom all the pleasures that are, or ever were in the world, amount not to the proportion of a drop, and for quality, the very quintessence of them is but bitterness. This is that object, which is all made up of sweetness and ravishing delights. And he holds forth himself as delightful to every faculty of man that is capable of pleasure. Truth, that is the dainty upon which the mind feeds. Now he is the first truth, the sun, the fountain of it, from whom were darted all those beams of truth which are scattered to this lower world. 'He enlightens every man,' &c.

Goodness is that only which the will embraces with complacency. Now he is the chief good, *αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν*, the idea and exemplar of all goodness, and the spring from whence dropped all creature goodness.

Beauty, that is the pleasure of the eye. Now God in Christ, as Clemens Alex. ἀρχέτυπον τῶν καλῶν, the archetypal exemplar of all beauty. The fairest and most glorious creatures are but rude, blurred, and imperfect transcripts. He is fairer than the morn, clearer than the sun. As Basil, *ὑπερλαμπρὴν τὴν τοῦ ἡλίου λαμπρότητα*, his brightness darkens the lustre of the sun. Nay, he is infinitely brighter than the most glorious seraphim, *τὸ ὁτιως καλὸν κατὰ ληψὶν παῖσαν ἀνθρωπίνην ὑπερβαίνει καὶ δυναμιν*, it is this beauty that transports those happy souls that behold it, *εἰς θεῖαν εἶνα ἔκστασιν*, as Basil, into a divine, an eternal ecstasy. To the taste he is hidden manna, angels' food, the bread of life. The touch is ravished with the kisses of those lips that drop sweet-smelling myrrh, Cant. v. 13, and with the embraces of his everlasting arms. The ear is delighted with the voice of joy and gladness: 'The voice of my beloved,' Cant. ii. 8. The sound of the voice can heal broken bones, Ps. li. 8, can breathe life into a dead soul, convey heaven into a spirit despairing at the gates of hell, and still it with joy unspeakable and glorious. To the smell he is spikenard, myrrh, aloes, cassia, Ps. xlv. 8. What a fragrant smell does Christ diffuse, when he lies in our bosom as a bundle of myrrh! as Cant. i. 13.

Oh what joy is in this fellowship, whenas there is nothing in the Father or Son, but is a spring of comfort, pure, satisfying, overflowing, ravishing comfort! It is true, while we are present in the body, we are absent from

the Lord. We are not yet admitted to the well-head, that is in heaven ; but there are rivers flowing from hence, that make glad the city of God. There are streams of comfort conveyed to us in ordinances, promises, privileges, of which they only have the actual improvement who have such communion, they only with joy draw waters out of the wells of salvation, whereas to others they are a fountain sealed.

No wonder if the saints have such a high esteem of this communion, and of the ordinances wherein they enjoy it. See it in David : Ps. xlii. 1, 2, 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before him ?' So Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' Ver. 4, 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,' &c. And why so ? See ver. 7, 'Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God ;' ver. 10, 'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Hence the Marquis of Vico, the pope tempting him with gold to leave the ordinances at Geneva for the enjoyment of his estate in Italy, replied, Let his money perish with him who prefers all the riches in the world before one day's communion with Jesus Christ. But it is in vain for me to endeavour to express what joys are in this fellowship, for it is beyond expression. It is joy unspeakable ; nay, not only beyond expression, but above apprehension ; the peace of God passes all understanding. Such peace, such joy is there in this fellowship.

(2.) The highest honour. It is accounted a great honour amongst men to be near unto and familiar with princes. 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business ? he shall stand before princes,' Prov. xxii. 29. These shine in the orb of honour as the sun, when all about them, as planets of an inferior degree, borrow their light ; and they shine with the clearest ray who are nearest to the fountain. What honour is it, then, to have such near and familiar converse with the King of kings and Lord of lords ; to a companion of the prince of the kings of the earth ? He alone is truly the fountain of honour, and whatever is not derived from him by advantage of vicinity to him is but a name, a shadow, οὐδὲ ἀξιώματα αὐτὰ εἶναι ἂν τις φαίη, ἀλλὰ ὀνόματα ἀξιώματων μόνον, as Chrysostom. He is clothed with honour and majesty as with a garment ; and there is no way to be honourable but by getting near to him, and creeping under the skirts of his garment. Those that are not near to God are far from honour, even as those are far from light who are antipodes of the sun. The light of these is darkness ; the glory of these is their shame. Now, those who converse with God must needs be near him ; they are so called, 'a people near unto God,' Ps. cxlviii. 14. They are *vicini*, neighbours ; there is nothing but the partition of the body betwixt them, and there are many windows, many avenues in that by which God passes to them and they to God ; whereas others are strangers, foreigners, aliens to the commonwealth of this Israel, Eph. ii. 12. There is a vast ocean parts them from that region where God is known and enjoyed. It is true of them which Abraham says of those in hell ; we may say to them as he to Dives, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.' The king of this commonwealth forbids traffic and commerce with all but those few who have submitted to his sceptre, and these only are near him. They are not only *vicini*, but *propinqui* ; not only

neighbours, but indwellers ; not only of the same commonwealth, but of the same family. They are members of the household of faith. The Lord is the master of the family, and Christ the heir. It is a great honour to be a servant in such a house ; so says Chrysostom, ἀντὶ μεγίστου ἀξιώματος τοῦτο εἶθης, λέγων δοῦλους. Paul puts this amongst his titles of honour, accounts it one of his greatest dignities, to be servant of Jesus Christ. But we have greater honours than these ; we are not only servants, but friends : ‘ Henceforth I call you no more servants, but friends,’ John xv. 14, 15 ; nay, not only friends, but favourites. What greater honour than to be a prince’s favourite, to be in his presence, to have his ear, his smile, his heart ; to be deep in his affections, high in his thoughts ; to have liberty to make known all grievances, and the privilege to know all his secrets ? And all these are made ours by communion. Haman knew that his interest in the king’s favour did entitle him to all the honour he could confer ; therefore he says, Esth. vi. 6, ‘ To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself ?’ Though Haman’s hopes deceived him, yet does the Lord never disappoint his favourites. They have the royal apparel which the king useth to wear, the robe of his righteousness, and shall have the crown royal upon their heads ; and time will come when they shall be brought through the streets of the great city, the new Jerusalem, with glory and triumph ; and he shall command his angels to proclaim before them, ‘ Thus shall it be done to the men whom the king will honour.’

Nay, this is not all. They are not only *propinqui*, but *proximi*, by this communion ; joined to the Lord in the nearest ties of affinity and consanguinity. The nearest affinity are husband and wife. Now, they are married to the Lord, betrothed to Christ ; and *uxor coruscat radiis mariti*, the rays of honour which make the husband illustrious shine in the wife. The glory of Christ makes his spouse glorious ; so he says, John xvii. 22, ‘ The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.’ What glory in the world comparable to this ? It is as far above the highest honours in the world as he is higher than men who is higher than the heavens.

The nearest tie of consanguinity is that between parents and children. Now, these are the children of God, and do converse with God as with a father. They have fellowship with the Father, not only as he is so to Christ, but also as to them. Now, what kind of honour is this, that we should be called the sons of God ? ὅταν δὲ υἱοὺς ἔσπῃ, ἅπαντα τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὸν θῆσαντες ἀνεκάλυψε. The spouse is not only the Lamb’s wife, and so a queen, a queen in gold of Ophir, Ps. xlv. 9, but also a king’s daughter, ver. 13, the daughter of him who sits on the throne. And as though this were not honour enough, he gives us a better name than that of sons and daughters : Isa. lvi. 5, ‘ To him that lays hold on my covenant, I will give within my house a name, &c., even an everlasting name.’ Here is immortal honour. Sweetly Chrysostom, καὶ δούλη καὶ ἀγόνης καὶ πεινχρὰ εἶ καὶ ἄσημος καὶ ἐν τῷ κατὰ τὴν γῆν βίῳ ἀπεξεξιμμένη, ὑπάρχει διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν κοινωνίαν ἐξευγερίζων βασιλῖδα οὐρανῶν ποιεῖ.

But we are not yet come to the highest of that honour to which this fellowship advances. There is not only approximation, but union. They are not only near to God, but one with him ; united to him closely, intimately, inseparably. And this by virtue of communion ; for this (as before) necessarily includes union. What honour is this, to be one with God ; to be one with the Father and the Son, even as the Father is one with the Son ? So Christ prays, John xvii. 22, ‘ that they may be one, as we are one ;’ as truly, though not as perfectly. And the intimacy of this union is expressed by inhesion ; they are not only united to God, but (if we may use the phrase)

mixed with him; ver. 23, 'I in them, and thou in me.' Nay, a mutual inherency: 'He that dwelleth in love' (in love, which is the bond of this glorious fellowship) 'dwelleth in God, and God in him,' 1 John iv. 16.

(3.) The greatest advantage. We have hereby,

[1.] Plenty, and [2.] Safety.

[1.] Plenty. No good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly, Ps. lxxxiv. 11; and who walk uprightly but those who walk with him? as appears, Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect,' or upright, which is either an ἐξήγησις of the former, or has necessary connection with it. There is nothing good in heaven or earth which God will withhold, no, not heaven and earth itself, when they are good; nor that which hath more goodness in it than heaven and earth united, himself, his Son, his Spirit. 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.' The Son loveth us, and giveth us all things; for all things are common in this communion; the Son, and whatever he hath, is ours, as before. He gives us πάντα πλουσίως, 1 Tim. vi. 17; 'all things richly to enjoy.' All things, not only good, but evil; not as they are evil, but good. The worst thing given to a saint becomes good. That which is evil in itself, and evil to others, is good to them; that which is good in itself and to others, is evil to the wicked. 'All things shall work together,' &c. 1 Cor. iii. 21, All is yours, the whole world; πάσης τῆς γῆς ἄρχοντες οἱ ἅγιοι, rulers of the whole world. See here the total of your wealth. The parcels are in the same chapter, ver. 22. You have your possessions in a map, divided into two hemispheres; each of them comprise a world; things present and things to come, heaven and earth, this world, and that which is hereafter. And in either of these, besides what is known and described, there is a *terra incognita*, vast continents which no eye ever surveyed, nor ear ever heard a relation of; nor could any heart, any thought, take the dimensions of it, so large it is. Yet all this is theirs who are Christ's, ver. 23.

[2.] Safety: Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall lodge under the shadow of the Almighty.' Isa. xxxiii. 16, 'He shall dwell on high, his defence shall be the munition of rocks.' Who dwells in the secret of the Most High, but he that is continually with God, by secret and intimate communion? And he it is that abides under the shadow of the Almighty, his shadow, who is the rock of ages; therefore it may be well said, his defence is the munition of rocks. He that hath such a defence need not fear, as Ps. xli. 2, 3, 'Though the earth be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof,' ver. 5, 'God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.' No such safety as in nearness to God.

And as the Father undertakes their protection, so the Son. He looks upon them as parts of himself, and those parts that are nearest to his heart. They are his members, and he is sensible of their sufferings, as though the union betwixt them were not only mystical, but physical; in all their afflictions he is afflicted; nay, his body mystical, his people, who have communion with him as a head, are more dear to him than his natural body; for he exposed this to all miseries, to make that happy. Christ will suffer himself rather than they shall suffer. How safe are they!

(4.) The chiefest happiness; for what is happiness but the fruition of the chief good, the enjoyment of God in Christ? Now, what is it to enjoy the chief good (to enjoy God in Christ) but to be united to it, partake of it, converse with it? All these are included in communion.

There is no true blessedness but in this fellowship; and hell itself cannot

hinder those who have this fellowship from being blessed. There is more happiness in this communion, abstracted from heaven, than there is in heaven abstracted from this communion. Heaven is the place of happiness; but this fellowship is the cause, or rather the formality of happiness. This is it which makes heaven happy; and this would make hell to be heaven, if that unhappy place would admit of it: this is heaven upon earth now, and will be the heaven of heaven hereafter. He that has this fellowship is happy before he come to heaven; nay, heaven comes down to him, and is in him, before he be in it. After the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven, John heard a voice, Rev. xxi. 3, saying, 'The tabernacle of God is with men,' &c. The tabernacle of God is heaven, Ps. xv. When God dwells with a soul, and continues to grant communion, heaven is with that soul. Where the king is, there is the court.

It is true, this communion, while in the body, is very imperfect, and much interrupted, and our happiness is answerable; but, whatever happiness we enjoy, we have it from and in this fellowship. In heaven it shall be perfect and constant, and this is it which makes heaven desirable; however, the happiness which we shall have in heaven, and this here, differ not essentially, but only in degrees. Communion here is the first dawns of heaven, the first gladsome appearances of glory; the day breaks here, and the day-star of bliss arises; the meridian, the noon-day of happiness is in heaven; but there is no happiness, here or in heaven, but springs from this communion.

This is the highest privilege, the greatest happiness, that the most glorious angel in heaven enjoys. What difference betwixt angels and devils, but this, that the one has fellowship with God, the other neither hath, nor can have it? What difference betwixt heaven and hell, but this, that heaven is made happy by this communion, hell miserable by wanting it? What difference betwixt saints militant and triumphant, but this, they are perfectly happy in a perfect communion; these happy imperfectly, enjoying but communion in part! But whatever happiness either angels or saints, in heaven or earth, enjoy, it consists only in this fellowship.

What a strong invincible motive should this be to desire communion with the Father and Son! What stronger motive than happiness! There is none but desire it. There is a strong inclination, a natural tendency, in all creatures, in their several spheres, to happiness. It is the voice of all mortals, 'Who will shew us any good?' Why, here is the way to the chief good, to the greatest happiness, if you will walk in it. Ask the glorious angels and saints why they are happy; they will tell you, because they have this fellowship. Ask the devils and damned spirits why they are miserable; they will say, because they have not, or ever shall enjoy this fellowship. Ask why there is nothing but darkness; they will answer, because they have no fellowship with the Father of lights. Why there is nothing but weeping, &c. *Ans.* Because no communion with the Father of consolation. Ask why there is nothing within them but the torturing worm that dies not; they will answer, because they have no fellowship with him who died for sinners. Ask why nothing without them but everlasting burnings; they will answer, because no communion with him whose blood should quench them. Ask the saints in this world why they are imperfectly happy, why their life is *γλυκύπικρον*, made up of bitters and sweets, happiness and misery; they will answer, because their communion is imperfect and interrupted. Ask inferior creatures why they are [not] so happy as men and angels; the answer is, because they are not capable of this fellowship. Ask who you will, all will conclude, all happiness is in communion, nothing but misery without it. If then you would be happy, if you would not be miserable, get it; and if

you would be perfectly happy, get nearer, closer communion with the Father and the Son.

Means.

1. Entertain frequent and delightful thoughts of God. Such will present us to God, and make him present with us. While they are in our minds, he is in our hearts; and there we enjoy him, and converse with him, in a way most suitable to spirits. Communion amongst men is maintained by conference; that with God principally by meditation. This is the character of the wicked, those who are at the greatest distance from God, 'God is not in all their thoughts;' he is not in all their thoughts, or to little purpose. But those who have fellowship with him, he must be in all their thoughts; all their thoughts must be of God. Even when their thoughts are employed about lower objects, they then think of him; because their thoughts of other things have always a tendency to him; he must be your meditation day and night, last and first thoughts; he must be betwixt your breasts as a bundle of myrrh, Cant. i. 13, that, when ye awake, ye may be satisfied with his image; and so, with David, ye may be continually with him, Ps. lxxiii., Ps. cxxxix.

It is true, while we are here, we must be employed in particular callings, and must do what we are called to with all diligence; but one who tastes the sweetness of this fellowship can never be so busied in the world, but he can steal a glance at Christ; and in the thickest crowd of worldly employments, can find a passage to let in some sweet thoughts of God; but, when disengaged from earthly affairs, oh then, as Basil sweetly, *πάς μὲν τόπος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῆς ὁραῖας Χριστοῦ περιληρώσθαι*; let the whole soul be taken up with thoughts of Christ; let him fill every part of it; *μηδεὶς δὲ τὸ συνόλον τόπος ἐν αὐτῇ σχολάζεται*, no vacant place, no room to entertain vain, sinful thoughts.

He that is much in thoughts of God hath much of God; these both admit him into the soul, and there entertain him. Christ enters into our hearts, when thoughts of Christ enter; and the meditation of him, in effect, is his inhabitation in us. So Basil, *καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνοίκησις, τὸ δια τῆς μνήμης ἔχειν ἐνδρυμένον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν Θεόν*. These seat God in our hearts, as he sometimes seated himself between the cherubims; and these make our souls his temple, yea, the holy of holies, the holy place of the most holy God; so he, *οὕτω γινόμεθα ναὸς Θεοῦ, ὅταν μὴ φροντίαι γήναις τὸ συνέχεις τῆς μνημῆς διακόπτηται*. Our hearts, by a constant entertainment of such thoughts, either actually, or, when that cannot be, habitually, become the tabernacles of God; and he says of them, This is my resting-place, here will I dwell; and, according to his promise, I will walk in them, and dwell in them. God is but a sojourner with those who seldom think of him; he is a wayfaring man, that turns but in for a night; but he is an indweller, and makes a constant abode, with those who constantly entertain him with sweet thoughts. He dwells in them, and walks with them, *i. e.* he abides in them, and converses with them. He does not *παροικεῖν*, but *κατοικεῖν*. This for frequency.

They must be also delightful; such wherein both Christ may, and we must, take delight. Take heed of such thoughts as disparage or misrepresent God; they must be such as advance him, endear him to us; those must delight us. 'How precious are thy thoughts!' &c. Not merely speculative thoughts, for devils and reprobates may have such, but such as have a sweet and powerful influence upon heart and affections. Speculative let God into the head, but not into the heart; into the fancy, but not into the affections. They must be high, adoring, affecting thoughts. The Lord

enters with such thoughts, and with him enters divine light; which, as light here below, being accompanied with heat, kindles the heart into flames of love, zeal; burns up world-lusts and affections, quickens grace, refines the spirit, melts the whole soul, separates it from dross; makes it fit to be cast into the mould of God, and impressions of his glorious image. Be frequent in thoughts that beget such effects; for in these we both enjoy communion with God, and by them are fitted for further communion.

2. Live in dependence upon Christ, in the exercise of faith upon God in Christ. Trust him in all, for all, with all. Trust him with all your concerns, for soul and body, for this life and eternity, for yourselves and posterity. Have confidence in him. You can have no fellowship or intimacy with one in whom you have not confidence; so far as you have fears, doubts, suspicions, jealousy, distrust of him, so far you will be estranged from him; these will keep you off from him, as from one whom you cannot fully trust, and will disoblige him, and so keep him off from you. These, so far as they prevail, will occasion a mutual distance and estrangement, which will not stand with near and mutual fellowship. When you find anything too hard and difficult for you, sin, the world, temptation, any spiritual duty, any service, he calls you to leave it, commit it to him, Ps. xxxvii. 5. When you find anything too heavy for you, any want, affliction, suffering, when it proves too burdensome, cast it upon him: Ps. lv. 22, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.' He will shew the part of an intimate friend, and put his shoulder under, and not suffer thee to shrink, to be moved, much less to sink. When you are apt to be troubled, perplexed, solicitous about anything, cast that care upon him, 1 Peter v. 7, Philip. iv. 6. They that have lived most in communion with God have lived most in the exercise of faith; trusting him with all they have, in all they fear, for all they want. Walking in communion with God is a walking by faith, not by sense; not making sensible objects, persons or things, their support and confidence; but renouncing all confidence in the flesh, or in those things which a carnal heart has recourse to for support. Rely on, and stay yourselves upon God, Isa. l. 10, else you will walk in darkness, not see your way to communion with God, nor discern the comfort of it. There is perfect peace and repose in this communion, but how may one come by it? See Isa. xxv. 8. While you stay yourselves on God, and go leaning on him, you are near him; he is near you, you are in fellowship with him. This is the posture of intimate friends; thus they enjoy one another, herein their communion shews itself.

8. Renounce fellowship with others, all that is not consistent with, and subservient to this with God. Aristotle tells us, Eth. 10, πολλοὶ δ' εἶναι φίλον κατὰ τριῖαν φιλίαν οὐκ ἐνδέχεται. Perfect friendship can be betwixt no more than two. And good reason; for entire friendship requires intense affection, a high degree of love. And love, when it is divided, dispersed amongst many objects, is weakened. This is more evidently true here. The continuance of this blessed fellowship requires the whole strength of our souls, the highest strain of affection, Mat. xxii. 37. No love is sufficient, but that which is cordial, love with all the heart. God will have all, or none at all. He will have our love, or we must have none of his company. Now, how can God have all our hearts, if we let them be distracted, by admitting others into such endeared fellowship? Basil upon that place, With all thy heart, &c., says, τὸ δὲ ἐξ ὅλης μέριμνον εἰς ἑτέρα οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται, that is not the whole which is divided. God has not all that heart, which is parted betwixt him and others; ὅσον γὰρ ἂν τῆς ἀγάπης καταναλώσῃς εἰς κάτω, τοσοῦτον σοὶ λείψει ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀπὸ τοῦ ὅλου. God wants so much

of our affections as the creatures have, or when they are loved otherwise than for his sake. The stream of affection will run low to heaven, when it finds many channels on earth; nor will God ever mix with that stream that dirties itself in an earthly channel. As he will not be found of us except our whole hearts seek him, so he will not stay with us except all our affections wait on him; and how can this be, if we suffer other objects to steal them away?

More particularly,

(1.) No fellowship with sin. He shall not have fellowship with the Father of lights, who will have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Renounce all sin, the least, the sweetest, the dearest, the right hand, the right eye, else Christ will renounce you. We have fellowship with Christ as with a king. Now, what king will admit of a competitor, will suffer one to exercise equal authority with himself in his own dominions? Our hearts are Christ's throne, and when we obey sin, delight in it, we lift it up into his throne; and while we do this, Christ will be so far from conversing with us as friends or subjects, that he will denounce war against us as traitors and rebels. It is such as betwixt husband and wife. Now, what husband will admit of a co-rival? He is a jealous God. Our hearts are, as it were, the marriage bed; and when we delight in sin, it creeps into our hearts, and takes possession of the bed of love. If we suffer this, we may expect a divorce rather than a conjugal converse with Christ. It is as impossible that light and darkness should be received in the same subject, that heaven and hell should be in the same place, as that Christ and sin should be affectionately entertained in the same heart. Forsake sin, or Christ will forsake you, 1 John ii. 24.

(2.) No fellowship with the world. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' If the love of the Father be not in us, there is no love of the Father to us; and where no affection, there can be no fellowship, James iv. 4. 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God.' He that will be the world's friend will be God's enemy. No fellowship, in respect of things lawful or unlawful. You must not give too much of your hearts to lawful comforts, not too affectionately converse with lawful relations. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me;' is not worthy of such fellowship. If we be ready and willing to forsake father and mother for Christ, we shall find incomparably more comfort in fellowship with God than in all these enjoyments. *Και πατέρες ἐκ πολλοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπερβαίνει φιλοστοργίαν καὶ μητέρες κληρονομίαν*, Chrysost. If these have more of our affections than God, we shall lose both our relations in heaven and earth, and be deprived of fellowship with both. He that will not lay down his life for Christ, shall lose both his life and Christ too. *οὐκ ἐμπαθεῖ δὲ εἶναι τὴν ἀγάπην*.

(3.) No fellowship with the wicked: 2 Cor. vi. 14-18, 'Touch not the unclean thing,' or things (as the Syriac); it is an allusion to the legal ceremony. For as unclean things did defile the Israelites, who touched them, so are believers in danger to be defiled by conversing with the wicked; and as those so defiled were not received into the sanctuary, no more will the Lord receive those into friendship with himself, who defile themselves with familiarity, intimate, delightful, with the wicked. But be ye separate, keep at a distance from unclean persons, and then I will receive you. Not into heaven (that is not the meaning), but into my tabernacle, into the secret of the Most High, as appears, Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. I will admit you into my tabernacle, and there you shall converse with me as familiarly as sons and daughters with a father, ver. 8. Now that God's people are defiled by such

converse, appears, Heb. xii. 15, 16, 'Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled,' &c. 2 Pet. ii. 13, 'Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you.' Jude, ver. 12, 'These are spots in your feasts of charity,' &c.

4. Labour to be like to God. Assimilation is an effectual means to attain and preserve this fellowship. *Φιλία* is either *ἰμοίωσις* or *καθ' ἰμοίωσιν*, as Aristotle. It is the mother of friendship; and communion is nothing but friendship in exercise. Likeness doth both engender and nourish it. There is in similitude a secret sympathy, which does strongly incline the subjects of it to unite, close, mix together, and that attained, does rest in it with much delight; whereas unlikeness is cause of disagreement, and this of estrangement. We must be like God, if we would converse with him; but how? It is true, if we speak properly, we cannot. No creature can be like God, there is an infinite distance betwixt us. He is infinite, we finite. Now betwixt finite and infinite there is no proportion, no similitude. This notwithstanding, God does put such a glory upon grace, as to style it his image, his likeness: Gen. i. 26, 'after his own likeness,' because his soul was adorned with holiness; which is, in Scripture phrase, the divine nature, the image of God, an impression of divinity. The way, then, to be like God, is to get this image repaired, which is now razed and defaced by sin. To get it conformed to its first idea and pattern; to raze out all the sculptures of hell, all the impressions that Satan hath stamped upon our souls, thereby making them deformed, unlike to God, the pattern of our primitive beauty, and incapable of this fellowship: we must be holy, as he is holy, 1 Peter i. 15, 16; merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful, Luke vi. 35, 36; just, faithful, righteous, spiritual, even as he is so. 'Then shall the King delight in your beauty,' Ps. xlv.

Like the Son too. The same mind must be in us, Philip. ii. 5. We must express the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness, &c. Learn of him to be meek, lowly, patient, self-denying, zealous, faithful, public spirited. Look unto Jesus as our pattern, endeavour unweariedly to reduce our whole man to a conformity and likeness with him. The more we resemble him, the more will he love and delight in, the more frequently visit us, the more affectionately embrace us; *ἁμοῖον ἁμοῖον ἰσχύεται*. What communion hath light with darkness? The harmony of this communion may admit of disproportions, but not of contrarieties. You may as well reconcile light and darkness, as bring the holy God into fellowship with those who have nothing in them like him; *μόνοι φίλοι Θεῷ καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐν ἁγίῳ*, says Basil. There can be friendship and communion betwixt none but God, and those that are holy, like him; *οὐδὲ πῖπτει τὸ τῆς φιλίας καλὸν εἰς μοχθηρὰν διὰβασιν*. A wicked disposition, an unsanctified heart, is incapable of friendly communion with men, much more with God.

5. Get nearer union with the Father and Son. This is the foundation of communion. Far from God, and far from communion. Distance hinders the acts of friendship; the interruption of these acts occasions forgetfulness, and this begets estrangement, and this destroys friendship; and where no friendship, no fellowship. On the contrary, the nearer union, the sweeter communion. That we may be more nearly united, we must exercise uniting graces, faith and love. Faith is the cause of mystical, love of moral union. The hand of faith clasps Christ to us, the bonds of love tie us to Christ. Exercise faith on the attributes, promises, providences of the Father; on the person, offices, undertakings of the Son. The more faith is acted, the

more it is strengthened; the more strengthened, the more it unites; the nearer united, the more sweetly may we converse with God: Heb. x. 22, 'Draw near to God in full assurance of faith.'

Love, that is *affectus unionis*. The formality of it is an inclination to union, accompanied with a sweet sympathy, which strongly inclines to join, unite, mix, with the object beloved. Love cannot endure absence or distance; it calls in and commands all other affections to assist in attainment of what it loves. Desire is the wing by which it flies towards its object, and hope supports it. It fixes hatred upon that which interposes, and when this cannot be removed, sorrow and anger attend it. When it is attained, joy and delight embrace it. No grace or affection tends so much to union as love, and therefore none so much to communion; οὐ πάντων Θεός ὁ θεός ἀλλὰ τῶν οικειωθέντων αὐτοῦ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης, Basil. Love is essential to friends, mutual love, ἀντιφιλήσεις, we cannot imagine this without friendship, nor any communion without both. When we love Christ, he loves us; and where there is mutual love, there will be reciprocal delight; and this will not suffer any distance or estrangement, the only obstacles of this fellowship.

Exercise love, then. Let it inflame itself by the contemplation of the glorious excellencies, eternal love, merciful administrations of the Father; meditation of the transcendent love, infinite loveliness of the Son. This is the way to increase love, and every degree of its increase brings us a degree nearer.

6. Comply with God's designs. That of the wise man* is applicable, 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' No communion where no concord; no concord, where contrary designs: for contrary designs and ends require contrary means; and they who agree not either in end or means, agree not at all. If you would have fellowship, comply with his end, let his end be yours. Manifest this compliance by promoting his design with his own means. Now the last and the first design of God is his own glory; the end of all his purposes from eternity, and performances in time, is to glorify himself. This must be the aim of all our designs and actions, to make God glorious. Do nothing that tends not thereto; all things with an intent to advance it, and all so as they may most glorify him. The apostle's rule, 1 Cor. x. 31, ἐν ᾧ μάλιστα ὁρῶν ἡμεῖς δοῦς, &c.; not only spiritual, but natural acts, must be directed in a straight line towards this end. And not only actions extraordinary and of great concernment, but ordinary and of smaller importance. No thought must be entertained, no employment undertaken, before we put this question to it, Will this glorify God? Can I think or do nothing that will more honour him? And if an answer cannot be returned, according to this rule, we should there stop, let it proceed no further, lest we run cross to God, and so break that concord which is the bond of communion.

And as we must comply with general, so with particular designs. God in every act of providence intends his glory, all his works praise him: but commonly he glorifies one excellency more than another, making one attribute more conspicuous than the rest, mercy, or justice, or power. Now when such a beam of glory shines in a dispensation, our soul should fix upon it, praise, adore, admire it; for when God thus honours himself, by darting forth such irradiations of glory, to the end we may glorify him, by acknowledging and taking notice thereof with suitable affections; if we neglect it, we run cross to God's design, and such crossness is inconsistent with communion.

And as we must comply with the end, so with the means which he has

* Qu. 'Amos iii. 3' ?—Ed.

made choice of to advance this end. Now the means whereby he promotes this end, in those who are admitted to this fellowship, is their holiness. Our holiness is his honour, our grace his glory; though not formally, yet by necessary consequence. God is most honoured by those who are most holy, gets most glory where he gives most grace. The way that is called holy leads directly both to God's glory and ours, brings us to the place where his honour dwells, and where we shall be happy in dwelling with him. Now we must shew our compliance with God in improving this means. Grow in grace, be perfecting holiness. Which that we may do, he calls upon us by the motions of his Spirit, ordinances, acts of providence: these all bespeak our holiness. The rod has a voice, he speaks by afflictions distinctly; he sometimes calls for the exercise of this grace, subduing of that lust. If we diligently observe, we may spy some passage, circumstance, which points at that grace, corruption, &c. Be watchful, obsequious, and then we have God engaged to vouchsafe communion, Rev. iii., John xiv. 23. But if we comply not with God in end and means, will not hear nor open, he will not deal with us as with the spouse, Cant. v. 2; he will withdraw and be gone.