

HEAVENLY CONVERSE ;

OR,

*A DISCOURSE*

CONCERNING THE COMMUNION

BETWEEN

THE SAINTS ON EARTH,

AND

*THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN,*

MADE PERFECT IN HEAVEN.

## THE PREFACE.

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**DIVINE** providence having of late removed from the stage of this world, many worthy ministers, pious relations, and choice christian friends, I bethought myself how their removal might be improved, though their bodies are laid in the silent dust; and in that respect, are in the circumstances of a “dead man out of mind, in the land of forgetfulness.”\* Whether active or passive, themselves not remembering any thing, nor others remembering them; yet notwithstanding, they are alive to God, and with God, “and the memory of the just is blessed,”† and must not be altogether forgotten by survivors. If it become us not “to be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience, inherit the promises,”‡ then must we also remember them for that purpose; and if God write a book of remembrance concerning them, surely we should;|| and not only of their conduct, whilst in the flesh with us, but of their present circumstances and employment in their blessed state above, so far as our limited capacities can conceive of them from scripture revelation; and we should conform ourselves to them according to the platform of prayer taught us by our Saviour, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”§

This conformity to the saints above, and communion with them, is a duty seldom studied, and as rarely practised. Divines tell us of a sevenfold communion that saints have.¶—They have communion with God the Father, 1 John i. 3.—With Christ the Son, 1 Cor. i. 9.—With the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. With the holy angels, Heb. i. 14.—With all the true members of Christ’s mystical body on earth, Eph. iv. 12, 13.—With the

\* Psal. xxxi. 12. lxxxviii. 12.

† Prov. x. 7.

‡ Heb. vi. 12.

|| Mal. iii. 16.

§ Matt. vi. 10.

¶ Dr. Pearson on the Creed, p. 714.

members of the same society, 1 Cor. x. 16.—And with the saints departed. The last is that which is handled in the ensuing Treatise.

That this communion of saints is a fundamental article of a Christian's faith cannot be denied; though by many misinterpreted and practically decried, yet many that stand up for it, will not stand up to practise it without reserve; most men confining their communion to their own party, excluding all from their fellowship, that differ from them, though in things not essential. Most understand not how Christians at a distance, can have any communion in spirit, though Paul saith to the church at Colosse, "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit."\* Many are dark, most of a private, few of a catholic spirit, so as to think and act according to the latitude of this principle.

I think it is beyond all question, that the church of God is rightly distributed into militant here on earth, and that called triumphant in heaven; there is an upper and lower part of the New Jerusalem. That "above is free, which is the mother of us all."† The cabalists observe that the word Jerusalem, is of the dual number, to denote doth a heavenly and earthly city; and they say, the taking away of the letter jod out of Jerusalem, 2 Sam. v. 13, מְרוֹשָׁלַם doth intimate the taking away of the earthly and establishing the heavenly. But that above, and this below, differ not in kind, but degree; both are children of one father, have union to one head, are members of the same body, are animated by one and the same spirit, and employed in the same service, for the same common end, the advancement of God's glory. These in the lower room, have the "earnest of of the Spirit," which is a pledge of that felicity which those above enjoy; they are endeared to them in affection, reverence their memory, imitate their holiness, hope and long to be with them; but dare not adore them, nor beg their suffrages for them in their prayers, or their merits to pass for them, which were contrary to scripture; and irrational, because they know not our hearts; injurious to Christ our mediator, and absolute idolatry, as Protestant divines have demonstrated sufficiently against the Papists.

Another opinion of some of the ancients has degraded the

\* Col. ii. 5.

† Gal. iv. 26.

saints departed ; some thinking that their souls are shut up in some subterraneous places till the day of judgment, and that only martyrs enter paradise, which, they say, is a place beneath the heavens ; but we believe according to Paul's description of paradise, that it is in the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.—that the angels carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom\*—that the thief upon the cross went immediately into that paradise where Christ himself was†—and that the spirits of just men, are upon their dissolution made perfect in the immediate enjoyment of God. There was but a moment of interval betwixt Paul's being in the flesh, and his being with Christ in glory.‡

Well then, we do firmly believe, that our pious friends and relations, dying in the Lord, are wafted through the air, the devil's territories, into the empyrean heavens, where they “shall be ever with the Lord, and see God face to face ; where God is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”|| Yea, the “saints shall judge the world, and sit with Christ on his throne.”§ O happy day ! O triumphant joy ! doth it not make our hearts leap within us, to consider that our parents, children, husbands, wives, dear christian friends, with whom we have walked, watched, fasted, and prayed, are now safely lodged in the mansions above ? It is true, we miss their company, but should not love to them drown our sorrow for them ? should not godly sympathy make us rejoice with them that rejoice ? shall we not by faith see them standing on the shore, arrived in that blessed haven, where we hope in God's time to arrive, though now tossed on this tumultuous sea ? They behold us, and wish us safe with them, as we pray for the resurrection of their bodies. We may be glad that the society above is increased, though ours be diminished here below ; yet praying and hoping the “Lord will add unto his church daily such as shall be saved, and will be with it to the end of the world.”¶

What a blessed prospect can faith display, when her piercing eye can peep through the curtains of mortality, and with stoned Stephen behold “God the Father, and Jesus in our flesh, at

\* Luke xvi. 22.

† Luke xxiii. 43.

‡ Phil. i. 23, 24.

|| 1 Thess. iv. 17. 2 Thess. i. 10.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 2. Rev. iii. 21.

¶ Matt. xxviii. 20.

God's right hand, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect ;" even those who but lately were accounted the scorn and off-scouring of the world; hated, nick-named, fined, imprisoned, banished, not judged worthy of room in the church, nor on earth, by the malignant world. O surprising change! to see these very saints entertained with applause, " clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,"\* in token of triumph, and admitted into the presence-chamber, whilst their cruel adversaries are thrust down amongst devils, in regions of darkness for ever. O who would not be a child of God in rags, rather than sit with profane princes in their greatest glory !

Consent and harmony is the perfection of the universe, as being the music of the spheres. Divines tell us of a three-fold unity.—Of persons in one nature; as the three persons of the trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.—Of two natures in one person; the divine and human in Christ.—Of many persons and natures of one quality and disposition; this is in the mystical body of Christ. This is in some measure begun here, and perfected in heaven, when all shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and there shall be no jarring in the music. O happy day, when they shall see eye to eye, and serve God with one consent! Who would not be glad to join in that concert and choir? Who would not long and say, " Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace."† In heaven there are no Babel builders, no confusion of languages; as they are intelligible one to another, so they all speak the language of Canaan, which some think will be the Hebrew tongue, if indeed they employ any articulate sound. There have been fine and ingenious projects of a universal character, for words or things, to make all the world understand one another, a curious invention! but if that fail, this will hold—in heaven the saints are sweetly centred.

Would to God there were more of this blessed society! the more and welcomer, there is room for all, the mansions are large, the feast plenteous; there are rivers of pleasures, an

\* Rev. vii. 9.

† Psal. cxx. 5, 6.



ocean of delight; they must enter into their master's joy; as thousands of vessels cast into the sea, all are filled, but all cannot contain it.

Who would not be of this number? O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity, and slight this celestial glory! Dreadful is your case if you be found out of Christ, in a state of nature. You that have attended ordinances, conversed with believers, professed to be of their number, how astonishing will it be to see so many come from all parts of the world, and "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," and you the professed children of the kingdom shut out? \* Virgins foolish, because without oil, rapping at the door, and howling, rejected with *I know you not*; while the wise are admitted with honour. Look to it, every one is not accepted; what is your choice now, must be your case for ever. If now you walk in the way of genuine Christians, you shall have a reward with them. If you despise them as a company of frantic, or melancholy fools, because they have prayed, wept, and kept a needless stir in religion, you are like to be expelled out of their society for ever.

I shall say no more at present, but acquaint the world with the occasion of this short Tract. God had removed a very excellent minister, who left a solitary widow, and many sad hearts; this Sermon was studied and preached to comfort mourners; God made it useful for that end. A stranger of another county providentially heard it, and desired a copy of it; I transcribed it, and committed it to his disposal, to send it to the press or not, at his option.

Such as it is, I refer it to the reader's judgment, and myself to the prayers of Christians, for a sinful creature, yet a messenger of Christ,

OLIVER HEYWOOD.

\* Matt. viii. 1, 12.

## HEAVENLY CONVERSE.

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HEBREWS<sup>\*</sup> XII. 23.

—*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

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THESE words are to be considered in two points of view :

1. *Absolutely*, or abstractedly, as in themselves : or,
2. *Relatively*, or in their connection.

A word or two may be advanced on the text in the former sense, from whence may arise these observations.

*Obs.* 1. That there are spirits distinct from the bodies of men.

I remark this the rather, because Sadduceeism prevails much amongst us ; the Sadducees say, “ There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit,” Acts xxiii. 8. Practical atheists are numerous, and speculative dogmatizing atheists are too many, notwithstanding the many volumes written against them. The Sadducees judged the soul to be only a crasis or temperament of the body and its humours. The ancients say of them, that they affirmed God himself to be corporeal ; but God is a spirit, and the souls of men are spirits ; hence God is said to be “ The Father of spirits,\* who formed

\* John iv. 24. Heb. xii. 9.

the spirit of man within him ;”\* the constitution of man’s nature proves this, yea, the exercise of his reason supposes it ; he that denies it contradicts his very being. There is, saith Elihu, “A spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”† It is true, it is hard to conceive what this soul is, and harder to define it ; it is a heavenly spark, lighted by the breath of God, of the same nature with that of angels ; spirit is the genus, angel is a species comprehended under it. The soul of man is a faint resemblance of God ; the faculties of the soul resemble the Trinity in vital action, intellection, and volition ; therefore it has been defined to be a vital, intellectual, volitive spirit, animating a human organized body. The powers of the soul are the instruments of reason. I need not however insist on this, but shall take it for granted amongst rational creatures.

*Obs. 2.* That spirits are substances, having an existence separate from bodies.

When men breathe out their last, the soul expires not ; it hath an existence and agency without the body. The essence of the soul is eternal, it had a beginning, but shall have no end ; it is a blossom of eternity ; while it is in the body, it is called the soul ; when it is separated from the body, it is not properly a soul, but a spirit. Hence, in the text, we read “the spirits of just men,” and our Saviour saith, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones ;” and Stephen dying, saith, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”‡

That the soul is a substance, not a mere accident, is thus proved :

(1.) That which is nothing, can do nothing. || But the soul doth move, understand, will ; therefore it hath

\* Zech. xii. 1. † Job xxxii. 8. ‡ Luke xxiv. 39. Acts vii. 59.

|| Non existentis, non est actus.



an existence. A reality it hath, though purely spiritual, and invisible to sense, but no less real; for it is said Prov. xvi. 2, "The Lord weigheth the spirits;" therefore they have some weight.

(2.) The soul is the subject of properties; and that which is a subject capable of habits, or affections, is a substance. Now the soul is capable of love, desire, hope, delight, joy, sorrow, in a natural sense; of cultivating arts and sciences, in a civil sense; of exhibiting graces and vices, in a moral sense; therefore must needs be a substance.

(3.) The soul is a being of itself; not an accident, or quality inhering in another subject; hence David saith, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;"\* and the apostle Peter requires us to "commit the keeping of our souls to God."† Here is the cage, the bird is flown; the soul is God's creature as well as the body, and will have its existence after the body is dissolved into dust and corruption; so our Lord saith, Matt. x. 28, "Men may kill the body, God the soul."

(4.) The soul is the man.‡ Man hath his denomination from the better part; Gen. xlvi. 26, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt," that is, all the persons; yea, the soul is so noble a part of man, that sometimes the body is excluded as inconsiderable; 2 Cor. v. 8, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Still he harps on this string, insisting on the soul, as if the body had no personality with the soul; therefore elsewhere he accounts the body as a perishing, a vile thing,|| but reckons upon the soul, the "inward man, being renewed day by day."§ This is the man worth

\* Psalm xxxi. 5.

† 1 Peter iv. 19.

‡ Animus cujusque est quisque.

|| Phil. iii. 21.

§ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

speaking of, and reckoning upon. Thus the soul is a substance.

I might add, that it was the soul that Christ came principally to redeem, and the body by consequence.

*Obs. 3.* That as soon as the soul leaves the body at death, it launcheth into an eternal state.

This is clear from the text. The soul of Judas went to its "own place;"\* that is, into the state of the damned, whither his deserts cast him. Believers go straight to heaven, being carried by the safe convoy of guardian "angels, into Abraham's bosom."† Hence it is said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,"‡ ἀπαρτι, from henceforth, that is, from the first instant their immortal soul is breathed out of this mortal body, they are with Christ: doubtless Paul understood his soul would be with Christ as soon as it was loosed from the body, which made him so earnestly to long for it, Phil. i. 23. Yea, Christ said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43.

(1.) Then surely the soul at death is not annihilated, that is, turned into nothing; it is a spirit, and consists not of parts, as the body doth, and therefore is not divisible, and so cannot be subject to dissolution, but continues in its being.

(2.) The soul sleeps not, for it ceaseth not in its acts and operations when the body is asleep, as is clear from dreams, wherein the soul is apprehensive and lively in its imaginations, as it is when the body is most waking and vigorous.

(3.) The soul is not buried with the body, to rise with it at the resurrection, as a gentleman in these parts hath lately asserted; because it is not mortal, nor subject to death, for Solomon saith, Eccles. xii. 7,

\* Acts i. 25.

† Luke xvi. 22.

‡ Revel. xiv. 13.

“The spirit shall return to God who gave it,” to receive its final sentence of absolution or condemnation; and this is at death, “when the dust returns to the earth, as it was.”

(4.) The soul goes not to purgatory, as Papists affirm, to be cleansed from venial sins: we deny it, as having no warrant from the word of God, which mentions only two places for men after this life, heaven and hell, joy and torment.\* All the ancient fathers are against it: Augustin saith, “After this life, there remains no compunction or satisfaction. Christ’s blood, applied in this life, is the only purgatory for sins,” 1 John i. 7. Heb. i. 3.

*Obs. 4.* The spirits of just or pious persons, and only they, are made perfect after this life.

Perfection must be taken in a double sense: first, of parts; secondly, of degrees. In the former, every sincere Christian is perfect in this life, with a gospel perfection of sincerity in heart and life; but no man on earth will attain to the latter. Paul himself renounceth it, Phil. iii. 12, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” As to the former, he asserts it of all sincere saints, verse 15, “Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded.” We must hold this distinction, or make Paul contradict himself. But as soon as the breath of a child of God departs out of his body, he is completely perfect. “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away,” 1 Cor. xiii. 10. O happy day! O blessed state! “When such as are feeble shall be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord before them: when every one shall arrive at a perfect age, at the

\* Luke xvi. 25, 26. John iii. 3. Rev. xxii. 14, 15.

measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!"\* But this is not the subject of which I shall treat.

We must consider the text as relating to the context; and then we must go back to verse 22, wherein we have a most excellent description of the gospel dispensation, as contra-distinguished from the legal economy. We have the following particulars: *We are come*; that is, new testament believers, being united and associated, have come,

1. *To mount Sion*, the blessed place of worship where the temple stood, whither all the males went yearly to worship; it was holy by God's special consecration. So believers are come to whatsoever was typified thereby, gospel worship, and most excellent privileges, Eph. ii. 14—22.

2. *To the heavenly Jerusalem*, that is, to the church catholic, of a heavenly descent, and as heavenly an ascent; it comes from above, is part of that Jerusalem above; governed by heaven's laws in the gospel charter; of invincible strength, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" of wonderful beauty and harmony.†

3. *To an innumerable company of angels*. A thousand thousands minister unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. To these, saints below are gathered, in Christ; with these they have communion, as being all of one family.‡ Holy angels are God's officers for the saints' good, and guard them to heaven.

4. *To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven*. Instead of all the males coming to worship, now we are come to all the members of the church, Jews and Gentiles, through-

\* Zech. xii. 8. Eph. iv. 13. † Gal. iv. 26. Matt. xvi. 18. Col. ii. 19.

‡ Dan. vii. 10. Eph. i. 10. iv. 10, 15.



out the world; who are all real saints, elect souls, written in the Lamb's book of life, animated with one spirit.\*

5. *To God the judge of all*, that is, the Lord paramount of his church, the object, author, and end of all gospel transactions. We have interest in a propitious God, are accepted in the beloved; he is the defender of his saints, punisher of their enemies, recompenser of upright services, comforter of their hearts, all in all.†

6. *To the spirits of just men made perfect*, that is, freed from sin, complete in grace, in full communion with God, having received their full reward in God's immediate presence, "having fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith," and who are now wearing the triumphant crown of righteousness which they will wear to all eternity.‡

7. *To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*. This, this is the Alpha and Omega, partaking of a human and divine nature. He is the author and finisher of our faith, the bright and morning star, the corner-stone of our salvation;|| a prophet transcending Moses, a mediator of a better covenant, confirming all by his death.

8. *To the blood of sprinkling*, that precious blood which is of more value than heaven and earth; this sprinkling of blood was the highest performance in his mediatorial office on earth; and this he manages now when he is in heaven, having entered into the holy of holies, to apply the benefits of his undertaking, and to appear in the presence of God for us.§ But to return to the words of the text:

\* Rev. xxi. 27. Rom. viii. 17. Eph. iv. 5—11.

† Eph. i. 6. Isa. liv. 17. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rom. viii. 32.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. || Rev. i. 11. Heb. xii. 2.

§ Heb. ix. 14, 24. vii. 25. Isa. lii. 13—15.



*To the spirits of just men made perfect*, that is, ye are come—for the word *προσεληλύθατε*, ver. 22, must be understood here. Calvin interprets it, as signifying, that we Christians are gathered to those holy souls, which having put off their bodies, have left all the pollution of this world behind them;\* whether it was the ancient patriarchs, or such as died successively till that time, and even to this very day. *Made perfect*; You will say,

Doth not the same apostle thus express himself? Heb. xi. 40, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

*Ans.* 1. They borrowed their perfection from our gospel dispensation; for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; the law had “but a shadow of good things to come, they were but carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation; Christ being the end of the law to every one that believeth.”†

2. Believers under the legal dispensation, were justified and saved by Christ to come; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ’s day, and believed in him, and it was counted to him for righteousness.‡ So David, and all the old testament saints; and when they had finished their course, they entered into a state of perfection, they saw God immediately, which the Hebrews call, a being put under the throne of glory;|| and they judged that those spirits entered into that state of perfection, sooner or later, as they depart out of this life, more or less purified. To them, Christians are said to

\* Ut significet nos aggregari ad sanctas animas, quæ corporibus exutæ, omnes mundi sordes reliquerunt.—*Calv. in loc.*

† Heb. vii. 19. x. 1. ix. 10. Rom. x. 4.

‡ John viii. 56. Rom. iv. 22. || Poni sub solio gloriæ.

come, by faith, hope, love, and sweet intercourse, or communion.

Observe it, *ye are come*, not only you shall come at your death, but while you live in the flesh, you are with them in spirit, by a blessed connection in one body, under Christ, the head; and some kind of communion in spirit.

*Doct.* There is a way whereby saints glorified in heaven, and believers sanctified on earth, come to each other.

Or, there is a union and communion maintained between gracious souls on earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. This is a mysterious point, yet a truth. We believe such a thing as communion of saints here below, though living at a vast distance in place, and though they never saw one another, or could understand one another's language, yet there is a communion in spirit: so it is in this case, only saints above are at the upper end of the table, or rather in the upper room, we below; they are in God's immediate presence, we in a foreign country; they drink deep of those rivers of pleasures, we do but taste how good God is; they are at full age, saints below in their minority; yet both are children, dear to God; we live by faith, they by vision and sensible fruition; we have but the earnest, they have full possession of the celestial inheritance.

In the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall observe the following method:

I. Declare how the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven come to, or have communion with saints below?

II. How saints on earth come to the saints above?

III. In what way this takes place?

IV. Conclude all with some practical inferences?

I. How do the spirits made perfect above, come to the saints below?

*Answ.* 1. By consent and communion in ordinances. The worship above is a counterpart to that of the saints below; as we sing hosanna, they resound hallelujah; wherever gospel worship is offered on earth, they above concur therewith.

Whether the saints glorified be present in the assemblies of saints here below, as scripture asserts the holy angels are, I know not;\* but some understand such as join with the angels, Rev. vii. 11, singing, "Blessing and glory, and wisdom, thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever," to be saints glorified; for it is said, ver. 14, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

O how do the glorified spirits echo to the saints' praises here! adoring free grace, the merits of Christ's blood, and the blessed conquests of the Holy Spirit. The worship is of the same nature, differently circumstanced; they being in the heavenly temple, in the royal presence, with harps well tuned; but we worship afar off, with jarring music, and on a lower key.

2. By some kind of sympathy with their suffering fellow members on earth; so far as their glorified state will bear, they have tender compassionate feelings, towards such as are still in the road, labouring, striving, fighting with temptations, persecutions, and corruptions, well remembering that themselves were lately in the same condition. These glorified saints, now arrived at the haven, stand upon the shore, and see their brethren in the ship on this tempestuous sea, tossed with storms, beset with pirates, endangered by rocks and sands, and

\* 1 Cor. xi. 10. Eph. iii. 10.

their hearts long to see us also safely landed ; and as far as they know any of our conditions more hazardous, so are they concerned for us ; nor doth this sympathy abate their present joy, but rather increases it, to see themselves out of danger. Nor is it inconsistent with this heavenly glory, any more than Christ's having "compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way;" \* for though he hath laid aside his passion, or liability to suffering, yet not his compassion.

3. Saints glorified come to us below by joy and exultation ; so far as the spirits above know the prosperity of the church below, so far do they triumph and rejoice. Hence it is said, Luke xv. 7, "That joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." How glad are they when one is added to their number ! That this joy is of saints glorified, is confirmed, ver. 10, for it is said, "There is joy in the presence of the holy angels," or angels of God. Additions to the church on earth, form an augmentation of the celestial inhabitants, and add to the honour of our Lord and master. It is melody to their spirits, and accents their triumphal songs, that another soul is snatched out of Satan's hands, and put into safe state for heaven. This way they themselves went, they travelled through these several stages, to salvation ; † they experimentally know what blessedness attends every step, and find the issue to be good ; and the more the happier. There is no envy in spiritual things.

4. By a daily accordance with the saint's prayers, and Christ's intercession for the militant church. The spirits of just men made perfect above are continually present with Christ, and know what our blessed advocate presents to the father on the behalf of the church

\* Heb. iv. 15. v. 2.

† Hinc itur ad astra.



militant, and have a similar concern for it. Our divines confess, that saints departed do in general pray for the church on earth, desiring the final deliverance of their fellow members from all miseries; \* so the souls under the altar, cried with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood, on them that dwell on the earth."† Full glad would they be that an end were put to these days of sinning, and they lift up their desires to God, which is their praying. But this doth not warrant men's invocation of saints; for they are ignorant of particular cases; "The dead know not any thing,"‡ nor can they impart any merits to men. What Papists say of glorified spirits seeing all things in the glass of the Trinity,|| is a fancy; for that would make them omniscient as God is.

You will say, do saints glorified know nothing of affairs here below? I answer affirmatively,

(1.) Because they are intellectual spirits, of a large capacity; for they are equal with the angels.§

(2.) Possibly the angels, whom God sends as messengers into this lower world, may communicate what they know to them of church affairs; for they have a peculiar way of signifying their minds to each other.

(3.) As God's children die, and depart hence to heaven, they may bring them notice how things go on in this lower world.

(4.) Possibly they may learn something by revelation immediately from God; for doubtless, such as are in paradise must know what the apostle Paul knew when he was rapt up thither;¶ though even angels are ignorant of some things, for so our Lord

\* Perkins on the Creed, p. 311.

† Eccles. ix. 5.

§ Luke xx. 36.

† Rev. vi. 10.

|| In speculo Trinitatis.

¶ 2 Cor. xii. 4.



affirms, Matt. xxiv. 36, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Much less can men know all things, yet the glorified spirits are on a level with the angels.

Thus much for the agency of these spirits of just men made perfect, for promoting this communion.

II. How do the saints on earth come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and wherein consists this communion?

This being the subject of my text, I shall state it in these seven particulars:

1. Saints on earth come to the spirits of just men above in point of adoration; not of them, but of God with them, when we perform any part of worship in reference to the divine Majesty; we below are doing the same thing that the courtiers do in the presence chamber: we are fully assured that he is encompassed with angels and glorified saints; one cries to another, and saith, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory."\* To this the saints on earth echo, saying, "Amen, so be it;" see Rev. v. 13, 14, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth,—heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." There we find precentors and succentors in this blessed choir, saints above and saints below. He that converseth with a great king, hath relative communion with his whole court; worshippers on earth have some intercourse with those heavenly choristers and courtiers in the upper region.

2. In point of conversation, saints on earth walk by the same rule, according to which they act who are above; hence we pray, "Thy will be done on earth

\* Isa. vi. 3.

as it is in heaven :”\* spirits below walk in the same road that led the glorified saints to that uphill city ; that strait and narrow way ; † that way of the righteous, which is above to the wise, and hath a direct tendency to heaven : hence saith the apostle, concerning himself and all sincere Christians, Phil. iii. 20, “ For our conversation is in heaven ; πολίτευμα, our citizenship, our civil intercourse.” ‡ We act as free-men of the Jerusalem that is above, from whence we sprang, and whither we tend ; living by heaven’s laws, and going about our business with heavenly hearts. So the pearl grows in the sea, but shines in the sky. Christians are holy pilgrims, asking the way to Zion ; these march through thick and thin to be where their brethren are ; desiring the way as well as the end ; holiness as well as happiness ; yea, holiness is part of their happiness. These holy brethren are “ partakers of the heavenly calling ;” || and make it their business to “ walk worthy of this calling.” §

3. Saints below come to those above in point of delight and affection. Pious souls loved God’s children whilst they were in the flesh ; in this imperfect state, “ saints on the earth were the excellent ones, in whom was all their delight.” It was natural to them, they were taught of God to love one another. ¶ This divine nature connects and unites hearts : as fraternity is a charm to the affections, much more do the spirits of just men made perfect, now purified and freed from the dregs of corruption and unloveliness, become the objects of the saints’ love. Nor is it distance of place that alienates their affections ; for the soul is not\*\* where

\* Matt. vi. 10.

† Matt. vii. 14.

‡ Ut municipes cœlorum nos gerimus.—*Piscat.* || Heb. iii. 1.

§ Eph. iv. 1—3.

¶ Psal. xvi. 3. 1 Thess. iv. 9.

\*\* Anima non est ubi animat, sed ubi amat.

it animates, but where it loves; men may love an object a thousand miles off. “Whom having not seen, ye love,”\* saith Peter. So, though saints below converse not personally with them above, yet their hearts are knit to them by a thousand bonds; they that are risen with Christ, set their affections on things, of course on persons, above, Christ, and all his lovely shining members with him.† The lover can go without actual locomotion; his heart removes to the object beloved though in a far country;‡ yea, sometimes distance endears cordial friends; and there is no such communion as by endeared affection; men may converse and not love; but they that truly love, do actually converse.

4. In point of imitation. The gracious soul on earth would be like the glorified saint in heaven. This is the command, Heb. xiii. 7, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” One while the Christian reflects on the exact life, fervent prayers, and great usefulness of such and such ministers and Christians as he was wont to converse with here below; and saith in himself, O that I had such firm faith, such flaming love, such exact holiness as I saw in such and such a one! I remember how such a one prayed, wept, wrestled, walked, and watched, I recollect his zeal for God, and his patience under the cross; O that I were like him! Another while the Christian considers, what such a saint is now, in heaven? what a bright taper of heavenly knowledge? what a flaming cherub of holy love? what a flying seraph of lively obedience? When, O when shall I be like to him? How far I am short! I

\* 1 Pet. i. 8.

† Col. iii. 1.

‡ Cant. iv. 8.

must follow, though not with equal paces : \* I cannot go so fast as they, but I will hold forward as hard as I can, and hope to overtake them at last. Lord, help me, “ that I may not be slothful, but a follower of them, who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises.” † I will fly high, and aim at perfection.

5. In point of desire, hope, and expectation. “ My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” “ Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.” ‡ This world is a prison ; my companions, jailors, or prisoners ; when shall I be set at liberty ? come, Lord Jesus, come quickly ; break down the prison door of flesh ; say to the prisoner, Come forth. I thank God for ordinances, and communion of saints ; “ but I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” ¶ O what a fine lovely company are those hundred and forty four thousand, “ that have their father’s name written in their foreheads, harping with their harps,” § singing a new song. Methinks it were worth a world to be a day with that palm-bearing company, and to be employed in that heavenly music ; well, I am with them already by hope ; we are saved by hope, why may I not be with them in possession ? ¶ my title to that blessed state is the same as theirs ; O that I were fit for it ! I am often casting this firm and stedfast anchor of my soul, even hope, into that within the vail, and there it adheres, and there will I fix my confidence, and not on the fluid waves of this tumultuous sea ! \*\* I confess myself to be a stranger, and a pilgrim in the earth ; I am seeking a better country, whither most of my best

\* Non passibus æquis. † Heb. vi. 12. ‡ Psal. lxxxiv. 2. cxx. 5.  
 ¶ Phil. i. 23. § Rev. xiv. 1—3. ¶ Rom. viii. 24. \*\* Heb. vi. 19.



kindred are gone, and whither I am aspiring\*—O for the dawning of that blessed day!

6. In point of encouragement. It is not to be told what encouragement a Christian receives from a consideration of the spirits of the just now made perfect in heaven; partly, by thinking what they endured, and how grace bore their heads above water, and hearts above terror, under their sore trials. The apostle Peter sets Sarah, and other holy women, before the righteous women of his time, as remarkable examples, and saith, "Whose daughters ye are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement," 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6. These holy souls have broken through the pikes, God was with them, they fainted not, but though their "outward man perished, yet their inward man was renewed day by day;"† they are arrived at the end of their hopes, the salvation of their souls."‡ And why may not I? God is the same God, I have the same spirit of faith; I believe, and therefore I speak;|| but above all, when I consider whither free grace hath brought them. O the perfect rest their souls have! "In God's presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand, there are pleasures for evermore." And why may not my heart be glad? why may not my flesh rest in hope? O happy souls, shall I ever reach you? why not? I have heard the same complaints from those here on earth, who are now triumphing in heaven; God is admired in them, and why not in me? "For he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."§ And if ever God was admired in bringing a forlorn creature to heaven, he may have the greatest revenue of glory from me.

\* Heb. xi. 14.

+ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

‡ 1 Peter i. 9.

|| 2 Cor. iv. 13.

§ 2 Thess. i. 10.



7. Once more, saints below come to the spirits of just men made perfect above, and that in point of possession.

You will say, these things are contradictory: are they in heaven? I answer,

They are, and they are not. Their souls are not gone out of their bodies, and ascended into the upper region, to be totally free from sin, and perfect in grace; they are yet in this lower world, in a state of imperfection, and so far they are different from the spirits of just men made perfect.\* But yet a gracious soul on earth hath possession given to him already:—

(1.) *In capite*, in the head, that is, Christ: so members are eminently and representatively where the head is; Eph. ii. 6, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” Christians below, have already taken up their places in Christ; as the country sits in parliament, by its representatives.

(2.) *In pignore*, in the pledge; or rather, in *arrhabone*, in the earnest.† For the pledge is restored, but the earnest is kept; as it is part of the payment, and ensures the whole sum; God hath given us both, for our Lord’s resurrection and ascension to heaven, is a pledge and anticipation of our advancement; “For Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept;”‡ as first fruits assured Jews of the whole harvest;|| so it is here. Yea, Christians have the blessed earnest of the spirit within them, that is, beginnings, foretastes of glory, like the grapes of Canaan in the wilderness of this world.

(3.) *In signo*, in the sign and seal, that is, either external, as in baptism and the Lord’s supper;§ or

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

† Pignus redditur, arrhabo retinetur.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

|| Eph. i. 14. § Eph. i. 13. iv. 30.

internal, "the seal of the holy spirit," 2 Cor. i. 22. Thus the merchant seals his property. This is the grace of God in truth; the graces of the Spirit, faith, love, hope; which are the clearest evidences of the title.\*

(4.) *In pretio*, in the price. It is a purchased possession. This is the foundation of all the rest, though I mention it last. Heaven was forfeited by us, Christ has recovered it for us.

But, you ask, doth God sell heaven for a price? In reply let me say,

The principal design of Christ, in laying down his life, was to deliver us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, with the guilt and condemnation due to us for sin;† and God was so well pleased with Christ's satisfaction, that he withholds nothing from us; no, not his dearest love, nor a room in the highest heavens.

Now go backward, for the certainty of the believer's arrival in heaven, as if he were already possessed.‡—It is paid for, and God will be just to his Son in performing his part.—God hath given outward and inward seals to secure it to them.—There is a pledge and earnest, which is a good part of the possession.—And they have actual possession in Christ their head. And surer ways than these cannot be expected or devised. Thus we have brought the Christian below, to the spirits of just men above.

3. I shall very briefly shew how this is brought to pass.

(1.) This proceeds from God the Father's everlasting love; for both saints glorified, and those who are

\* Eph. i. 14. + 1 Thess. i. 10. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. viii. 31, 32.

‡ Ad quos accessimus etiam in hac vitâ, adhuc militantes, quia una fide ac Spiritu, cum capite Christo societatem habemus.

sanctified, are the objects of God's purpose; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. They are carried as by a river under ground, till converting grace distinguisheth them from others. As there are elect angels, so there are elect saints; and God's purpose according to election must stand;\* "All that the Father hath given to me, saith Christ, shall come unto me;"† this is the first spring of motion in the work of man's salvation; the first link in the golden chain, which draws God and sinners together; "Whom he he did predestinate, them he also called," &c. Rom. viii. 29, 30.

(2.) From Christ's meritorious undertaking. He that was God became man, that he might bring man to God; he suffered the "just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. Christ's blood is the only cement that unites God and man together; "He makes peace through the blood of his cross." The rending of the vail of his flesh, opened a new and living way to the holy of holies.‡ But that is not all, this blood also hath connected men together; Eph. ii. 14, 15, "He is our peace, who hath made both," that is, Jews and Gentiles, "one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Jesus in Hebrew, and Christ in Greek, to signify the uniting of both, that both might be fellow-citizens with the saints."|| And Christ's prayer is, "That all his may be one."§ Nay, still more than this, "He gathers together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him," Eph. i. 10. Crowned saints, and unsinning angels, all are brought under one head, Christ, so the word ἀνακεφαλαιώσαςται

\* Rom. ix. 9.    † John vi. 37.    ‡ Col. i. 20.    Heb. x. 19—22.

|| Eph. ii. 19.    § John xvii. 21.

doth signify ; relating either to houses broken down and scattered pieces, being brought together ; or an army shattered and restored to its ranks under its general. Thus our Lord brings sinners together.

(3.) This proceeds from the sanctifying operations of the Holy Ghost. God chooseth his children to salvation, “ through sanctification of the Spirit,” 2 Thess. ii. 13. The same Spirit works in all God’s saints, whether under the old testament, or under the new, in all ages, among all nations ; “ We having the same spirit,” saith Paul, that is, with David of old ; 2 Cor. iv. 13, “ For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one spirit.”\* All God’s children are animated by the same spirit ; it runs through all the veins of Christ’s mystical body, and makes them have a tendency towards each other ; the saints above towards those below, and those on earth towards the spirits of just men made perfect. As the saints in heaven, with great acclamations, behold the church’s conflicts and triumphs here below, and long for the completing of their number. So, God’s poor children in this afflicted, conflicting state, being supported and quickened by the Spirit, expect a rest ; Gal. v. 5, “ For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Nor will the waters of tribulation quench, but rather kindle the fire of this zeal ; for in these fiery trials, “ the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon them,”† by which they are carried out of themselves, and beyond themselves to heavenly objects, as Stephen was.

(4.) This proceeds from the gospel covenant, the blessed new testament dispensation. The covenant of grace binds God and souls together, and it binds souls to one another ; all believers are connected in this

\* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† 1 Peter iv. 14.



bond, and become "one stick in God's hand."\* Religion is of a binding nature, it gathers persons and things homogeneous, or of the like kind; they are knit together, and both joined to the "Lord in a perpetual covenant."† Nor doth death disannull, but complete it, and consummate its purpose; for on behalf of the glorified, all their graces are perfected; love has reached its proper element, which as it mounts upwards to God, so it descends to all fellow members in this lower world; this permanent love reigns triumphantly in the world above;‡ and faith is the chief grace by which we live in this world; these two fulfil law and gospel; they who are of faith, "the same are the children of Abraham;" and doubtless Abraham will have respect unto his seed, and take them into his bosom when they die, as he must be endeared to them while they live.|| But you will say, Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel doth not acknowledge us.§ I answer, good interpreters understand the passage thus: That Israel was so degenerate, that if those pious patriarchs were alive, they would not own them for their legitimate posterity. It may however be a truth, that glorified saints in heaven have no personal knowledge of particular persons on earth; but in general they understand their dispositions and circumstances, and so far regard them as is allowable by the laws of that heavenly country. By virtue of this covenant all the saints are of the "household of faith, the family in heaven and on earth;" all one Father's children, fellow heirs;¶ so it is said even of the Gentiles, Eph. iii. 6, "That they should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise, in Christ by the gospel."

\* Ezek. xxxvii. 17.      † Jer. l. 5.      ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

|| Heb. xi. 39. Rom. xiii. 8    1 John iii. 23. Gal. iii. 7.

§ Isa. lxiii. 16.

¶ Gal. vi. 3, 10. Eph. iii. 15.



This is an important text, which details the privileges of Christians.—They are co-heirs.—Concorporated, being of the same body.—They have excellent companions, all this proceeding from a gospel promise.—And, that promise founded on Christ, the mediator of this blessed covenant. See another similitude, 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Thus much for the doctrinal part.

From this subject the following inferences may be drawn for the purpose of information.)

1. That the soul of man is of a peculiar and wonderful nature.

(1.) It is far beyond and above the soul of a brute. Of the beast it is said, Gen. ix. 4, "But flesh, with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat." So that let out the blood of the animal, you let out all its vital power; it is dissolved at death; the spirit of a beast goeth downward.\* Whether beasts shall retain, or regain their existence, I have nothing to say, though some maintain it. Yet, doubtless, the soul of man is more excellent than that of a brute, in either its present operations, or future existence. A beast can only look on objects of sense present before it. But the soul of man can look backward by recollection, inward by reflection, forward by anticipation, and upward by contemplation; it hath a wonderful sagacity, and excellent faculties, it is capable of moral good and evil; having a conscience that can bear witness of actions or thoughts, to excuse or accuse.† It can ascend to heaven, descend to hell, and travel through the universe in the twinkling of an eye.

(2.) As for its future existence in a separate state, that I have proved before. In Matt. xvi. 26; the passage speaks of "losing a man's own soul;" and again we read of "God's destroying both soul and body:"‡ but you

\* Eccl. iii. 21.

† Rom. ii. 15.

‡ Matt. x. 28.

must not understand this, as though men should have no souls, or that they should be reduced to nothing, but only of losing the happiness of the soul, by its being cast into hell, to be tormented for ever. In this case, men will wish they had no souls, or that they never had a being. But that there are different states for immortal spirits in the other world, the parable of Dives and Lazarus doth sufficiently demonstrate.

2. Though in the other world it is said, the spirits of just men are made perfect; yet this doth not exclude the perfection of their bodies: these also,

(1.) Shall be made perfect at the resurrection; for the apostle saith, "The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," &c. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;"\* that is, Christ's: which, doubtless, shines as bright now or brighter than it did at his transfiguration, when his "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."† Such sparkling glory shall the bodies of saints have; indeed they shall be more like spirits than bodies, so transparent, that as one saith, all the veins, nerves, and muscles, shall be seen, as in a glass; so agile and nimble, that they shall instantaneously move from one end of the heavens to the other, even as a thought; so powerful, that they shall be able to move mountains. They shall be freed from all imperfection, and be absolutely perfect as Adam's body was before he sinned, possibly better. And as the bodies of the dead shall be raised and glorified at the great day, so shall also such as shall be found alive, be changed, perfected, and glorified; which is a mystery possibly declared to Paul when rapt up into the third heavens,‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

\* 1 Cor. xv. 42—44. Phil. iii. 21.

† Matt. xvii. 2.

‡ 2 Cor. xii. 4, 5.

“The dead in Christ shall rise first, and they which are alive, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”\*

(2.) But though the text speaks of the spirits of just men made perfect, yet it doth not exclude even the bodies of just men made perfect; for there were then three bodies in heaven already, Enoch before the law, Elijah under the law, and Christ under the gospel: how they were taken up, whether Enoch was taken up in a whirlwind, as Elijah was, or as Christ in a cloud, we know not; but they were escorted into paradise, the third heaven, the place of the blessed, and have taken possession of the land of life. So they are not only definitely in heaven, as souls are in a state, but circumscriptively as bodies are said to be in a place; and there we shall find them. But it is only said of their spirits that we are come to them, not of their bodies.

3. It follows that wicked men on earth have communion with devils and lost spirits in hell. This I gather from the rule of contraries, and it is intimated 1 Cor. x. 20, “I would not that you should have fellowship with devils.” This is done two ways:

(1.) Sensibly, knowingly, or by plain contract: that such a thing hath been, testimonies might be produced. Some indeed have denied that there are any such beings as witches or persons confederate with the devil; but scripture and history speak another language. Scripture tells us of Jannes, Jambres, Balaam, Manasseh, Simon, Elymas, and the witch of Endor; and of the law condemning such to be cut off by the sword of justice. But I shall not enlarge here, since Mr. Glanvill’s treatise and others are full of stories of

\* 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

such as have, by wicked ceremonies, maintained familiar correspondence with the infernal fiend.

(2.) Some maintain familiarity with Satan, who little suspect it, and will not believe it; as all wicked workers and graceless sinners; Satan tempts, they consent, and are led captive in invisible chains at his pleasure. "He is that prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works effectually ἐνεργῶντος, in the children of disobedience;"\* he commands, they obey; they hold a frightful correspondence with him, and maintain conformity to the devil's sins, and those of lost souls, lying, cursing, envy, pride, hatred of true godliness, heart-murder, and such like spiritual wickedness; which are the devil's proper sins, who is the "ruler of the darkness of the world,"† and holds his black hand over their eyes; "for he is the god of this world, that blindeth the minds of them that believe not."‡ Poor sinners will defy the devil, shudder at mentioning him, yet cordially deify him, and embrace his criminal suggestions. Woe, woe to such poor sinners; "he that committeth sin is of the devil!"|| Look to it: you are acting the devil's part when you commit sin, and show yourselves to be of your father the devil.§ You are your own tempters; so saith the apostle, James i. 14, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

4. Great is the privilege of Christianity, wherein God hath delivered us from the "power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13. O blessed change! "To be turned from darkness to light; from the power of Satan to God!"¶ What a mercy it is to a malefactor con-

\* 2 Tim. ii. 26. Eph. ii. 2. + Eph. vi. 12. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

|| 1 John iii. 8.

§ John viii. 44.

¶ Acts xxvi. 18.



demned, going pinioned up the ladder to be hanged, when he immediately receives a pardon, a new life, a new nature, high privileges and blessings. What a mercy, when a man is taken out of prison from fetters, fellow-slaves, a sturdy imperious gaoler, and is carried into his prince's presence-chamber, where he converseth familiarly with the prince and his favourites? Such is the case of a convert; he hath familiar intercourse with God, Christ, holy angels, and with quick and dead, whom he may call brethren, though he never saw them here below. Though God be a dreadful Judge, a consuming fire, yet in Christ he is a reconciled Father, and makes all the creatures to become friends, and angels attendants, "for they are ministering spirits to the poorest heirs of salvation." All things in this world are theirs in Christ, and tending to their good.\*

O what a large charter hath a child of God! "he inherits all things." Devils cannot hurt him, all creatures shall help him; saints on earth pray for him, and are his companions; saints in heaven are his friends. O happy souls! Grace makes a Christian a friend to himself, a friend to God, a favourite of heaven, and he shall be at last an inhabitant in the glorious mansions above. All this comes by the gospel dispensation. O admire the riches of grace! 2 Tim. i. 9, 10.

The passage which has been considered may lead to examination.

Who are those that have arrived at this privilege, that are thus come to the spirits of just men made perfect? It is not every one's attainment; there are some souls, "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of pro-

\* Heb. i. 14. 1 Cor. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 28.

mise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”\* This is a forlorn state: better have no souls than graceless souls: better never to have been joined to the living, than not to be united to departed saints, that live in heaven. Alas! how few understand what this means?

It would be too tedious to run over the characters of gracious souls, that are members of Christ’s mystical body on earth, and so associated in near relation to, and communion with, the glorified spirits above.

I shall but briefly glance at these two things in the text, that men are considered as *just*, and as *made perfect*.

And how are these in unison with the character of all pious persons here on earth?

1. Pious persons are just or righteous, and that in these two respects: as having *inherent*, and *imputed* righteousness.

(1.) Inherent; and so by consequence, a practical, exercised justice and righteousness: Gen. vi. 9, “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God;” the goodness of his state produced the goodness of his life. There must be a right principle, or there can never be a right practice: the tree must be good, or there can be no good fruit. Are your hearts renewed? Has sin lost its dominion? Do you square your actions according to Scripture rule? A godly man is called a just man in Scripture;† he is just to God, giving to God the things that are God’s; to man the things that are man’s; to the soul, to the body, to the world, their dues and no more. Do you make it your business to do “justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?” Mic. vi. 8.

\* Eph. ii. 12.

† Job. xxvii. 6. Psalm xxxvii. 12. Prov. xxix. 10. Isa. xxvi. 7

Alas, friends, it is not an assent to truth, a profession of godliness, nor a mere notion that will do, but a saving work on the heart; “a putting on the new man, which after God is created, in righteousness and holiness of truth;”\* and then being righteous before God, as Zechariah and Elizabeth, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;”† and doing “righteousness at all times.”‡ This is a being suited and squared to the whole will of God. No man is just, but such a one as makes it his business to be universally upright: so saith the apostle, 1 John iii. 7, “Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

(2.) They are just, or righteous also by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is יהוה צדקנו the “Lord our righteousness;” the author is God alone; “it is God that justifieth;” the efficient cause is free grace, “We are justified freely by his grace,” and not our deserts; the meritorious cause is the redemption, which is in Christ; the means of applying Christ’s righteousness is faith; receiving this free gift, “We are justified by the faith of Christ.”|| By this means it is, that a poor sinner standing at the bar of God, as a guilty malefactor condemned by the law, is cleared and acquitted, and accepted by God as if he had never offended. So that neither Satan, nor conscience, nor law, nor justice, hath any thing to lay to his charge; hence the apostle’s challenge, Rom. viii. 33, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” If the judge acquit the prisoner, no matter what the jailor, or fellow prisoners say. This, this is that which all the servants of God own, desire, stand by, and delight in, above

\* Eph. iv. 24. † Luke i. 6. ‡ Psalm cvi. 3.  
|| Jer. xxiii. 6. Rom. viii. 33. iii. 22, 24. Gal. ii. 16.

any inherent righteousness; so Paul must be found in Christ, or he is lost for ever, "Not having" saith he, "mine own righteousness, which is by the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Thus the church is clothed with the sun,\* that is, the righteousness of Christ; "These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."† No standing before the holy, righteous, sin-avenging judge, but in a righteousness, commensurate with the demands of infinite justice, and that is Christ's only, who was, and is God equal with the Father, whose deity gives value to his sufferings in the humane nature. O blessed souls that are thus just! These shall enter amongst the just ones.

2. As they are just ones, so they are perfect: and none can come to the spirits made perfect, but such as are in a gospel sense made perfect, even in this world, two ways: *by integrity*, and *by proficiency*, and a constant tendency towards perfection.

(1.) A believer is in some sense perfect. God bids Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, to walk before him, and to be perfect.‡ Job was perfect and upright; that is, with an evangelical perfection of parts, though defective in point of degree; for he saith, "If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."|| In this sense Paul disclaims perfection, but asserts it as the characteristic of all believers in the former sense; "As many as be perfect, let them be thus minded:"§ and elsewhere, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,"¶ that is, serious Christians. Our Lord himself tells us what is requisite to this

\* Phil. iii. 8, 9. Rev. xii. 1.

† Gen. xvii. 1.

§ Phil. iii. 12, 15.

† Rev. vii. 14.

|| Job i. 1. ix. 20.

¶ 1 Cor. ii. 6.



gospel perfection: Matt. xix. 21, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me:" Mark adds, "Take up the cross." \* A cheerful, real, universal, perpetual compliance with gospel terms is this gospel perfection; there is an endeavour to resemble Jesus Christ—"Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master," † both in character and possession of glory. This is the great business of poor ministers, "warning and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." ‡ A child is a perfect man as to the number of bodily members, though defective in size: so the convert hath all the limbs and lineaments of the new creature—he hath light in the understanding, rectitude in the will, regularity in the affections, tenderness and faithfulness in the conscience. A gracious soul hath all the graces of the Spirit—faith, love, repentance, the fear of God, and humility; though alas! but in an inferior degree. I may truly say, that the same grace for kind is in the meanest saint on earth, as is in the most elevated child of God on earth or in heaven, yet not the same measure of grace. The apostle Peter writes to them that have "obtained like precious faith with himself," || and other apostles: like precious, not like glorious; like for quality, not for quantity: there are babes in Christ, as well as strong men: § a child may hold a ring in his hand as well, though not so fast as a strong man. Grace hath its different degrees, and even its ebbings and flowings: but is there truth in the inward parts? Hast thou given the key of thy heart to God? Darest thou set thyself before the heart-searching God, as a glass in the sun, that he may

\* Mark x. 21.

† Luke vi. 40.

‡ Col. i. 28.

|| 2 Pet. i. 1.

§ Heb. v. 12—14.

look into thee, through thee? Dost thou say as Job, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity?"\* and as David, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart?"† Do you love trying truths, sermons, and providences, approving your hearts entirely to God, doing all as in his sight, and aiming at his glory?

(2.) A proficiency in grace. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."‡ Christians are never at the summit in this world; "They go from strength to strength, till every one in Zion appears before God."|| It is as natural for a living child to grow, as to breathe. Grace came from above, and like pillars of smoke ascends upwards. Heaven is the Christian's centre; "They that are risen with Christ, seek the things above."§ Every thing tends to the perfection of its being, grace much more. The Christian is still short, and would be better; still something is lacking in his faith, hope, love, or patience; it grieves him at his heart, that he can serve God no better, that he hath so many strong corruptions, such distractions in holy duties, such deadness, forgetfulness, or levity of spirits: he is still labouring at the pump to draw out grace, to remove defilement, to rub off spots, to "cleanse away all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, that he may perfect holiness in the fear of God."¶ The Christian is never right unless with God, never well till he be with God above in his immediate presence: he almost envies the happiness of glorified spirits, and aspires to be as good as they; watching, warring, wrestling, praying, obeying, and acting, if by any means he may "attain

\* Job xxxi. 6.

† Psalm xxvi. 2. cxxxix. 23.

‡ Prov. iv. 18.

|| Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

§ Col. iii. 1.

¶ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

to the resurrection of the dead,"\* namely, that blessed state which saints attain, at the great day of resurrection. Hence saith blessed Paul, "I follow after,—reaching forth to things before; I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."† That is a low strain of spirit, and below a Christian frame, which aims at no more grace, than will keep soul and hell asunder; that is, he is afraid of damnation, therefore would have some grace, but studies not to be perfect, as God is perfect; longs not for communion with God, but is well content to live without God, if only he may not perish; not considering that the enjoyment of God is heaven, and banishment from God is the worst part of hell. Oh, saith the good Christian, let me have more grace, more sensible intercourse with God! more exchange of affection with my dear Lord, and this will stay me till I arrive at the haven of rest, and see God on those mountains of spices.

Further, something tending to conviction and conducive to humiliation may be addressed to sinners and saints, on several accounts.

First, Poor graceless sinners are deeply guilty and unadvised:

1. In neglecting and slighting this blessed relation to God, to saints on earth, and glorified spirits above. How can men think they shall go to heaven where saints are, when they are not saints; nay, that do not so much as pretend to be saints? though they have often heard, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and that no unclean thing shall enter into that city;"‡ yet they live in sin, and are in danger of dying in sin. Some pretend a desire to go to heaven, but will not so much as associate themselves with such here, as shall go to glory; they are mere strangers to

\* Phil. iii. 11. † Verse 12—14. ‡ Heb. xii. 14. Rev. xxi. 27.

the life of heaven, the road to heaven, and the manner and employment of the celestial inhabitants; as though men could leap from the dunghill of sin to the throne of glory; "Let no man deceive you, God is not mocked; such as a man sows, such shall he reap;"\* again, "Let no man deceive you with vain words."† Sin will exclude you out of heaven, bring down God's wrath, and shut you up in hell; think not to dance with devils all day, and sup with Christ at night; to associate with wicked men here, and be joined with saints above; when you die you will be wofully mistaken. You cannot lie in Delilah's lap now, and in Abraham's bosom in the other world. You must be made ready here, or never meet God hereafter.

2. Some magnify, yea, almost deify departed saints, but vilify and condemn, and despise living saints, that walk by the same rule, are actuated by the same spirit, and are marching to the same goal of glory with the other. How much do Papists honour the memory of the apostles, and how liberally canonize as saints the ancient fathers, Ignatius, Jerome, Augustin, Chrysostom, and others; yet vent their spleen at those who preach the same doctrine, live by the same rules, serve the same God, and hope to enjoy him in the same heaven with those pious ancient fathers and martyrs. But Papists, and some others follow the copy of their predecessors, the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, to whom he said, Matt. xxiii. 29, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous." Even Horace could observe this, ‡ "Invidious spirits hate virtue which they see living, but admire what is gone out of their sight:"

\* Gal. vi. 7.

† Eph. v. 5, 6.

‡ Virtutem incolumen odimus, sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi.



present truth galls them, but what is past hurts not. If Peter were now alive they would hate him as they do his successors: but this fallacy men willingly put upon themselves, that they may sin more freely, and sleep in sin with more security.

3. Some are flat atheists, and disbelieve the life to come; or do not regard the state of the blessed or the lost, in another world. They look upon a future state of retribution but as a romance, hatched in the brains of melancholy fools or cunning priests, to keep the world in awe; but they shall find it otherwise, and death will open their eyes: whom the light doth not convince, the fire shall. Men will be first libertines, then atheists; these are near akin. But if there is a God, he must be just, and not indifferent to good or evil, and then there will be a final judgment, and a sentence to heaven or hell. But this point hath been so fully handled by excellent pens, that I shall wave it, only wish, that before this description of men leap desperately into another world, they would make a pause, and consider, Whether they be brutes or men? who made them? what they were made for? whether there be not moral good and evil? whether conscience does not sometimes rebuke them for their faults? whether scripture be from God, or man, or Satan? whether the greatest tyrants have not been afraid of a future judgment? whether they be able to disprove a future state? whether prudence would not prompt them to take the safest side? Men are undone for want of consideration: the invited guests "made light of it," Matt. xxii. 5, ἀμελήσαντες, they would not take it into their thoughts. This is the grand disease of this lethargic age; nothing sinks into their minds: "But in the latter days they shall consider these things."\*

\* Jer. xxx. 24.

4. The most part of men are surprisingly slothful ; they stand idle all the day in the market-place. Few will take such pains for their souls, as they take for their bodies, yea, or for their beasts. It is a shame to compare the pains the Greeks took at their Olympic games, running, wrestling, &c. which they did for a corruptible crown, (it may be of flowers or bays,) but alas, how few will strive and endeavour to take the kingdom of heaven, or an incorruptible crown by a holy violence.\* Men sit still and think it should drop into their hands; or that they should be rocked asleep, and whirled to heaven unawares in a dream: “But if the righteous scarcely be saved,” that is, with great difficulty, “where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”† Do not you read in the Bible, and ecclesiastical histories, what sweat, tears, labour, hazard, blood, and torments it hath cost the saints to enter in at this strait gate? and do you think God hath altered the terms of salvation to gratify your sloth? No, no, if you would go to heaven, you must shake off sloth, ply the oars, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” and “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”‡ But more of this anon.

Secondly, God’s people are much to blame on four accounts :

1. In mourning for their departed relations as persons “without hope.”|| Some are affected and sorrow as if their dead relatives were quite extinguished and lost. Indeed if they were graceless, there is ground for lamentation, though in this you exceed bounds, and ought to submit to the will of God ; but if they were truly religious, they are not lost, but safe with God. There is a difference worth notice, between David’s

\* 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.

+ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

‡ Phil. ii. 12. 2 Pet. i. 10.

|| 1 Thess. iv. 13.

mourning for wicked Absalom, and the child born in adultery, of which he had good hopes.\* It becomes Christians to moderate their passions. It is true, it is due to the dead that they be lamented at funerals, and the contrary incurs a threatened judgment; but this must be done submissively and piously. Are you grieved at their felicity, when angels attended their departing souls through the devil's regions, uninjured? they left their body of death with that of earth, their graces were perfected, the whole court of heaven came forth to bid them welcome with acclamations, and they were embraced in the arms of the blessed Jesus. Surely they would be loth to return back again to us in this polluted world: methinks I hear them saying as our Lord did, "Weep not for us, but weep for yourselves,"† that you are so long detained from this felicity which we possess.

2. What a shame it is that Christians are no more ready to follow this blessed company who are landed safely in heaven. May we not cry out as Monica, Austin's mother, What do I here,‡ when so many of our choice friends are gone? We linger behind, as Lot in Sodom. A good man finding himself unwilling to die, cried out, Go out, my soul, go out of this sinful flesh. || Our relations are gone, they want our company to fill up the number of the church triumphant: have we not as much need to be with them? You will say, we cannot go till God set us at liberty. I answer, but you may reach out your arms, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly:" this is the character of all good souls: "The Spirit and the bride say, come:" it is the badge on the saint's sleeve, "to wait for the Son from heaven."§ You will say, I

\* 2 Sam. xii. 23. xviii. 33.

† Luke xxiii. 28.

‡ Quid hinc facio?

|| Egredere, anima mea, egredere.

§ Rev. xxi. 17, 20. 1 Thess. i. 10.

doubt my interest in him, I am at uncertainties. I answer, whose fault is that? God hath given you time and means to obtain assurance; it is our sloth and negligence that keep us under: be humbled for sin, and make more haste; “be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” \*

3. We do not, so profitably as we ought, improve the departure of our friends, and especially the death of our christian friends, those now in the presence of God, in such proper and laudable ways as I have mentioned before.—Quickening our hearts in God’s worship: O, do saints above praise God at this rate?—Do I live with such exactness and circumspection as might be expected?—is my heart carried out with delight in God, and saints above for God’s sake?—Do I imitate the piety, zeal, and heavenliness, which I saw in them, and which must be much more now?—Do I desire, long, and make all ready to be with them?—Do I animate myself in my christian course, from a consideration of what they were, and what they now are?—Or, do I already possess foretastes of that blessed state, such as God allows and grants me? Alas, friends, we plod on in ordinary duties, but I fear we have not yet reached this high and noble gospel duty and privilege, of coming to the spirits of just men made perfect; and by this means we lose many motives, helps, engagements, and encouragements in our christian course. Where is the Christian almost that hath studied this point? Woe is me, such a one set out in the christian race after me, but is now got beyond me! I am a poor, dull scholar in this petty school, but he hath commenced in the university above! I am labouring under corruptions, temptations, desertions, such a one is got above all;

\* Heb. vi. 12.



surely my time will come: oh when shall it once be?

4. Alas, Christians are to blame that they improve christian society here to no better purpose. You see many of our dear friends have left us, we can have no personal converse with them any more in this world, there are some yet left behind, and God only knows, how long, or short a time we may enjoy them.—Alas, that we should so seldom meet together for conference, prayer, or such religious exercises. It is said, Mal. iii. 16, “Then they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another.” Oh, whence this strangeness? Is it not want of love, which is a uniting grace?—When we do meet, alas, how unsavoury, how unprofitable is our discourse? how little to edification? We squander away much time in telling news, or impertinent things. Is this the language of heaven? will this afford comfort in reflecting upon it?—Do not we fall out, and contend, wrangle, and pick quarrels, provoke one another to anger, fly out into passion, and which is worse, let the sun go down on our wrath? Do we not maintain endless grudges, grow implacable, stand upon terms, and refuse to be reconciled? Alas for us! Is this the language or carriage of saints in heaven? Can we think to go to heaven and not agree in the way? Shall one heaven hold us, and shall not one church hold us? Surely God will humble us for this before death, if we belong to him, or else woe to us. Will these grudgings be a comfort to us at death when the judge is at the door? \* Away, away with such unbecoming frames.—Narrowness or selfishness of spirit, is very unbecoming the children of God: have we not all one Father? are we not members one of another? should not every member contribute to the good of the body?

\* James v. 9.

should not all the bees bring honey to the hive? That was a sad complaint, "All seek their own, none the things of Jesus Christ." \* never such selfishness as at this day! Alas, we are fallen into the dregs of time, "when the love of many waxeth cold; † love seeketh not her own." ‡ Can we think this selfish frame is according to the pattern above? Do not those celestial inhabitants unite in this centre, God's glory and their mutual comfort? How far are we short of them? nay, do we not act contrary to them?

But you say, they are not of my way or opinion. I answer, examine the difference: is it enough to produce separation, and cause distance amongst them that own so many unities as you find in Eph. iv. 4—6? "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Phil. iii. 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

But you object that they are faulty in their conduct. And let me ask, art not thou so too in some respects? If however, they are professors, praying persons, willing to join with Christians, thou must admonish, instruct, and seek to recover them; "Restore them with the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. Think them not incorrigible, till thou hast tried all means.

But, say you, I live quietly, and such a course will beget trouble. In reply I would say, man is a sociable creature, "Woe be to him that is alone!" || You must have some society, why not christian society? David would choose to be a companion of them that feared God. § "Fellowship in the gospel" commenced the first day of the Philippians' conversion to Christ, Phil.

\* Phil. ii. 21.

† Matt. xxiv. 12.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

|| Eccles. iv. 9—12.

§ Psalm cxix. 63.

i. 5. As soon as Paul was converted, he essayed to join with the disciples.\* Suspect your christianity, if you live loose: it is natural for Christians to associate. Be sure you study duty, not consequences.

O but, say you, such a one is of a cross, peevish humour, not sociable. That may be, but there are also Christians of a sweet, mild, and condescending disposition, take these for thy intimate associates: and if any prove morose, churlish, and untoward, remember God tries thy patience, and exercises thy faith, love, humility, and forbearance, which it is very fit should be improved: and they must bear with thee, as well as thou with them: God bears with you both, and if there were no provocation, forbearance would not be a duty.

Once more, the subject furnishes instruction in righteousness. If it be so, that there is such an association, and communion between saints on earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, then learn these seven lessons:

1. That humility and condescension is no diminution of persons' honour and advancement. It is said of the infinite God, Psalm cxiii. 4—6, "The Lord is high above all nations, his glory is above the heavens,——who humbleth himself to behold things in heaven and earth."† The holy angels are attendants on the meanest saint on earth: the glorified spirits forget not what once they were, and what their brethren still are on earth, and do good offices for them. Precious Mr. Baxter thinks saints in heaven contribute to the happiness of saints on earth. His words are these: "The sun shines on the stars, and stars shine one upon another, and upon this lower world. This is no diminution of Christ's honour, that he makes use of fellow-creatures to our joy. Christ himself stooped to

\* Acts ix. 26.

† Heb. i. 14.

wash his disciples' feet ; and the more generous men's spirits are, the more humble they are." Be clothed with humility :\* it is the finest ornament that any can put on ; it is the crown of every virtue, and the grace of every grace. Let us learn from hence, "to condescend to men of low degree : "† glorified spirits stoop lower to us, than we can do to the meanest saint on earth. Away with supercilious scorning of the meanest creature, much less of the humblest child of God : think it no degrading of yourselves to stoop to the meanest offices ; yea, the apostle exhorts to a hard task, Phil. ii. 3, " Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself." A gracious spirit hath his eyes looking inward, and sees more spots in himself than he knows or can believe to be in others ; and this makes him humble.

2. That it is a Christian's great concern to gain sinners to Christ. The saints that were lately on earth, are now spirits of just men made perfect ; whatever service they do for the church now, they cannot be so efficient in it as they were wont to be, whilst they were in this lower world ; at least, in the same way and manner : their places are empty, they would be glad to know that they are filled up. Let us labour to be instruments to produce joy in heaven : let us mourn that righteous and merciful men are taken away ; and let us study, discourse, and pray, for filling up such vacuities : not only ministers, but private Christians may do much this way. I have read of a pious ancient Christian, that by his going to discourse familiarly with his neighbours at plough, and in their shops, about soul concerns, had been an instrument in converting forty persons to Christ. O noble performance !

\* 1 Pet. v. 5.

† Rom. xii. 16.



Certainly it is a high honour to have a hand in such a work : it is more than Alexander's conquest of the world. " Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," James v. 20. This increaseth the church militant, and by consequence the church triumphant. It is not the usual employment of angels, or glorified spirits : God's ordinary method is to effect this by Moses and the prophets, and not by raising persons from the dead,\* either to bring the glorified from heaven, or the wicked from hell, to declare what they have seen or felt in the other world. O therefore let us use all means to bring home souls to God; " On some let us have compassion, using gentleness; others let us save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."† Let us, whether ministers or others, struggle hard to save sinners; for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for the church's sake, for sinners' sake, for our own sakes; for every soul converted by us, adds a jewel to our crown; " yes, is our very crown of rejoicing," 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

3. That it is the glory of the creature to be a candidate for heaven; such souls are joined already to the celestial inhabitants, "to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; to God the judge of all." Such honour have all his saints, above kings and princes on earth; though never so poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, they are precious in God's eyes, and truly honourable.‡ Hence the apostle James stirs up attention, when he introduces this paradox, James ii. 5, " Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?"

\* Luke xvi. 31.

† Jude, 22, 23.

‡ Isa. xliii. 4.

It is true, they are in disguise, but yet kings ; the world knows them not,\* but these silly heads are destined to wear a diadem. O happy souls ! Who would not be of this number ? Theodosius accounted it a higher honour to be Christ's servant, than emperor of the world. You are happy here, and will be happier hereafter. Your estate lies much in reversion. Oh have pity upon your never-dying souls ! Scorn and trample upon riches, pleasures, and honours of this world. Set yourselves for another world. Get furnished with saving grace, which is the seed of immortality. Avoid soul-destroying sins. Attend on ordinances. Walk according to the rule of the divine word. "Worship God in the spirit. Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."† Give up yourselves in covenant to God, seek his glory, be jealous of yourselves, search your hearts, make him witness of your actions, and daily put your souls into his hands. Thus lay hold on eternal life. By this means you will be of the number of saints here, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven.

4. That Christian love and unity is a blessed thing. The saints on earth and in heaven are become one ; and shall not the saints on earth be one ? Divisions are odious and dangerous among all sorts of people, but scandalous and ominous among church members. It is the devil's maxim, as well as Machiavel's, *divide et impera* ; make division and get dominion : ruin enters in at this door. Our Saviour saith, "Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation."‡ Histories make this clear, both in church and state. How earnest is the blessed apostle about this, 1 Cor. i. 10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

\* 1 John iii. 1.

† Phil. iii. 3.

‡ Mat. xii. 25.

that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Alas! that factious spirits should open the veins and cut asunder the sinews of Christ's mystical body. Woe to us! for our divisions there are great thoughts of heart. What a number of bonds do these sever; the bond of doctrine, of discipline, of love, and of the spirit; and many mutual endearings and strong obligations; they are against Christ's prayer for unity, against the seals of the covenant, against our mutual promises, and against all that is dear to us. What pathetic language doth Paul employ to promote union, Phil. ii. 1, 2, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercy, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind:" words that might charm the most boisterous spirits into concord and unity. Alas, alas, alas, that a legion of devils should agree in one man, and not half so many Christians agree in one society! Why should we grieve the Spirit, unchurch ourselves, provoke God to remove the candlestick from us? how contrary is this to the spirit of the primitive Christians! Acts ii, 42, 46; and their unity was a means of their augmentation, the "Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," ver. 47. But dissensions much discourage such as are coming in; they say, we will be no part of that company who cannot agree amongst themselves. It is true, Paul and Barnabas may be in such a paroxym about a small circumstance, that they may part at present; however the fit goes off, and they are reconciled. But it is observed of some professing Christians, that if differences arise, they will

never be friends again, "The sun goes hundreds of times down upon their wrath,"\* and they will hearken to no terms of accommodation. Alas! how unlike is this to a christian spirit! Drunkards will fall out and squabble, but in the morning they are friends and shake hands. How unlike to that wisdom which is from above; that is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated," James iii. 17. O that God would pour down a spirit of love, mildness, and forgiveness among us! But I shall say no more of this, except repeating the apostle's caution, Gal. v. 15, "If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

5. Serviceableness of God's people on earth to one another is a grand christian duty; as believers must not hurt, so they must help each other heavenwards. Members of the body should have the "same care one for another;"† this is God's great design in giving a variety of gifts for profit and mutual edification; for there is variety of duty incumbent upon Christians. Sometimes they must warn the unruly who are in danger of falling into sin; then comfort the feeble-minded, wounded with the sense of guilt; they should support the weak, who are staggering, ready to fall,‡ instruct the ignorant, resolve the doubting, settle the wavering, rouse the slothful and indifferent, by provoking them to love and to good works,|| and by exciting one another to prayer, to attendance on public ordinances, and to a personal covenanting with God. Oh what need to strengthen "one another, to lift up the hands that hang down, to confirm the feeble knees,"§ and to answer objections and cases of conscience. Christians have enough to do if they look

\* Eph. iv. 26. † 1 Cor. xii. 25. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 14.

|| Heb. x. 24. § Zech. viii. 21. Isa. ii. 3. Jer. l. 4, 5. Heb. xii. 12.



about them, and duly consider one another ; they certainly need abundance of knowledge, grace, and tender compassion,\* that they may be able to admonish one another ; what need to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ ; not judging or despising one another in smaller matters, but seeking to please our neighbours, for their good to edification ; not "putting a stumbling-block before the weak,"† &c. These are duties of great importance and require great diligence and discretion ; this will be a means to exercise our own, and draw out the gifts and graces of others ; and by this means others' gifts will become ours. The contrary omission is a sad symptom of apostacy or tendency thereto ; and this mutual communion is proposed as a remedy against such a declining, Heb. x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." No man must say as Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper ?" No, God expects we should watch over one another for mutual advantage. What if any be missing in the last day through our neglect ? O Christians, let us delight in the society of those here on earth, with whom we hope to have communion in heaven. David accounts the saints on earth, "Excellent ones, in whom was all his delight ;" and, "Let the righteous smite me," saith he, "it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head ; for faithful are the wounds of a friend."‡ O what a mercy if we could by divine assistance, help one another towards heaven !

6. It is a great comfort to surviving relations, to hope upon good grounds, that their departed friends

\* Rom. xv. 14. † Gal. vi. 2. Rom. xiv. 13. xv. 2. 1 Cor. viii. 9.

‡ Psalm xvi. 3. cxli. 5. Prov. xxvii. 6.

are among the spirits of just men made perfect. O what a comfort it is to think, my pious father, my zealous mother, and predecessors are ascended into paradise, and are now beholding the unveiled face of God in the beatifical vision; we remember their tears, groans, and complaints because of the body of death, and distance from God; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes, and sin from their souls; they shall sorrow no more at all; they have taken up their abode in the celestial mansions, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs, and prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors; these died in faith, are perfect in love, and are as happy as their souls are capable of being at present; "waiting for the final consummation of their felicity in soul and body, at the general resurrection, "When the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and they that are found alive shall be changed, and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. Wherefore let us comfort one another with these words."\* There is comfort at present, to think that part of ourselves is glorified; my affectionate wife, my sweet children, have got the start of me, and have commenced, in that famous university, distinguished scholars in the profoundest gospel mysteries; saints in the highest attainments of grace and sanctity, and complete graduates in happiness, and everlasting felicity. O blessed state! their joy is my comfort; their holiness enlargeth my heart in gratitude, that there is such a state, and my best friends are got thither, though I be grovelling below, in this valley of Achor. O that I could discourse one hour with my

\* 1 Thess. iv. 16—18. 1 Cor. xv. 51.

companion on that celestial state above! His body sleeps in Jesus, his soul converseth with Jesus; the sting of death is gone, and the crown of glory is placed on his triumphant head; his body rests in hope,\* his spirit hath attained the end of his hope; why should I complain that I want my dear friend, when in some sense I have him, and am come to him in association and communion? I need not want him if I had but a heart to improve my connection with him. O that my heart were elevated above this narrow polluted world; to that blessed state! I will study my duty, meditate on the felicity of departed friends, and hie after them, rather than spend my days in lamentation for my loss; let God be glorified, souls saved, and I am satisfied.

7. It is a high preferment, to be advanced by death, amongst the spirits of just men made perfect. Souls are like angels, whether men or women gracious spirits here shall be equally glorified. The essential happiness of the departed, is to be ever with the Lord; an additional happiness is to be with the blessed spirits above.

O what a meeting will that be of the pious husband and wife, that prayed and wept together here, and now shall be with each other, and both with their dear Lord for ever.

The pastor shall own his child in Christ; "which shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing."† The convert shall own the instrument of his conversion, and say, This, O this is my spiritual father in Christ! At such a time, in such a place, by such a sermon, God touched my conscience and sent me home with a bleeding heart, by the same means he satisfied my soul of my interest in Christ; and by the same ordinance built

\* Psalm xvi. 9.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

me up in holiness; and now he that sowed and we that reap rejoice together.† O blessed day, that ever I saw that man's face or heard his voice!

The father will say of his poor depraved or prodigal child, whom the Lord hath restored, I should never have had so many errands to the throne of grace, had it not been for that sad trial; that was a costly child, for I had never gone so frequently and fervently to to God in prayer, had not that untoward youth sent me with a mournful heart and many a briny tear; but God heard me, and it was as life from the dead. I acknowledge such a child as a Samuel; and such a signal mercy shall occasion joy and hallelujahs to all eternity.

The gracious child will look with joy on his pious parents, and bless God for a religious education, for prayers, example, instruction and admonition, which God blessed to his soul's good. O what a mercy! he will say, that I enjoyed such pious parents, who were always dear to me, but never so much so as now.

Thus it will be amongst christian friends that have conversed, and wept, and prayed, and enjoyed the seals of the covenant together. What a soul-reviving meeting will they have in glory!

You will say perhaps, how are you certain that the saints will know one another in heaven? I answer, we are not certain; but it is probable, because they shall enjoy that which will most contribute to their comfort, and doubtless this mutual knowledge and review of their former intercourse would very much. Luther, on the evening before he died affirmed it, saying, that Adam knew Eve to be part of himself; and the disciples knew Moses and Elias with Jesus in the mount of transfiguration, &c. Not that they will have such a knowledge of each other as they had in the

\* John iv. 33.



flesh, for it will be refined from all the dregs of sense, and become like that of angels.

Divines dispute profoundly about the manner of spirits discoursing or notifying their minds to each other. I doubt not the thing; but we, being so ignorant of the nature and operations of spirits, are not able exactly to conceive of it or describe it. O, what an accession will it be to the saints' happiness, that they shall meet with such as they have known here, and celebrated saints whom they never saw in this world, to communicate experiences, solely to the glory of their supreme Lord, to whom alone the rent of glory is due. O happy meeting never to part any more! there will be no schisms, sinful passions, censures, reflections, unkind withdrawings; but all the saints there shall be one society, united together in perfect harmony, fully illuminated with the crystal beams of the sun of righteousness, and bathing their naked souls in the refreshing streams of life and love. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. O blessed day! when there shall be no more quarrels, nor jarrings; and when all those devout friends to whom our hearts were knit in the Lord, who departed before us in the faith of Christ, whom we thought we had lost, and bewailed as Jacob did Joseph, shall meet together with more joy than Jacob met his son. O what embraces, uniting of spirits and mutual interchanges of celestial favours will there be! what reciprocal affection will there be! Nor is it any diminution of Christ's honour that he there maketh use of our fellow creatures to complete our joy. The sun shineth upon the stars as well as on the earth, and the stars on one another. The whole creation, saith a great divine, will be still one compact frame, and the heavenly society will for ever retain their relation to

one another, and their aptitude and disposition to the duties and benefit of their relations.

O when shall my soul leave this tempestuous sea, and enter that haven of rest? How long shall I dwell in Meshech? how long must I be travelling in this uneven road? when shall I come to the mount of God? If it were not for the rare and delightful visits I have from God, this world would be a hell. Did not my soul enjoy some sweetness in the communion of saints, it would be a howling wilderness: but what is this pleasure to that above, where these souls shall be purified from all the dregs of ignorance, error, and partiality, and sublimated to the highest degree of which a creature is capable? How gloriously will God shine in the glory of the blessed! How delightful will it be to see their perfection in wisdom, holiness, love, and concord! There will be no jarring or discordant spirit out of tune. If I go from affectionate friends on earth, I shall go to such as will love me incomparably better; and I shall love them better, because both shall be better, and more lovely, and love more perfectly. It costs some pains here to raise my thoughts to heavenly objects; but when I shall be above, it will be natural to delight in God and in his saints: contemplation will lead to full communion. O what a blessed harmony of minds, wills, and exercises! There is nothing except confusion in this lower world, but perfect order will be above. Let death come and deliver this weary spirit, pressed down with guilt and corruption, from all the evils of this sinful life, and raise me up among the spirits of just men made perfect.

I shall on this occasion conclude with a passage taken out of Mr. Baxter's *Dying thoughts*, page 198, which doth somewhat illustrate my proposition, concerning the communion of saints below and the spirits

of just men above made perfect, which may seem somewhat strange: "It is at least," saith he, "very probable, that God maketh glorified spirits his agents and ministers of much of his beneficence to the creatures that are below them. For,

"First, We see, that where he has endued any creatures with noble endowments, he maketh use of them to the benefit of others. We shall in heaven be most furnished to do good, and that furniture will not be unused.

"Secondly, Christ tells us that we shall be like or equal to the angels; which though it mean not simply and in all things, yet it meaneth more than to be above carnal generation; for it speaketh of a similitude of nature and state as the reason of the other; and, also, that the angels are God's ministers for the good of the chosen in this world, and administrators of much of the affairs of the earth, is past all doubt.

"Thirdly, The apostle tells us, that the *saints shall judge the world, and angels*, and judging in Scripture is oft put for ruling. It is therefore probable, at least, that the devils and the damned shall be put under the saints; and that with the angels they shall be employed in some ministerial oversight of the inhabitants and affairs of the promised new earth.

"Fourthly, And when even the more noble and superior bodies, even the stars are of so great use and influx to inferior bodies, it is probable that accordingly superior spirits will be of use to the inhabitants of the world below them. The truth of this notion I neither affirm nor deny, but leave it to the consideration of the learned; as it is propounded only as a conjecture. Yet this doth no ways countenance the popish adoration of saints and angels, from which the beloved disciple was prohibited, Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 8, 9."