

prejudice others against him and the worship. And be not religious at the church alone, for then you are not truly religious at all.

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## CHAPTER X.

*Directions about our Communion with Holy Souls Departed, and now with Christ.*

THE oversight and neglect of our duty concerning the souls of the blessed, now with Christ, doth much harden the Papists in their erroneous excesses here about <sup>a</sup>. And if we will ever reduce them, or rightly confute them, it must be by a judicious asserting of the truth, and observing so much with them as is our duty, and commending that in them which is to be commended, and not by running away from truth and duty that we may get far enough from them and error; for error is an ill way of confuting error. The practical truth lieth in these following precepts.

*Direct.* 1. ‘Remember that the departed souls in heaven are part, and the noblest part of the body of Christ and family of God, of which you are inferior members; and therefore that you owe them greater love and honour, than you owe to any saints on earth.’ “The whole family in heaven and earth is named of Christ<sup>b</sup>.” Those are the happiest and noblest parts, that are most pure and perfect, and dwell in the highest and most glorious habitations, nearest unto Christ, yea, with him. If holiness be lovely, the most holy are the most lovely: we have many obligations therefore, to love them more than the saints on earth: they are more excellent and amiable, and Christ loveth them more. And if any be honourable, it must especially be those spirits that are of greatest excellencies and perfections, and advanced to the greatest glory and nearness to their Lord. Make conscience therefore of this as your duty, not only to love and honour blessed souls, but to love and honour them more than those that are yet on earth. And as every duty is attended with benefit, so we shall find this exceeding

<sup>a</sup> I have said more of this since in my “Life of Faith.”

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. iii. 15.

great benefit in the performance of this duty, that it will incline our hearts to be the more heavenly, and draw up our desires to the society which we so much love and honour.

*Direct.* 11. 'Remember that it is a part of the life of faith, to see by it the heavenly society of the blessed, and a part of your heavenly conversation, to have frequent, serious, and delightful thoughts of those crowned souls that are with Christ.'

Otherwise God would never have given us such descriptions of the heavenly Jerusalem, and told us so much of the hosts of God that must inhabit it for ever; that must come from the "east and from the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God." When it is said that our conversation (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven, the meaning extendeth both to our relation, privileges, and converse: we are denizens or citizens of the heavenly society; and our title to their happiness is our highest privilege and honour; and therefore our daily business is there, and our sweetest and most serious converse is with Christ and all those blessed spirits. Whatever we are doing here, our eye and heart should still be there: for we "look not at the temporal things which are seen, but at the eternal things which are not seen<sup>c</sup>." A wise Christian that hath forsaken the kingdom of darkness, will be desirous to know what the kingdom of Christ is into which he is translated, and who are his fellow subjects, and what are their several ranks and dignities, so far as tendeth to his congruous converse with them all. And how should it affect us to find that "we are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant<sup>d</sup>?" Live then as the members of this society, and exclude not the chief members from your thoughts and converse; though our local, visible communion be only with these rural, inferior inhabitants, and not with the courtiers of the king of heaven, yet our mental communion may be much with them. If

<sup>c</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. xii. 22—24.

our home and treasure be there with them, our hearts will be there also.

*Direct.* III. 'It is the will of God that the memory of the saints be honoured on earth when they are dead.' It is some part of his favour which he hath promised to them. "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot\*." "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her†." The history of the Scripture recordeth the lives of the saints to their perpetual honour. And God will have it so also for the sake of his abused servants upon earth, that they may see that the slanders of malicious tongues, shall not be able to obscure the glory of his grace, and that the lies of the ungodly prevail but for a moment. And God will have it so for the sake of the ungodly, that they may be ashamed of their malicious enmity and lies against the godly, while they perceive that the departed saints do leave behind them a surviving testimony of their sanctity and innocency, sufficient to confound the venomous calumnies of the serpent's seed. Yea, God will have the names of his eminent servants to be honoured upon earth, for the honour of their Head, and of his grace and Gospel: so that while malice would cast dishonour upon Christ, from the meanness and failings of his servants that are alive, the memory of the dead, (who were once as much despised and slandered,) shall rise up against them to his honour and their shame. And it is very observable how God constraineth the bitter enemies of holiness to bear this testimony for the honour of holiness against themselves! that many who are the cruellest persecutors and murderers of the living saints, do honour the dead even to excess‡. How zealous are the Papists for the multitude of their holidays, and the honouring of their names and relics, and pretending many miracles to be wrought by a very touch of their shrines or bones, whilst they revile and murder those that imitate them, and deprive temporal lords of their dominions that will not exterminate them. Yea, while they burn the living saints, they make it part of their crime or heresy,

\* Prov. x. 7.

† Matt. xxvi. 13.

‡ Concil. Later. sub Innoc. III. Cau. 3.

that they honour not the days and relics of the dead, so much as they: to shew us that the things that have been shall be, and that wickedness is the same in all generations. "Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell<sup>b</sup>?" I know that neither did the pharisees, nor do the Papists, believe that those whom they murdered were saints, but deceivers and heretics, and the troublers of the world: but if charity be the grace most necessary to salvation, then sure it will not keep any man from damnation, that he had malice and uncharitableness sufficient to persuade him, that the members of Christ were children of the devil. But thus God will force even the persecutors and haters of his saints to honour them. And if he constrain his enemies to it, his servants should not be backward to do it according to his will.

*Direct. iv.* 'Only such honour must be given to departed saints, as subverteth the honour of God; and nothing must be ascribed to them that is his prerogative.' All that of God which was communicated to them and appeared in them, must be acknowledged: but so that God must still be acknowledged the spring of all; and no honour given ultimately to them; but it is God in them that we must behold and love, admire and honour.

*Direct. v.* 'The honour of the saints departed must be only such as tendeth to the promoting of holiness among the living.' It is a most horrid aggravation of those men's sins, who make their honouring of the saints departed a cover for their hating and persecuting their followers; or that make it an engine for the carrying on of some base design. Some make it a device for the advancing of their parties and peculiar opinions. The Papists make it a very great means for the maintaining the usurped power of the pope, giving him the power of canonizing saints, and assur-

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxiii. 29—33.

ing the world what souls are in heaven. A pope that by the testimony of a General Council (as Joh. 23. Eugenius, &c.) is a heretic, and a wicked wretch, and never like to come to heaven himself, can assure the world of a very large catalogue of persons that are there. And he that by the Papists is confessed fallible in matters of fact, pretendeth to know so certainly who were saints, as to appoint them holidays, and command the church to pray to them. And he that teacheth men that they cannot be certain themselves of their salvation, pretendeth when they are dead that he is certain that they are saved. To pretend the veneration of saints for such carnal, ambitious designs, and cheats, and cruelties, is a sin unfit for any that mentioneth a saint. So is it when men pretend that saints are some rare, extraordinary persons among the living members of the church: to make men believe that honouring them will serve instead of imitating them; and that all are not saints that go to heaven. 'God forbid,' say they, 'that none but holy persons should be saved: we confess it is good to be saints, and they are the chief in heaven; but we hope those that are no saints may be saved for all that.' But God saith, that without holiness none shall see him<sup>1</sup>. Heaven is the inheritance of none but saints<sup>2</sup>. He that extolleth saints to make men believe that those that are no saints may be saved, doth serve the devil by honouring the saints. The same I may say of those that give them Divine honour, ascribing to each a power to hear and help all throughout the world that put up prayers to them.

*Direct. vi.* 'Look up to the blessedness of departed souls, as members of the same body, rejoicing with them, and praising God that hath so exalted them.' This is the benefit of holy love and Christian unity, that it maketh our brethren's happiness to be unto us, in a manner as if it were our own. "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another—that if one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it<sup>3</sup>." So far as selfishness is overcome, and turned into the uniting love of saints, so far are all the joys of the blessed souls in heaven become the joys of all that truly love them upon earth. How happy then is the state

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 14.<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 18. Col. i. 12.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.

of all true believers, that have so many to rejoice with! Deny not God that thanks for the saving of so many souls, which you would not deny him, if he saved but your friends, estates, or lives. Especially when afflictions or temptations would deprive you of the joy which you should have in God's mercies to yourselves, then comfort yourselves with the remembrance of your brethren's joy. What an incongruous, indecent thing is it for that man to pine away in sorrows upon earth, who hath so many thousand friends in heaven, in joy and blessedness, whose joys should all be to him as his own!

*Direct. VII.* 'When you feel a cooling of your love to God, or of your zeal, or reverence, or other graces, think then of the temper of those holy souls, that see his glory!' O think, with what fervour do they love their God! with what transporting sweetness do they delight in him! with what reverence do they all behold him! And am not I his servant, and a member of his family as well as they? shall I be like the strangers of this frozen world, when I should be like my fellow citizens above? As it will dispose a man to weep to see the tears and grief of others; and as it will dispose a man to mirth and joy to see the mirth and joy of others; so is it a potent help to raise the soul to the love of God, and delight in his service, to think believingly of the love and delight of such a world of blessed spirits.

*Direct. VIII.* 'When you draw near to God in his holy worship, remember that you are part of the same society with those blessed spirits that are praising him in perfection.' Remember that you are members of the same choir, and your part must go to make up the melody; and therefore you should be as little discordant from them as possibly you can. The quality of those that we join with in God's service, is apt either to dull or quicken us, to depress or elevate us; and we move heavenward most easily and swiftly in that company which is going thither on the swiftest pace. A believing thought that we are worshipping God in concert with the heavenly choir, and of the high and holy raptures of those spirits, in the continual praise of their great Creator, is an excellent means to warm and quicken us, and raise us as near their holy frame, as here on earth may be expected.

*Direct. ix.* 'When you would possess your hearts with a lively sense of the odiousness of sin, and would resist all temptations which would draw you to it, think then how the blessed souls with God do judge of sin, and how they would entertain such a temptation, if the motion were made to them!' What think they of covetousness, pride, or lust? What think they of malice, cruelty, or lying? How would they entertain it, if lands and lordships, pleasure or preferment were offered them to entice their hearts from God? Would they venture upon damnation for a whore, or for their games, or to please their appetites? Do they set as light by God and their salvation as the ungodly world doth? O with what scorn and holy indignation would they refuse a world, if it were offered them instead of God! with what detestation would they reject the motion to any sin!

*Direct. x.* 'When you would revive in your minds a right apprehension and estimation of all earthly things, as riches, and honours, and greatness, and command, and full provisions for the flesh, bethink you then how the blessed souls with Christ esteem them.' How little do they set by all those things, that worldlings make so great a stir for, and for which they sell their God and their salvation! How contemptible are crowns and kingdoms in their eyes! Their judgment is more like to God's than ours is. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." All the world would not hire a saint in heaven to tell one lie, or take the name of God in vain, or to forget God, or be estranged from him for one hour.

*Direct. xi.* 'When you see the godly under the contempt of sinners here, accounted as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, defamed, reviled, hated and persecuted, look up then to the saints with Christ, and think how they are esteemed and used.' And when you would truly know what a believer is, think not how they are esteemed and used by men, but how they are esteemed and used by Christ. Judge not of them by their short afflictions, nor by their meanness in the flesh, but by their endless happiness and their glory above. Look up to the home and world of saints, if you would know what saints are, and not to the few, scattered, imperfect passengers in this world, that are not worthy of them.

*Direct.* XII. 'When you are tempted to think meanly of the kingdom of Christ, as if his flock were so small, and poor, and sinful as to be inconsiderable, look up to the world of blessed souls which dwell above.' And there you shall see no such paucity, or imperfections, or blemishes, as are here below. The subjects there are such as dishonour not their king. Christ's kingdom is not of this world<sup>a</sup>. If you would know it in its glory, look up to the world where it is glorious. If when you hear men condemn the kingdom of the saints of Christ, and at the same time did but see, (as Stephen did,) a glimpse into that kingdom, and all the glory of the blessed there, what thoughts would you have of the words which did dishonour it?

*Direct.* XIII. 'When you hear sinners boast of the wisdom or numbers of their party, and appealing to the learned or great ones of the world, look up to the blessed souls with Christ, and ask whether they are not more wise and numerous than all the sinners upon earth.' The greatest doctors are ignorant and unlearned in comparison of the meanest soul with Christ: the greatest monarchs are but worms in comparison of the glorified spirits with God. If they say to you, Are you wiser than so many and so wise and learned men? ask them, Are you, or all the ungodly, wiser than all the blessed souls with Christ? Let the wiser party carry it.

*Direct.* XIV. 'When you are tempted to be weary of a holy life, or to think all your labour is vain, look up to the blessed souls with Christ, and there you will see the end of holiness.' There you will see that of all the labour of your lives, there is none that you are sure to gain by; and that in "due time you shall reap, if you faint not; and if you sow to the Spirit, of the Spirit you shall reap everlasting life<sup>o</sup>;" and that when you have "done the will of God," if you "have but patience, you shall inherit the promise<sup>p</sup>." Ask yourselves, whether any of those blessed souls repent now of the holiness of their lives on earth? or their mortifying the flesh, and denying themselves the delights of sin?

*Direct.* XV. 'When you are tempted to turn back in the day of trial, and to forsake Christ or his cause when persecution ariseth, then look to the blessed souls above, and see what is the end of suffering for the sake of Christ and

<sup>a</sup> John xviii. 36.<sup>o</sup> Gal. vi. 8, 9.<sup>p</sup> Heb. x. 36.

righteousness.' To foresee the great reward in heaven, will convince you that instead of being terrified by sufferings, you should "rejoice and be exceeding glad." Are you to lie in prison, or to burn in the flames? so did many thousands that are now in heaven. And do you think that they repent it now? Ignatius, Polycarp, Cyprian, and many such holy men, were once used as hardly as you are now, and put to death by cruel men. Rogers, Bradford, Hooper, Glover, and multitudes with them, were once in prison and burnt in the flames; but where are they now, and what is the end of all their pains? Now whether do you think the case of Bonner or Bradford to be best? Now had you rather be Gardiner or Philpot? Now which think you doth most repent; the poor Waldenses that were murdered by thousands; or the popes and persecutors that murdered them?

*Direct. xvi.* 'When you are dismayed under the burden of your sins, the greatness of your corruptions, the weakness of your graces, the imperfection of your duties, look up to the blessed souls with Christ, and remember that all those glorified spirits, were once in flesh as you now are, and once they lay at the feet of God, in tears, and groans, and cries as you do: they were once fain to cry out of the burden of their sins, and mourn under the weakness of their graces, as you now do.' They were once as much clogged with flesh as you are; and once as low in doubts and fears, and bruised under the sense of God's displeasure. They once were as violently assaulted with temptations, and had the same corruptions to lament and strive against as you have. They were once as much afflicted by God and man; but is there any of the smart of this remaining?

*Direct. xvii.* 'When you are deterred from the presence of the dreadful God, and think he will not accept such worms as you, look up to the blessed souls with Christ; and remember how many millions of your brethren are there accepted to greater familiarity than that which you here desire.' Remember that those souls were once as dark and distant from God, and unworthy of his acceptance as you now are. A fearful child receiveth boldness, to see his brethren in his father's arms.

*Direct. xviii.* 'When you are afraid of satan lest he should prevail against you and devour you, look up to the

blessed souls with Christ; and see how many millions are there safely landed, that once were in as dangerous a station as you are.' Through many tribulations and temptations they are arrived at the heavenly rest: satan once did his worst against them: they were tossed on the seas of this tempestuous world; but they were kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, and so may you.

*Direct. xix.* 'When you would duly value all your present means and mercies, and see whither they tend, look up then to the souls with Christ, and see whither the like mercy hath conducted them.' The poorest cottage and the hardest fare are great mercies, as they tend to endless blessedness. This now and heaven after, is great; though the thing in itself be never so small. Heaven puts the value and signification upon all your mercies. The wicked make cyphers of their greatest blessings, by separating them in their esteem and use, from God and heaven, which is the measure of their estimate.

*Direct. xx.* 'When you see divisions among believers, and hear one for this party, and another for that, and hear them bitterly censuring each other, look up then to the saints with Christ, and think what perfect love, and peace, and concord is among them.' Consider how unlike our factions and schisms are to their fervent love and unity. And how unlike our jarring strifes and quarrels are to their harmonious praise of God. Remember in what work it is that they are so happily united, even love and praise incessant to Jehovah: and then think, whether it would not unite the saints on earth, to lay by their contendings for the preeminence in knowledge, (covered with the gilded name of zeal for the truth of God,) and to employ themselves in love and praise, and to shew their emulation here, in striving who shall love God and each other with the more pure heart and fervent love, and who shall praise him with the most heavenly alacrity and delight. Consider whether this work of blessed souls be not like to be more desirable and excellent, than the work of self-conceited, wrangling sophisters. And whether there be any danger of falling into sects and factions, or falling out by emulations or contentions, while we make this work of love and praise the matter of our religious converse. And consider whether almost all the schisms that

ever vexed the church of God, did not arise, either by the pastors striving "who should be the greatest," or by the rising up of some sciolist or gnostic, proudly pretending to know more than others, and to vindicate or bring to light some excellent truth which others know not, or oppose. And when you see the hot contendings of each party, about their pretended orthodoxness or wisdom (which James iii. is purposely written against), remember how the concord of those blessed souls doth shame this work, and should make it odious to the heirs of heaven.

*Direct.* XXI. 'When you are afraid of death or would find more willingness to die, look up to the blessed souls with Christ, and think that you are but to pass that way, which all those souls have gone before you; and to go from a world of enmity and vanity, to the company of all those blessed spirits.' And is not their blessed state more desirable than such a vain, vexatious life as this? There is no malice, nor slandering, nor cruel persecuting; no uncharitable censures, contentions, or divisions; no ignorance, nor unbelief, nor strangeness unto God; nothing but holy, amiable, and delightful. Join yourselves daily to that celestial society: suppose yourselves spectators of their order, purity, and glory, and auditors of their harmonious praises of Jehovah. Live by faith in a daily familiarity with them: say not that you want company or are alone, when you may walk in the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, and there converse with the prophets and apostles, and all the glorious hosts of heaven. Converse thus with them in your life, and it will overcome the fear of death, and make you long to be there with them: like one that stands by the river side, and seeth his friends on the further side, in a place of pleasure, while his enemies are pursuing him at his back, how gladly would he be over with them? And it will embolden him to venture on the passage, which all they have safely passed before him. Thus death will be to us as the Red sea, to pass us safe to the land of promise, while our pursuers are there overthrown and perish. We should not be so strange to the world above, if we thus by faith conversed with the blessed ones.

*Direct.* XXII. 'When you are overmuch troubled for

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii. 24. 26.

the death of your godly friends, look up to that world of blessed souls, to which they are translated, and think whether it be not better for them to be there than here; and whether you are not bound by the law of love, to rejoice with them that are thus exalted.' Had we but a sight of the world that they are in, and the company that they are gone to, we should be less displeas'd with the will of God, in disposing of his own into so glorious a state.

All these improvements may be made by a believer, of his daily converse with the souls above. This is the communion with them which we must hold on earth; not by praying to them, which God hath never encouraged us to do; nor by praying for them: (for though it be lawful to pray for the resurrection of their bodies, and the perfecting of their blessedness thereby, yet it being a thing of absolute certainty as the day of judgment is, we must be very cautious in the manner of our doing this lawful act; it being a thing that their happiness doth not at all depend on, and a thing which will-worshippers hath shewed themselves so forward to abuse, by stepping further into that which is unlawful; as the horrid abuses of the names, and days, and shrines, and relics, of real or supposed saints, in the papal kingdom sadly testifieth). But the necessary part of our communion with the saints in heaven, being of so great importance to the church on earth, I commend it to the due consideration of the faithful, whether our forgetfulness of it is not to be much repented of, and whether it be not a work to be more seriously minded for the time to come.

And I must confess I know not why it should be thought unlawful to celebrate the memorial of the life or martyrdom of any extraordinary servant of God, by an anniversary solemnity, or a set, appropriate day: it is but to keep the thankful remembrance of God's mercy to the church: and sure the life and death of such, is not the smallest of the church's mercies here on earth. If it be lawful on November the fifth to celebrate the memorial of our deliverance from the Powder-plot, I know not why it should be thought unlawful to do the like in this case also: provided, 1. That it be not terminated in the honour of a saint, but of the God of saints for giving so great a mercy to his church. 2. That it be not to honour a saint merely as a saint, but to some

extraordinary, eminent saints: otherwise all that go to heaven must have festivals kept in remembrance of them; and so we might have a million for a day. 3. That it be not made equal with the Lord's day, but kept in such a subordination to that day, as the life or death of saints is of inferior and subordinate respect, to the work of Christ in man's redemption. 4. And if it be kept in a spiritual manner, to invite men to imitate the holiness of the saints, and the constancy of the martyrs, and not to encourage sensuality and sloth.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### *Directions about our Communion with the Holy Angels.*

*Direct.* 1. 'Be satisfied in knowing so much of angels as God in nature and Scripture hath revealed; but presume not to inquire further, much less to determine of unrevealed things.' That there are angels, and that they are holy spirits, is past dispute; but what number they are, and of how many worlds, and of what orders and different dignities and degrees, and when they were created, and what locality belongeth to them, and how far they excel or differ from the souls of men, these and many other such unnecessary questions, neither nature or Scripture will teach us how infallibly to resolve. Almost all the heretics in the first ages of the church, did make their doctrines of angels the first and chief part of their heresies; arrogantly intruding into unrevealed things, and boasting of their acquaintance with the orders and inhabitants of the higher worlds. These being risen in the apostles' days, occasioned Paul to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind \*."

*Direct.* 11. 'Understand so much of the ministry of angels as God hath revealed, and so far take notice of your

\* Col. ii. 18.