

THE
ANGELICAL LIFE,
BY SAMUEL SHAW.

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MATT. XXII. 30.

—“ *Are as the angels of God in heaven.*”

THE doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the great things of the christian religion, as they were accounted strange things by all the world when they were first published and preached, so indeed by none less entertained, or rather more opposed, than by the wisest of men living in that age, namely, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, who were the “disputers of this world,” as the Apostle’s phrase is: a thing of wonderful observation, not only to us in our day, but even to our blessed Lord himself in the days of his flesh, who fetches the cause of it from heaven, and adores the infinite wisdom of God in it—“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Amongst other set disputations that the Sadducees held with our Saviour, the one in this

chapter is very famous; where they dispute against the resurrection of the dead, by an absurd argument grounded upon an instance of a woman that had been married to seven husbands successively. Now, say they, if there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be then? Our Saviour answers by destroying the ground of their argument, and showing that they disputed upon a false supposition; for, saith he, "In the resurrection there shall be no marrying; but men shall be as the angels of God." In which words this doctrine is plainly laid down, (for I shall not meddle with the controversy,)

"That the glorified saints shall be as the angels of God in heaven." The other evangelists lay down the same truths, see Mark xii. 25, Luke xx. 36. In the explication of which point I will shew, I. Negatively, wherein the saints shall not be like the angels. II. Affirmatively, wherein the saints shall be like unto them, or, as St. Luke hath it, equal to them.

I. Negatively.

1. "The glorified saints shall not be like the angels in essence." The angelical essence, and the rational soul are, and shall be different. Souls shall remain souls still, keep their own essence: the essence shall not be changed; souls shall not be changed into angelical essences.

2. "They shall not be wholly spirits without bodies," as the angels. The spirits of just men now made perfect, are more like to the angels in this

sense than they shall be after the resurrection ; for now they are spirits without bodies : but the saints shall have bodies, not such as now, corruptible, not in anything defective, not needing creature-supplies, but incorruptible, glorious bodies, in some sense spiritual bodies ; which are described by three characters—incorruptible, (somewhat more than immortal,) glorious, powerful. Neither doth their having bodies any whit abate their perfection or glory, nor render them inferior to the angels ; for even the glorious Redeemer of the world hath a body, who is yet superior to the angels ; and he shall change the vile bodies of the saints, and make them like unto his glorious body.

3. “ Neither have we any ground to believe that the saints shall be altogether equal to the angels in dignity and glory :” but rather, that as man was at first made a little lower than the angels, so that he shall never come to be exalted altogether so high as they ; for it seems, that the natural capacity of an angel is greater than of a man, and so shall continue, for they are a distinct kind of creatures. As a beast cannot become so wise and intelligent as a man, for then he would cease to be a beast ; so neither can a man become so powerful and capable as an angel, for then he would cease to be a man.

II. Affirmatively.

The glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven, 1st. In their qualities ; that is,

1. “ In being pure and holy.” Whether they

shall be equal to them in positive holiness or not, I know not; whether they shall understand, and know, and love God, in all degrees, as much as the angels; it seems rather that they shall not, because, as I said before, their capacity shall not be so large. But if in this they be not altogether equal to the angels, yet it implies no imperfection; for they shall be positively holy, as far as their nature is capable, and so shall be perfect in their kind—"The spirits of just men made perfect:" they shall in this be like unto the angels, if not equal to them, yea, like unto God himself in it—"Be ye holy, as I am holy." But as to negative holiness, the saints shall be even equal to the angels of God in heaven, that is, they shall have no more sin, no more corruption than they have: they shall be as perfectly freed from all iniquities, imperfections, and infirmities, as the angels. What can be cleaner than that which hath no uncleanness at all in it? Why, so clean shall all the saints be—"No unclean thing shall enter into heaven." They shall be without all kind of spot or blemish, which is a perfect negative holiness; more cannot be said of the angels in this respect. As branches of this:—

2. "As the holy angels do reverence the divine Majesty; they cover their faces with their wings, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, so shall the glorified saints." You may see what sweet harmony they make, consenting together to give the glory of all to God. The saints stood and cried,

“Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb;” the angels stood round about, saying, “Amen, amen.”

3. “In their readiness to do the will of God, and execute his commands;” therefore the angels are described to have wings;—“with twain they did fly.” How God shall please to employ angels or saints in the world to come, is not for us to enquire; but they shall be alike ready to do his will, and serve his pleasure, whatever it shall be. Even whilst the saints are imperfect on earth, they can cry, “Here am I, send me:” how much more ready shall they be then, when all their fetters are knocked off!

4. They shall be as the angels, “in their cheerful and unwearied execution of the will of God.” So the angels are, and so shall the saints be. The spirit shall then be more willing, and the flesh shall be no more weak, as it is now; for when it is raised again, it shall be in power. More things of this nature might be added, but I pass lightly over them; because, although they be true, yet they are not principally looked at in this text: therefore I come to the second thing wherein the glorified saints shall be like unto the angels, and that is,

In their way of living. They shall be like the angels, that is, saith one truly, *ισαγγελως βιουντες*, living like the angels. How is that? our Saviour tells us, neither marrying, nor being given in marriage; it is added presently in Luke xx. 36, “For neither can they die any more.” If there be no

dying, there will be no need of propagation ; and if no need of propagation, then why should they marry? The angels are single, and know no other conjunction but with God in a spiritual manner ; no more shall the saints. But what great matter is that to be like the angels in? what perfection is that? Many saints, yea, and sinners too upon earth, are so like the angels, nay, and the devils too. Therefore you must know that our Saviour under this phrase of not marrying, doth comprehend all manner of creature-converse, all kind of living upon, and delighting in the creature, by a synecdoche of the part, as is ordinary in scripture ; “ I have not given upon usury,” saith the prophet, “ yet the people curse me,” that is, I have had no dealing in the world, no negotiation. By one kind he understands the whole, Ezek. xxv. 4, where, by eating their fruits, and drinking their milk, is understood the possession of all that was theirs ; and in many other places the Spirit of God uses this tropical way of speaking.

The angels of God neither marry, nor are given in marriage, that is, they live not upon any created good, delight not in any created comfort, but live entirely upon God, converse with him, are everlastingly beholding his glory, and delighting themselves in him. Thus shall the glorified saints live for ever : their bodies shall not need nor use created supplies, food, physic, raiment, &c. which things in this animal state they stand in need of, Matt. vi. 32.

But that is not all: for their souls shall not any longer desire, nor hanker after any created thing, but, as the angels, shall be possessed of God, filled with the fulness of God; all their powers and faculties are perfectly refined and spiritualized, abstracted from all created things, eternally rejoicing and delighting themselves in the contemplation and participation of the supreme and infinite Good: for during this earthly and imperfect state, not only the bodies of good men feed upon, and are sustained by the creatures, in common with other men, but even their souls do taste too much of worldly contentments, and drink too deep of earthly pleasures and creature comforts: even the most refined souls upon earth, though they do not properly feed upon any thing below God, yet do oft dip the end of their rod in this honey that lies upon the earth, with Jonathan; do use their earthly enjoyments, and delight in them in a way too unspiritual, having abstracted them from God, and loving them with a distinct love. But in the resurrection it shall not be so; for the holy souls shall be perfectly conformed to the holy God, shall feed upon him singly, live upon him entirely, be wrapt up in him wholly, and be satisfied with him solely and everlastingly, and so shall they be equal to the angels. The creature, although it does not fill any truly sanctified soul upon earth, yet it hath some room there; but then it shall be perfectly cast out, and the soul shall be filled with all the fulness of God. The crea-

ture is now much in some pious souls, and something in all of them; but then it shall be nothing at all to them, or in them, but God shall be all in all, all things in all of them; as the way of the saints' living, and their glorified state is described—"that God may be all in all." "They shall inherit all things:" but how is that? why, see the explication of it in the following words, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God." God will be their God; God shall be unto them instead of all things. In that state there shall no need of sun or moon; by which excellent and useful creatures the whole creation seems to be understood; for they that shall live above the sun and moon, shall certainly live above all things that are below these: but how then? why it follows, "The glory of God shall enlighten them, and the Lamb shall be their light." "And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord giveth them light." All happiness is derived into them from God, and therefore there shall be no night, no want of any creature comfort to them; neither shall they desire anything more of the creature whether small or great, whether candle or sun. For explication of this their blessed life, let me allude to that of our Saviour—"The fowls of heaven neither sow nor reap, yet God feedeth them;" so the saints in heaven neither want nor desire any created good, for they feed upon God the supreme and infinite Good: and

again, "The lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." These blessed souls have no respect at all to things terrene and created; yet they are so filled and adorned with the glory of the infinite Majesty, that Solomon in all his glory was nothing in comparison of them. In a word, the state of the glorified saints and angels is set out by our Saviour in the same manner, by one and the same description, and that is the seeing of God: the life of angels is called a continual beholding of the face of God, and the state of the saints' glory and happiness is also a seeing of God—"They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Now, this phrase, the seeing of God, applied both to the saints and angels, doth place their happiness in God alone, excluding the creature; and it doth import the fullness and clearness, and certainty of their bliss.

Thus I have showed you, in what sense, though I am not able to show you in what degree, the glorified saints shall be like the angels of God in heaven: their way of living upon the blessed God alone, shall be the same with that of the holy angels.

APPLICATION.

From the discovery of the future state of the saints, I find myself furnished with reasons for,

1. Reproof against the carnal conceits that many Christians have of heaven. Christians do I call them! nay, herein they seem rather Mahometans,

who place heaven in the full and lasting enjoyment of all creature-comforts, nay, indeed of sinful and abominable pleasures, as one may read in their Alcoran. It may be, few Christians are altogether so sensual; but, sure I am, the far greater sort of Christians, so called, are very gross and carnal, at least, very low in their conceits of the state of future happiness. Heaven is a word as little understood as holiness; and that, I am sure, is the greatest mystery in the world. It would be tedious to run through the various apprehensions of men in this matter, and indeed impossible to know them. The common sort of people understand by heaven either just nothing but a glorious name, or at best but a freedom from bodily torment: as nothing of hell affects them but that dreadful word *fire*, so nothing of heaven but the comfortable word *rest* or *safety*. Others, it may be, think there is something positive in heaven, and they dream of an honourable, easy, pleasant life, free from such kind of toils, labours, pains, persecutions, reproaches, and penuries, which men are subject to in this life; this is a true notion, but much below the nature of that happy state. Others are yet more highly affected with the words of glory and glorious, and seem to be much ravished with them, but are like men in a maze or wonderment, who admire something that they understand not, and are altogether confounded in their own apprehensions of it; as if a man should be mightily taken with such a fine name as Arabia

the Happy, and by a blind fervour of mind should desire to go and visit it. Others rise yet higher in their apprehensions of heaven, and look upon it as a holy state, but that holiness is negative, a perfect freedom from sin, and all temptations to it: and indeed this is a precious consideration, and that wherein many a weary soul finds much rest: but yet this amounts not to the life of angels; it is a lower consideration of heaven than what our Saviour here presents us with. The state of the glorified saints shall not only be a state of freedom from temporal pains, or eternal pains, or a freedom from spiritual pains and imperfections, but a state of perfect positive holiness, pure light, ardent love, spiritual liberty, holy delights; when all created good shall perfectly vanish, all created love shall be swallowed up, the soul shall become of a most God-like disposition, shining forth in the glory that he shall put upon it, glorying in nothing but the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in his divine image and perfections, and wrapt up entirely into his infinite fulness to all eternity: which hath made me oftentimes to nauseate, and indeed to blame the poor low descriptions of the kingdom of heaven which I have found in books and sermons, for too dry, yea, and gross; which describe heaven principally as a place, and give it such circumstances of beauty, firmness, security, light, and splendour, pleasant society, good neighbourhood, as they think will most commend an earthly habitation. True indeed,

the Holy Ghost in scripture is pleased to condescend so far to our weak capacities, as to describe that glorious state to us by such things as we do best understand, and are apt to be most taken with, and do most gratify our senses in this world; as a kingdom, paradise, a glorious city, a crown, an inheritance; but yet it is not the will of God that his enlightened people should rest in such low notions of eternal life; for in other places God speaks of the state of glory according to the nature and excellency of it, and not according to the weakness of our understanding, and describes it at another rate, calling it the life of angels; as the beholding of God—a coming unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ—God’s being all things in us—it is called a knowing of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. In a word, which is as high as can be spoken, higher indeed than can be perfectly understood, it is called a being like unto God—“We shall be like unto him.” But this use is not so much for reproof, as it is for information.

2. Here is matter of reproof, yea, and of just indignation, against the gross, low, sensual, earthly life of professors, who yet hope to be the children of the resurrection, and to be as the angels of God in heaven. What! hope to be like them then, and yet altogether unlike them now! I speak not in a passion, but out of a just indignation that I have conceived against myself, and against the generality even of saints themselves. I am not going to speak

of covetousness commonly so called; there is a sin much like to it, which is not indeed a single sin, but an evil and unseemly temper, which is earthly-mindedness, or minding of earthly things; or if you will, because I would not be misunderstood, a living upon the creature, or a loving of the creature with a distinct love. Oh! the insensible secrecy, and insuperable power of this creature-love! I cannot sufficiently exclaim against it. Why do we spend noble affections upon such low and empty nothings? Are we called with such a high calling, think you, that our conversation should be so low? Is the fulness of the fountain yours, and do ye yet delight to sit down by and bathe yourselves in the shallow streams? Is your life hid with Christ with God? why then do you converse as if your life were bound up in the creature? Have you laid up your treasure in the blessed God? what do your hearts, then, so far from it? Is your happiness in heaven? why then is not your conversation there too? Do ye count it your bliss to see God? what then mean those fond glances that ye cast upon created comforts, and that impure love which you bestow on things below? I mean not only the "bleatings of the sheep, and the lowings of the oxen," I speak not of the grosser sort of earthly-mindedness, sensuality, or covetousness, but of that more refined and hidden creature-love, a loving of friends, relations, health, liberty, life, and that not in God, but with a love distinct from that love wherewith we

love God. To love all these in God, and for his sake, and as flowing from him, and partaking of him, and with the same love wherewith we love God himself, is allowed us; but to love them with a particular love, as things distinct from God, to delight in them merely as creatures, and to follow them as if some good, or happiness, or pleasure, were to be found in them, distinct from what is in God, this is a branch of spiritual adultery, I had almost said idolatry. To taste a sweetness in the creature, and to see a beauty and goodness in it, is our duty; but then, it must be the sweetness of God in it, and the goodness of God which we ought alone to taste and see in it. As we say, “the wife shines with the rays of her husband;” so more truly every creature shines but by a borrowed light, and commends to us the goodness, and sweetness, and fullness of the blessed Creator. You have heard that the glorified souls shall live upon God alone entirely, wholly, eternally; and should not the less glorious souls, I mean gracious souls, do so too, in some degree? yea, even we who are upon earth, and do yet use creatures, should behold all the scattered beams of goodness, sweetness, perfection, that are in these creatures, all united and gathered up in God, and so feeding upon them only in God, and upon God in all of them. It is the character of wicked and godless men, that they set up and drive a trade for themselves; live in a way distinct from God, as though they had no dependence upon

him ; they love the world with a predominant love ; they enjoy creature-comforts in a gross, unspiritual manner ; they dwell upon the dark side of their mercies ; they treasure up riches, not only in their chests, but in their hearts ; they feed upon the creature, not only with their bodies, but their very souls do feed upon them : and thus, in a word, they “live without God in the world.” All this is no wonder ; for that which is of the earth must needs be earthly ; but is it not a monstrous thing, that a heavenly soul should feed upon earthly trash ? I speak without any hyperbole ; the famous king of Babylon, forsaking the society of men, and herding himself with the beasts of the earth, and eating grass with the oxen, was not so absurd a thing, nor half so monstrous or unseemly, as the children of the Most High God forsaking the true bread of souls, and feeding upon the low fare of carnal men, even created sweetness, worldly goods : nay, a glorious star falling from its own sphere, and choking itself in the dust, would not be such an eminent piece of baseness ; for what is said of the true God in one sense, is true of the truly godly in this sense—“He that cometh from heaven is above all ;” that is, above all things that are below God himself.

3. Shall this life of angels be also the life of saints ? this may then serve as a powerful consideration to mortify in us the love of this animal life, to make us weary of this low kind of living, and quicken us to long after so blessed a change. Well might

the Apostle say indeed, that to die was gain; for is not this gain, to exchange an animal for an angelical life? a life which is in some sense common to the very beasts with us, for that which in some sense may be called the life of God? For as the blessed and holy God lives upon his own infinite and self-sufficient fulness, without being beholden to anything without himself, so shall the saints live upon him, and upon the self-same infinite fulness, and shall not need any creature-contributions. The Apostle indeed saith, that "the last enemy to be destroyed is death;" which is true of enemies without us; and it is true with respect to Christ, who shall make a general resurrection from the dead, for that is the proper meaning of it; but it is true also, that the last enemy to be overcome within us is the love of life, therefore it is said, that a man will part with anything to keep his life, Job ii. 4; and we do generally excuse the matter, and cry, Oh! life is sweet, life is precious. It must be confessed, and it may be granted; I believe that there is an inclination of the soul to the body, arising from that dear and inconceivable union that God himself hath made of them, which is purely natural, some say altogether necessary for the maintaining of man in this complex state, and not in itself sinful: possibly there may not be found a man upon earth so holy and mortified, in whom this is not found; certainly it is the last hinderance to be removed out of the way of our perfect happiness. This, although

in itself natural, yea necessary, and without blame, yet in the inordinateness of it, ordinarily, if not constantly, becomes sinful. I count him the most perfect man in the world, who loves not his own life with an inordinate sinful love; who loves it only in God, and not with a creature-love distinct from God. There are two ways whereby this natural and lawful love of life becomes sinful—inmoderateness and inordinateness. Immoderateness is, when men love their lives at that rate, that they are filled with unreasonable and distracting fears, cares, and thoughts about them; when the whole business of life is almost nothing else but a studiousness to preserve the being of life. Inordinateness is, when men, though they do not love their lives at that excessive rate, yet do love life as a creature-good, not in God, nor in order to him, but love it for itself, as something out of God. Every carnal man in the world is guilty of the latter, and I doubt but few saints are altogether free from the guilt of it. Now, that this immoderate love of life ought to be subdued in Christians, all men almost will grant: if any will not grant it, we can easily prove it from the command of God—"Take no thought for your life."—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Both which words in the most favourable interpretation that can be given of them, do, in the judgment of all, forbid immoderation: nay, a mere philosopher would inforce this from mere moral considerations, which I cannot now stand upon.

But this inordinate love of life, as it is a more secret evil, a more refined corruption, is harder to be discovered, and men are loth to be convinced of the evil of it. Now, this particular distinct loving of life not as in God, but in itself, as a creature-good, is clearly condemned in that first and great commandment—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" as if he should say, God the supreme, infinite, perfect, original, essential, self-sufficient Good, is to be loved in the highest, and purest, and strongest manner, that the heart of men is capable to love; and all other things only in him, and under him, and as being of him, and for his sake. Let it be allowed that life is good; yet it must be added, that it is but a created good: let it be allowed that life is comfortable; yet it must be acknowledged, that man's chief comfort and happiness doth not stand in this animal life. So then, life itself is to be loved in God, who is the fountain and spring of life; it is to be loved in the quality of a created good, and no otherwise. Now, created goods are to be loved only in the Creator, as coming from him, as partaking of him, as leading to him. Argue the case a little thus: The soul of man is allowed to love its body with which the great God hath united it, and to love union with this body, which union we call *life*; but this body being a creature, and a creature much inferior to itself, and much more ignoble than itself, cannot in

reason be judged to be the fit and adequate object of its strongest and best affections: that must needs be something more excellent than itself; and that cannot be anything in this world, for this world hath nothing so noble, so excellent in it as the soul of man; it must needs be the Creator himself. Well, seeing God is the supreme, self-sufficient, perfect Good, he is to be loved with all the strength and powers of the soul, singly and entirely: and the will of God being God himself, is not only to be submitted to, or rested in, but to be chosen and loved above all created things, yea, even above life itself, the best of creatures. So then, if it be the will of God to call for our lives, we ought readily to give them up; because we ought to love the will of God much more than our lives. I pray you be impressed with this, that the will of God being pure, holy, and perfect, should not only be submitted to, or rested in, but even loved and chosen above all creatures. Now, the will of God is not that only whereby he teaches men, and prescribes laws to them, but that whereby he rules and governs the world, and disposes of men in any condition of life, or takes away their lives from them. The eternal Fountain of goodness can send forth nothing but what is perfectly good; and that which is perfectly good ought to be loved with a universal, pure, and, as far as possible, perfect love. This you will say, perhaps, is a high and a hard saying; but let it not seem impossible for a man to love his own life only

in God, and in subordination to him ; for this God requires, and he requires not things impossible—“ If any man come after me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple ;” that is, not simply hate it, but in comparison of me and my will. It is not then impossible, nay, you see it is a necessary duty, without which we cannot be Christ’s disciples. The saints of old found it possible. Holy Paul gives this answer readily—“ I am ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus ;” and “ I count not my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy.” It is witnessed of the whole army of martyrs that “ they loved not their lives unto the death :” that is, they did not value them in respect of God and his truth. Neither let any one flatter himself, and say, Yea, if I were called to die for God, I would rather do it than deny him ; for the will of God is as much to be eyed in his sending for us by a natural death as by martyrdom, and a not giving up our lives to him at any time, is as truly to deny him and his will, as not to give them up at the stake when we are called to it. Besides, how shall we imagine that he that is unwilling to die in his bed should be willing to die at a stake? Now, this duty of being mortified to the love of this animal life, being so difficult, yet so necessary, and so noble, how doth it become every saint to study to attain to this perfection? which, that we may, let us press upon ourselves this consideration, this doctrine, that the glorified saints shall live as angels of

God in heaven. We know that if this body were broken down, this low life cut off, we should live like angels, not being beholden any more to poor creatures for help or comfort, but should be filled with the fulness of God, filled with his image and glory, and live upon him entirely for evermore. Yea, I may add, that this very living above our own lives merely at the will of God, is a participation of the angelical life even in this world; therefore labour to be mortified to that love of this life which is here upon earth, yea, to be weary of it, yea, almost ashamed of it.

4. Shall we thus live the lives of the angels, subsisting in God, feasting upon him, filled with him to all eternity? this may moderate our sorrow which we conceive for the loss of any created good, houses, lands, husband, wife, children, &c.; yet a little while and we shall not miss them, shall not need them, shall not desire them any more. The blessed angels live a glorious life, and they have none of these, but are perfectly satisfied in the enjoyment of God alone; they have no wives nor children, yet they want none; and yet a little while, and we shall have none either, neither shall we want them, having all things in the God of all things: they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are in conjunction with the Father, with love, and goodness, and truth itself; and so they have no want of anything. If you have no candles left in the house, yet it is towards day-break, and the sun will rise upon you,

and you shall need none, and yet have light enough too. In a word, learn to live independent of them whilst you have them, and you will be the better able to live without them when they are removed.

5. I come now to the fifth and last use that I shall make of this doctrine; and oh that you and I may make this happy use of it! Shall the saints be as the angels of God in their way of living upon God, and enjoying all happiness in him alone for ever? shall this certainly be our life in heaven? oh! then, labour to begin this life upon earth. If you cannot perfectly transcribe, yet, at least, imitate that angelical kind of life. Though you are here imprisoned in a body of earth, and oft cumbered and clogged with bodily infirmities, and called to tend upon bodily necessities, yet, as far as this animal state will permit, live upon God. Do not excuse nor vindicate that low kind of earthly life, do not justify your living below and besides God, but stir up yourselves to behold where your happiness lies, and live not willingly below it. Certainly a pious soul hath more than bare hope in this world. God the blessed, infinite, and communicative Good, hath not locked himself so far out of sight, but that he gives his people a comfortable beholding of him even whilst they are in their pilgrimage; and what Solomon saith of the life of the godly, he means of their present life. "The way of life is above to the wise:" their living not only shall be, but is now above; it is a high way of living. They are

certainly a puny sort of mechanical Christians, that think and talk only of a heaven to come, and dream of a happiness without them, and distinct from them. The truly religious and God-like soul cannot so content himself, but being spirited and principled from above, is carried out after the infinite and almighty Good, as a thing is carried towards its centre; and hastens into his embraces as the iron hastens to the loadstone, and longs to be in conjunction with it. If therefore ye be from heaven, live above all earthly things: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above." If ye be born of God, live upon God. Deny self, live besides self, that is, live not to the service of your senses, to the lust of the flesh, to the lust of the eye, to the pride of life; let not your souls be servants to your sins, no, nor to your senses; that were for servants to ride on horseback, and princes to walk on foot. Live above self, that is, let your souls quit all their own interest in themselves, and entirely resign themselves to God, as to all points of duty and service. But that is not all; neither is that it which I urge you to from these words; but live above the creature, and whatsoever is in it, namely, delighting in God, conversing and communing with him alone as the chief Good; desire not any creature any further than as it may help you forward to the Creator; neither delight in it any further than as it either represents some of the divine perfections, witnesses something of divine love, or leads to some divine participation or com-

munion. Seeing we shall come to live upon God, and delight in God alone, without any creature, let us now live upon, love God alone in very creature. Now, to give you a more distinct knowledge of this high and noble life, I will explain it in some particulars, negatively and affirmatively.

I. Negatively.

1. "Live not upon self." I speak not of living unto self, but live not upon self, self-excellencies, self-sufficiencies, any created accomplishments, which was the life of the Stoics, those great philosophers, who placed happiness in the enjoyment of themselves, which they called "independence of all things." To enjoy one's self indeed is a high duty, a noble privilege, a duty of the gospel—"Possess ye your souls." But how must we enjoy ourselves? why, only in God. He enjoys himself,

(1.) Not who, in a sullen melancholy, retires to a solitary and monastic life, as many of the sourer sort of Papists do.

(2.) Nor he who, in a proud mood, disdains the perfections of God shining forth in other men; and hiding himself from them through envy, contents himself to sit and admire his own personal accomplishments, as many humourists do.

(3.) Nor he who finding nothing without him, and knowing nothing above him to give his soul her full rest, settles upon a foundation of his own, and admires a self-sufficiency in the temper of his own spirit, a little subdued by philosophical precepts, as

the Stoics did—But he who enjoys himself in God, that is, who doth not view himself in the narrow point of his own being, but, taking a view of himself in the unbounded essence of God, loves, and enjoys, and values himself, and all his personal excellencies as he is in God, and partakes of his perfections. To live in a way of self-converse is below the end of man's creation, who was made for a higher good; and hereby a man shall never obtain true happiness, for it is peculiar to God alone to be happy in himself. “In a word, a soul that confines itself to itself, and lives, and moves, and rejoices only within the narrow cell of its own particular being, deprives itself of that almighty and original goodness and glory that fills the world, and shines through the whole creation.”

2. “Live not upon any creature without yourselves.” Self indeed is a creature; but yet for clearness in proceeding we shall distinguish them. Now, this is the life of the greatest part of men, they live beside God, and move only within the sphere of the creature. You will easily understand that I speak not of the body's living upon the creature, for so God hath appointed that it shall live; and yet as to this too, I say with our Saviour, “Man liveth not by bread alone;” but I speak of the soul of man living upon the creature as its highest good, and feeding upon it as its best fare: they rise up early, and sit up late, and God is not in all their thoughts: they are filled with domestic and

foreign comforts, but behold not the Father of lights from whom all these descend : they live upon the good things of the world, yet live without God in the world. Now, by these men,

(1.) I do not mean those heathens that in the most idolatrous manner do, in the literal sense, set up the creatures for gods.

(2.) Nor those Christians that in a most gross manner make idols of the creatures, and place their happiness in them.

(3.) No, nor only those earthly professors, who follow the world too eagerly, and have such a deep and rooted respect for it, that they can be ordinarily content to suffer creature-employments to justle God and duties out of their hearts and houses, whose worldliness is apparently too hard for their religion. Who then ? shall we come any nearer ? yes.

(4.) Those are guilty of creature-converse who do not enjoy all creatures in God ; who love anything in any creature with a distinct love, who do not love it only in God ; who love silver, gold, houses, lands, trading, friends ; with a particular over-weening love. Oh take heed of this creature-love, of valuing any created thing any otherwise than in God, any otherwise than as being from God, partaking of him, and leading to him.

3. "Live not upon ordinances." These are God's institutions, love them, cleave unto them, attend upon them, let no temptation cause you to leave them ; but live not upon them, place not your

religion, place not your hope, your happiness in them, but love them only in God; attend upon them, yet not so much upon them, as upon God in them; lie by the pool, but wait for the angel; love not, no, not a divine ordinance for its own sake. Why, who doth so? alas! who almost doth not?

(1.) Thus did they in Ezek. xxxiii. 32, who delighted in the prophet's eloquence, and in the rhetoric of his sermons, as much as in a well-tuned voice and harmonious music: and so do thousands in England, who read the Bible for the style or the story's sake, and love to sit under learned and elegant discourses, more for accomplishment than for conversion: and swarms of priests, who preach themselves more than Christ Jesus, even in his own ordinances; as a proud boy rides a horse into the market, to set forth himself more than his master's goods.

(2.) But there are many not so gross as these, who do yet use ordinances in a way very gross and unspiritual, placing their devotion in them, and sinking their religion into a settled course of hearing or praying; who will wait upon God, as they call it, at some set and solemn times, new moons, and Sabbaths, it may be evening and morning; but religion must not be too busy with them, nor intermeddle in their ordinary affairs, or worldly employments; it hath no place there; they do not count it a garment for every day's wear.

(3.) And not only these, but even almost all men are too apt to seek rest in duties and ordinances, or, at least, to be pretty well satisfied with the work done, whether they have conversed with God there or not. Oh, if you love your souls, seek your happiness higher! Conversing with divine ordinances, I confess, is honourable and amiable, but it is too low a life for an immortal soul.

II. Affirmatively.

Let nothing satisfy you but God himself; take up with no pleasure, no treasure, no portion, no paradise, nay, no heaven, no happiness, below the infinite, supreme, and self-sufficient Good. Let your eye be upon him, and his all-filling fulness; let your desire be unto him, and to the remembrance of his name; follow hard after to know the Lord, and to enjoy the Father through his Son Jesus Christ; let your fellowship be with the Father, and with the Son, by the Spirit, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints;" "love him with all your soul, and with all your strength;" "yea, and keep yourselves always in the love of God; persevere and increase in the love of God;" "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Oh sweet duty! Oh amiable, pleasant task! Oh sweet and grateful command! Away, ye crowd of creatures, I must keep my heart for my God: away, ye gaudy suitors, away, ye glittering toys, there is no room for you; my whole soul, if its capacity were ten thousand times larger than it is, were too scant to entertain the supreme

Good, to let in infinite goodness and fulness. Oh charge it upon yourselves with the greatest vehemence! Love the Lord, O my soul, keep thyself in the love of God; let the love of God constrain you, and keep yourselves under the most powerful constraints of it. In a word, live upon God as upon uncreated life itself, drink at the fountain, feed upon infinite fulness, depend upon almighty power, refer yourselves to unsearchable wisdom, and unbounded love; see nothing but God in the creature, taste nothing but God in the world, delight yourselves in him, long for communion with him, and communications from him, to receive of his fulness grace for grace. Then do we live most like angels, when we live most purely in God, and find all the powers of our souls spending themselves upon him; and ourselves, our life, and all the comforts of it, flowing from him, and again swallowed up in him. But because we are yet in the body, I shall explain it in these following particulars:—

1. “Converse with God in all your self-excellencies.” I bade you before not converse with these; now, I say, converse with God in these. Thus do the angels; they know nothing that they have of their own, they enjoy nothing distinct from God: they are excellent creatures, excellent in knowledge, power, holiness, &c.; yet they enjoy all their excellencies in God, and ascribe them all to him, and so let us labour to do.

(1.) View yourselves not in your own particular

beings, but in the essence of God; look upon yourselves as being and subsisting in the midst of an infinite essence, in which the whole creation is, as it were, wrapt up, and doth subsist.

(2.) And whatever excellency you find in your souls or bodies, look not upon it as your own; maintain not a mine and thine, a distinction of interests between God and yourselves, but look upon all as God's, and enjoy it in him.

(3.) When you find yourselves tempted to cast a fond and unchaste look upon the beauty, strength, activity, or temper of your own bodies, upon the ingenuity, wisdom, constancy, courage, composedness of your own souls, take heed of settling into a selfish admiration of any of them, but enjoy them in God, and say, This, O my body, this, O my soul, is no other than the portraiture of the blessed God; these created excellencies are broken beams of the infinite, unspotted, uncreated perfections. Having once attained to this, we shall no longer covet to be admired, desire to be commended, fret at being undervalued; I mean, not in a selfish manner, but rather break out in a spiritual passion with the Psalmist, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

(4.) Nay, let me add, when you find yourselves ready to put your own stamp upon God's best coin, to look upon supernatural gifts and graces with a sinful, selfish admiration, remember that you have them

only in Christ Jesus, and enjoy them in your head; labour to enjoy grace itself only in Christ, as the Apostle, "I, yet not I, but Christ in me;" "I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God." So ought we to glory: I believe, I love, I am patient, penitent, humble; yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me, Christ Jesus that dwelleth in me. And indeed a pious man, who thus lives at the very height of his own being, yea, and above it too, knows best how to reverence himself, yea, and to love himself too, and yet without any self-love: for he loves himself in God, and his own endowments as divine ornaments.

2. "Converse with God, and live upon him in the excellencies of all other creatures, and in all your creature-enjoyments." We cannot live without creatures, as the angels do indeed, but let us come as near them as we can, which is by living above creatures: place your happiness in God, and your hearts upon him; labour to find God all things to you, and in you, and to be filled with his fulness; labour to get your understandings filled with the knowledge of God, your wills filled with his divine will, your hearts filled with his infinite goodness and sweetness, your memories filled with the remembrance of his name, your whole souls filled with his holy and pure image, filled with the fruits of his Holy Spirit: nay, let these very bodies be filled not only with his good creatures, but more especially with his good-will in the creatures. It is

said indeed of the sensual epicures of the world, that their bellies are filled with God's hid treasures, that is, with rare and precious delicacies : but how much better doth God fill the souls of his saints with his hid treasures, when he feedeth them with his divine favour, and dippeth his hand with them in the dish ? This is meat indeed which the saints eat of, which other men, though they feed at the same table, know not of. The glorified saints shall be satisfied wholly and perfectly with the divine image shining gloriously on them, and in them ; to which purpose that of the Psalmist may be accommodated, " I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness." Well, we cannot be so satisfied in this life it seems : however, though we cannot be so satisfied with it, yet let us not be satisfied without it, nor satisfied with anything besides it. Resolve, holy soul, Well, if I must not be fully satisfied with the image of my heavenly Father till I awake, I will lie down, and fall asleep hungry as I am then ; for I will not fill my mouth with chaff, nor my soul with the husks that the swine do eat. But, in the mean time, get what you can of God out of creature-enjoyments.

(1.) Enjoy all things for God, and that these two ways :

(i.) Use all for him. Those riches, honours, interest, friends, which are clogs upon the heels of others, let them be as heels to you to carry you heaven-ward ; let your souls be winged with those

very enjoyments, wherewith the wings of others are pinioned; and that which is fuel to their worldly lusts, let it be as fuel to feed and nourish your spiritual love. To use what we have for God, is the only way of not abusing it; this is one way of enjoying all for God, to use all for him: and yet there is something higher in that phrase of enjoying all for God, than this, namely,

(ii.) Value no creature-comfort any further than as it leads to God; and this in a double sense too. 1. Value things to be good only by this, by their leading you unto God. Now, God being the supreme and infinite Good, anything is so far good as it leads to the enjoyment of him. Now, the enjoyment of God is only in being like to him; holiness is his image; so then, every thing is good that tends to sanctification, and to make men partakers of a divine nature. We are usually mistaken in the true notion of good and evil, of mercies and judgments, judging according to the taste, as foolish patients do; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. Measure all things by the proportion they bear, and the tendency they have to the supreme Good: and call not anything evil that brings nearer to him, nor anything good that draws off from him. 2. When you have found a thing that is really good, tending and leading to the chief Good, and to the possession of him; labour to enjoy it, and rejoice in it only under this notion, as such; when you love it, let it be with a pure spiritual

love ; and so order your delight in it, that it may be said, you do rather rejoice in the end of it, than in the enjoyment of it.

(2.) Another way of living upon God in the creature is, to enjoy all things as partaking of him. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." Every beam of created light floweth out of the Father of lights. When the blessed and glorious God framed this stately fabric of the visible world, because there was nothing better in the world than himself, he was pleased to copy out himself in it, and to spread his own infinite perfections over it, and through it, so that every particular good is a blossom of the first goodness ; every created excellency is a dark draught of God, and a broken beam of this infinite Sun of righteousness. Oh labour to do so ! look upon the perfections which you find here below, not so much as the perfections of this or that particular being, but as they are so many drops risen out of the Fountain of all perfections, in whom they all meet, and are concentrated. It is well expressed by one, "In a particular being, love the universal Goodness ;" let the whole world be as the garden of God to you, where every creature is a flower, from which you may drink something of the divine sweetness. Alas ! at what a low and sensual rate do we live, when we rejoice in creatures, either as they are excellent, or as they are ours ? whereas indeed neither of these is true ; for they are not excellent, but God is excellent in them ; and how

can we call anything our own, when God made both us and all things for himself? Oh! how injurious it is to the blessed God, when we rob him of his own perfections that he hath imprinted upon the creature, by loving it, and delighting in it, not as in him, but as something distinct from him! nay, we are then injurious to ourselves, as we shall see by and by. Labour to enjoy and to converse with God in the creatures. "O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" cried David, when he had been meditating of the creature's excellencies. Labour to abstract your minds from terrene things even in the enjoyment of them, and call upon yourselves to love, and live, and feed upon God in them; live not upon the dark side of your mercies, but upon the representations of God in them. Is there anything good? oh, this is a taste of infinite goodness! Is there anything sweet? oh, how sweet is the God that made it so! Is there anything lovely? it is a picture of him whose name is Love. Is anything firm, stable, lasting? it is a shadow of that glorious Essence with whom there is no shadow of change. Have you anything strong? it arises out of that God with whom is everlasting strength. Doth any creature give rest, ease, refreshment? it springs out of the all-satisfying fullness of God. In a word, labour to climb up by every created excellency, as by so many beams, to the Father of lights: let all the world be to you as God's temple, and be ready to say of every place,

as Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! surely this is none other but the house of God;" that God who runs through all created beings, and from himself derives several prints of beauty and excellency all the world over. But especially take heed of your own created comforts, that they do not insensibly lead away your hearts, and ensnare you into a sinful, particular, distinct love of them; which is a sin soon committed, hardly discerned, and most hardly reformed. If any be freed from these inordinate affections, sure they are but few; and those few have come dearly by it; as one said in another case, With a great sum they have obtained this freedom; they have paid for it, not with the fore-skins of the Philistines, but with the lives of what they so loved, there being no way to cure this evil distemper, but cutting off the member infected with it, the part that it fed upon. As a branch of this head, let me add, Labour to live upon God in the excellencies of other men; value them, and all their accomplishments, only in God, as he that did admire God, and enjoy God in them. Wherever you see wisdom, goodness, ingenuity, holiness, justice, or any other accomplishment, say, here and there is God. And this is the honest way of making ourselves masters of whatever is another man's, and enjoying it, as truly as he himself doth, yea, as truly as if it were our own; when we behold all these beams, as coming from the same Fountain of lights, and do love them all in him, with a univer-

sal love. This is the rare art of having nothing, yet possessing all things; of being rich, though one have nothing; and of being wise, though one know nothing.

(3.) The last way of living upon God in the creature is, to taste and feed upon the love of God in them, not only his common bounty, but his special love in Christ. The good will of God gives a sweet relish to every morsel, as I hinted before. Even in the midst of all your delightful, pleasant, sweet enjoyments, let your souls be more affected with this than with them; let this be as the manna lying upon the top of all your outward comforts, which your spirits may gather up and feed upon. But this I touched upon before, therefore I shall add no more concerning it. Thus I have shown you how you may imitate the life of angels, in living upon God, even whilst you live in the body. To this I may add another particular or two.

3. "Converse with God, and live upon him in all his ordinances." Let communion with God be your drift in every duty, and the very life and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, as might appear abundantly; yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter, but after the living God—"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;" "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God,"

Let the word, preached or read, be as a voice from heaven talking with you ; let your conference be a comment upon that word ; let meditation be as a kind of bringing down God into your souls, and prayer as a raising up of your souls into God, nothing but faith and love put into praises. And so of all the rest.

4. "Converse with God in all his providences ;" prosperity, adversity, plenty, penury, health, sickness, peace, and perplexity. This is a large theme : but as to prosperity, I have spoken something already, under that head of conversing with God in creature-enjoyments ; as for adversity, I have said much more in a large discourse to describe and commend the art of conversing with God in afflictions. Briefly at this time, converse not with losses, wants, afflictions, but with God in them ; and that not only with the justice, righteousness, severity, and sovereignty of God in them, but with the goodness and mercy of God in them. They are dark providences, we had not need to dwell altogether on the dark side of them. If all the ways of the Lord towards his people be mercy and truth, then his roughest and most dark ways are so too : if God be wholly love, then his very corrections proceed not from hatred : if it be his name to be good, and to do good, where have we learned then to call his afflicting providences evils, and to divide evil, which is but one, even as God is one, into sin and affliction ? Surely we speak as men ; and if God call them so, he speaks after the manner of men, as he often doth. If

the governing will of God be pure, perfect, and infinitely good and righteous, ought we not to converse with it in a free and cheerful manner, yea, and to love it too? In a word, pore not upon creature-changes, nor the uncertain wheels of motion, that are turning up and down we know not how, nor how oft; but fix yourselves upon that all-seeing Eye, that unbounded Understanding, that unsearchable and infinite Goodness, which pervades the whole universe, and sits in all the wheels of motion, governing all the strange motions of the creatures in a wonderful and powerful manner, and carrying them all in their several orbs to one last and blessed end.

Thus imitate the angelical life, even whilst you are in the body: converse with God in self-excellencies, in the creature excellencies, ordinances, providences; and yet labour to be more like him still, to abstract your mind from all these, and all material and sensible things, and to converse with God without the help of any creature, I mean in the Spirit, and by a secret feeling of his almighty goodness, and energy of grace, and the communications of a divine life in your souls. In a word, if you would taste of heaven, whilst you are upon earth, labour above all things for a true conjunction of your hearts with God, in a secret feeling of his goodness, and a reciprocation of love to him; and to find the holy and blessed God exercising his grace and power upon all the faculties of your souls, and rendering them like unto himself, and all these powers of the soul mutually spending themselves upon him freely and entirely, as upon

the chief Good, which is their proper and full object. Seeing the saints in glory shall be like unto the angels of God in their way of living in and upon God alone, receive, I pray, this exhortation, which I have so largely prosecuted, and labour to begin that life, as far as you can, upon earth. Is there not reason for such an inference? doth it not now flow naturally from the doctrine? If you think it does not, I will add two or three particulars to strengthen this inference, or at least to clear it.

(1.) It is highly reasonable that we begin to be that which we expect to be for ever, to learn that way of living in which we hope to live to all eternity: so that I infer, upon as strong ground as the Apostle, “He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.”

(2.) If this be the life of angels, then it is the highest and noblest life that any created being is capable of. As by the bread of angels, and the tongue of angels, the most excellent food, and the most excellent language is understood in scripture, so must we understand this life of angels. Now, it is very suitable to the reasonable soul, that immortal, noble being, to aim at the highest and noblest life: “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

(3.) This shall not only be our life in heaven, but itself is something of heaven, a beginning of heaven. This life is not a thing really distinct from life eternal—“This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” “Ye have eternal life.” There-

fore we read of eternal life abiding in men, and not abiding in them—"Whoso eateth my flesh hath eternal life." A holy soul thus deified, thus living in and upon God, is as truly glorified upon earth, in some degree, as the world is enlightened by the morning-sun, which is as truly enlightened, though not so gloriously, as by the sun in its greatest height. Oh low and ignoble spirits, who can be satisfied with a happiness which shall only be in the world to come! Certainly it is true and proper speech to say, that a participation of God, is an anticipation of heaven; and to be like unto him, is to be with him. You see what reason I have to make such an inference, and to form it unto such an earnest exhortation; oh, therefore, I beseech you before God, and his holy angels, to endeavour to be like him, and to live like them!

Obj. Say not, How can men on earth live like angels? *Ans.* 1. But fall on and imitate them, though it be—with unequal steps; labour to be as angels, if you cannot be altogether equal to angels. 2. We are bidden to live the life of God—"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Be ye holy as I am holy." If I speak high, how high speak these texts.

Obj. Say not, But how can this animal life permit this? *Ans.* 1. Thus men have lived in the body; thus lived Enoch, thus lived Paul, thus lived David, that man after God's own heart, the greatest and most divine character that can be given of a mortal man, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." 2. Cannot we live in the body, ex-

cept we live to the body? You see saints upon earth live above other men upon earth; and yet a little more pains, take the other flight, and you may live above yourselves too, higher than you do. I will only add a motive or two to this duty of living upon God.

1. "The last enemy to be overcome is creature-love. This is the last enemy that keeps the field, by which alone the greatest part of men do perish everlastingly: beat down this, and you win the day, and shall wear the crown; nay, the very conquest of it is a crown, as I said before.

2. "To live upon God in the creature, is to enjoy the creature in the best sense." You will lose nothing of the creature by this means, but shall enjoy it more fully than ever you did: for the creature is ten thousand times sweeter in God than it is in itself. Yea, in a word, this is the way to enjoy all the world, and to enjoy the accomplishments of all men, and all things, as much as if they were your own.

3. "It is the way never to lose anything." He that lives upon God, spends upon a stock that cannot be wasted, drinks at a fountain that cannot be exhausted. So much as we enjoy of God in the creature, we do not lose with it; and that which we do not so enjoy, we deserve to lose. This then is the secure and honourable life, in comparison of which the life of a prince is but a wallowing in the mire. "Lord, give us evermore this bread," and hearts to feed upon it. Amen.