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THE
HEAVENLY SOCIETY:

A

Funeral Discourse,

DELIVERED IN GREEN COUNTY, ON

OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

MRS. JANE HORTON,

MAY 15th, A. D. 1808.

By THE REV. THOMAS CLELAND.

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MEMOIR.

MRS. JANE HORTON, was a daughter of the Rev. Robert Henry, a worthy and pious clergyman, some years ago in the Presbyterian church, in Charlotte county, Virginia. Blessed with such a parent, his daughter had the advantages of a religious education in her youthful days; and in the noted revival of religion, in the days of the eminently pious and Rev. John Smith, she became seriously impressed respecting the concerns of her soul and a future state, and shortly after, professed an interest in Christ, and became a member of the church. Removing sometime after to this country, owing to her unsettled situation in life, the want of the stated means of grace, together with those doubts and scruples, which are often incident to the professors of religion, she was prevented from an open attendance on the ordinance of the sacred supper, as is customary in other cases when such difficulties do not occur. But during the whole course of her life, she maintained one uniform course of moral conduct, and manifested an opposition to the sinful habits and customs of the world, and supported an unblemished character until death. But her latter end was more like the sun that seems larger at setting. Her complaint was very lingering, and she waited for her dissolution a long time before it came. Death was not terrifying to her; neither did he come with surprize, as she had for some time anticipated her departure with pleasure. She wished to leave this world, as she said, not so much for the sake of its troubles and sorrows, but to be free from all sin, and rest in a state of perfect holiness with her Jesus, who she observed was her only hope, and glorious intercessor. She expressed a sweet resignation to the will of Heaven, and left an almost unequivocal testimony to her friends, that she departed to a glorious state of rest and ineffable felicity. To record her dying testimony, would exceed our limits and designed brevity. Let it suffice to say, it is humbly hoped, she fell asleep in Jesus on the 29th of March, 1808, and is now at rest. Her funeral was preached on the third Sabbath in May following, at the dwelling of her brother, Daniel Henry, in Green county. The author had not the smallest thought of publishing the sermon at the

time he preached it ; but being afterwards earnestly solicited to give a copy for publication, and from the assurance given that it should be no burthen to the public except the reading of it, together with a hope, that by the blessing of God it might not be unprofitable, he did consent after some deliberation and advice, to furnish a copy for publication, as near as possible after the method in which it was delivered. God grant, for Christ's sake, that it may be blest to every one who may read.

The author designed the following discourse for general, as well as special use. He did not give it as a mere compliment to those soliciting its publication. It contains neither encomiums or censures, which are often misapplied, and of which he is not fond in funeral discourses. The above little memoir is sufficient. From the circumstances detailed to him, together with his own knowledge, from an acquaintance with the deceased—he selected the text, and shaped the discourse from it, to answer the occasion for which it was intended. ✓



THE HEAVENLY SOCIETY, &c.

REV. VII. 9.—“ *After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.*”

THE present state, is but the infancy of human nature. Our days are few and evil, and the space is narrow between the cradle and the coffin. Life terminates its short and unpleasant journey in the grave, and all beyond is vast eternity. There are two places of destination to which all the human family are going. A few find the straight gate, and walk the narrow way that leads to life; while thousands rush down the broad road that leads to destruction. These latter go away into everlasting punishment, but the former into life eternal. So great is the difference between the future abodes and exercises of the saint and sinner, that, while the one is comforted, the other is tormented. So great are the joys of the one, and the torments of the other, that the efforts of men and angels fail in the description. In the holy scriptures our bodily sense are addressed, and employed on these subjects, to assist our faith; and the strongest metaphors and boldest figures are there used, to convey to our minds those important lessons, with which it is necessary for us to be acquainted. Those descriptions of heaven and hell with which we meet in the sacred writings, are generally made up of such metaphors, as serve to represent the one in a point of view the most glorious and attracting; but the other, a place of exquisite pain and anguish. A paradise with all its pleasure—a Canaan with all its exuberance and fertility—a city with all its magnificence and splendor—a kingdom with all its grandeur and glory—rivers of eternal pleasures. These are some of the faint emblems of heaven. Such material objects with which we are conversant, and which excite pleasure in the mind through the medium of the senses, are only used to assist our know-

ledge, and raise our views respecting spiritual things, and especially the future happiness of the righteous. On the other hand, gnawing worms, and gnashing teeth—lakes of fire and brimstone—bottomless pit and smoky furnace—devouring fire and everlasting burnings, are the usual emblematical representations of the dreadful torments of the wicked in their state of infernal anguish, and everlasting punishment. But all descriptions fail.

*We talk of heaven, we talk of hell,
But what they mean, no tongue can tell;
Heaven's a place where pleasures are,
But hell the chaos of despair.*

With regard to heaven, my brethren, we need not perplex ourselves as some have done, by a restless anxiety to know, how, and where, it will be; whether in the regions of the air, or on this globe, when it shall have become refined by the great conflagration at the last day, or whether it be local, and have a certain form. To be **EVER** with the Lord—to be **LIKE** him, and to **SEE** him as he is—to serve him day and night in his temple—surely this is enough—this will ravish the soul forever. Such a prospect once reconciled an old Testament saint to the troubles and difficulties of life; produced the most cheerful acquiescence in the Divine Providence, and drew from him this soul-comforting language: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” The Eternal presence and fruition of Him, who is **GLO-RI-OU-S** IN **HOL-I-N-E-S-S**, will make heaven wherever it may be. His eternal absence—the sinner's everlasting separation from Him; and the furious reflections of a guilty soul, will no doubt be an awful hell.

It is the former of these subjects, my brethren, to which your attention is now solicited. The living and dying testimony of our departed friend, whose memory we now commemorate, constraineth that charity which hopeth all things, to place her in the happy number of glorified spirits—in the “general assembly and church of the first born.” The subject we have chosen, evidently represents heaven to be a place of society; and from those circumstances, with which we are made acquainted, respecting the case of her, whose departure is the occasion of this solemnity—we shall endeavour to shape our discourse from the subject, in such a way as to suit the present occasion.

The vision contained in the first eight verses of the chapter, appears to be a representation of the state of the true church on earth for a short space of time, supposed to be in the days of Constantine the Great, between the year 323 and 337, when the church enjoyed a calm and peaceful state. The number in that period, are figuratively expressed by an hundred and forty-four thousand, a large *determinate* put for an *indeterminate* number, as multiplied by twelve a square root, and then by a thousand, to be an emblem of all the called and chosen of God in that age; consisting of Gentile as well as Jewish believers, who being the truly spiritual *Israel*, are spoken of in verse 4 as such, in allusion to the twelve faithful tribes that sprang from Jacob, and whose posterity were the true and visible church, according to God's covenant with Abraham. In the enumeration, the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are left out, as having been ringleaders in idolatry, and so not fit to bear a part in the emblems of the pure church of Christ, which, consisting not merely of the *natural* seed of Israel, but of Jews and Gentiles together, are figuratively expressed by sealing those of the twelve tribes of Israel.

But the vision of the innumerable company in our text, is evidently a representation of the glorious state of the church triumphant in heaven, consisting of all true believers, collected out of different nations and kindreds of the earth; even all the elect, wheresoever they were scattered through the world. Those, when gathered home to their glorious and blessed state, make a great assembly and an innumerable multitude. There their tribulations are ended, when God will dwell amongst them, and wipe away all tears from their eyes forever. In farther pursuing the subject, we shall briefly attend to the following method:—

I. Endeavour to describe the heavenly society.

II. Shew wherein will consist the happiness of that society.

III. Make a few reflections by way of improvement.

1. We shall endeavour to describe the heavenly society. A number I hope in this assembly, are on the way to immortal glory and happiness. Your souls, my dear brethren, are longing for the happy period to arrive, when you shall take your flight from this stage of sin and sorrow, and be at rest. You have tasted of the wholesome fruit of the tree of life, and the streams of that river which make glad the city of God. You contemplate, ere long,

through the merits of our glorious Redeemer, to bid adieu to this unsatisfying world—spring from this darkling vale—leave the shores of dull mortality, and fly beyond the grave. It does not now appear what you shall be, nor hath it entered into your hearts to conceive, what God hath prepared for you. Your journey is not yet ended, and you have perhaps to sigh a few more days or years, in this vale of sorrow. But will it not animate your heaven-born souls to be informed a little of that blessed society, in which you expect shortly to be numbered? Will it not be reviving, to draw away the parting veil for a moment, and see of whom this blessed society will consist? Here behold,

1. *Jesus, the glorious Mediator.*—He who once took on him the likeness of sinful flesh, and was found in fashion as a man, who groaned in the garden, and expired on the cross—who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. This very same Jesus “is gone up with a shout, and our Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” Yes, the Lord is risen indeed, and is now exalted at the Father’s right hand, and ever liveth to make intercession for his church. There he sits in God-like majesty; ten thousand smiles in his face, and love in every smile. He appears as a Lamb that had been slain, and by his merit and mediation, he recommends his blood-bought inheritance to the divine favour. He is the head of all principality and power—the head of the church—the eternal bond of union—the sun that enlightens that world, and the glorious object of everlasting praise and adoration, to saints and angels. There the refulgent beams of his dazzling glory, irradiate the heavenly mansions, and eternally excite the songs of the redeemed, who, with the blessed angels circle round his throne, while the seraphims veil their faces, and cover their feet with holy reverence, and with adoring wonder, cry day and night, “holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts—the whole earth is full of his glory.” It would be impossible for such sinful beings as we are, ever to hope for, or even conceive of a heaven without Jesus. As soon might those little lamps that shine with borrowed light, illuminate this world without the sun, as for us to shine in heaven without the borrowed rays of the sun of righteousness. Had he never assumed our likeness, we never could have been made like unto him. That manhood which he took upon him when he appeared in this world, he did not leave behind when he ascended into glory. And so completely did he open up the way when he was receiv-

ed up ~~into~~ heaven, that now with cheerful expectation, we look forward to that blessed period, when "he shall change our vile body, and fashion it according to his glorious body." O then my brethren we shall be *like* him for we shall *see* him as he is, and be satisfied with his *likeness*. As the *wine* is to the branches, or the head to the other members of our body, so is the God-man, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to all the members of his mystical body. Not one of those for whom he laid down his life shall ever perish; not one shall be absent. 'Father, says he, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.' And to his dear disciples he says, 'I go to prepare a place for you: I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' O what a Society must that be where Jesus the glorious Mediator is the head! And how unspeakably happy must those glorified spirits be, who are ever with the Lord and behold his glory!

2. *The blessed Angels* shall form a part of this society. Of these celestial spirits, we know but little. They appear to have been the first of God's creation, and were present when he created the heavens and earth, at the sight of which, these 'morning stars sang together, and these sons of God shouted for joy.' But the work of redemption being more glorious and amazing, their songs are changed into a holy wonder, and adoring inquiry, in much that, as it were, with "*out-stretched necks,*" they desire to look into these things. They have ever since the creation been employed as instruments in accomplishing the divine purposes, and executing the judgments of God upon his, and the church's enemies. The Apostle tells us that by the church is made known to them the manifold wisdom of God, with which also they hold an uninterrupted intercourse on earth, for they are continually ascending and descending on the son of man. They attend on the bride the Lamb's wife, being 'sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' They encamp around the dwellings of the just, and at length shall conduct us to the throne of God and the Lamb, and we shall dwell among them. Happy spirits! they never sinned as we have done. They never felt the pangs of remorse, but in perfect holiness and innocence, enjoy the smiles of heaven continually. When the son of man shall come to judge the world, then shall the holy angels be with

him. They will be present at that grand assize when the books are opened, and when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and the righteous received into glory, this 'Innumerable company of angels' shall join in concert with the general assembly and church of the first born, and ascribe blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and might unto our God for ever and ever. Glorious company! blessed society! O happy association! What rivers of pleasure!—What pure immortal joys!—What ineffable delights shall the ransomed of the Lord experience while they adore him with unabating rapture, and worship him with uninterrupted pleasure in his heavenly temple above, while the Lamb in the most immediate and delightful manner will refresh and complete^{ly} satisfy them with the most refined and transporting, substantial and noble enjoyments, ever fresh and flowing, to the utmost of their enlarged capacities and desires. And O with what harmonious concert will all these holy angels join in celebrating the praises of God's perfections, and of his works of nature, providence and grace!

3. This society will comprehend *all good men*. We are by nature children of wrath; degenerate plants of a strange vine, conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. We are destitute of the moral image of our Creator, and there is no good thing dwelling in us. Being by nature unclean, and in a state of moral depravity and pollution, we are totally unqualified for the spiritual exercises and holy employments of the heavenly state. There must be a change, not of the essence or faculties, but of the qualities and dispositions of the soul. The will must be renewed and holy dispositions implanted before the heart can have a suitable relish or moral taste for the holy beauty and excellence of divine things. This moral change which is effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart, is that which constitutes an essential difference between the regenerate and unregenerate part of mankind. It is in this view only that men can be properly called *good men*: for while unregenerate, there is none that doeth good; none righteous; no not one. However mild, blameless, and moral men's external conduct may appear to the world, yet if they are not regenerated or born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God. No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; and without faith it is impossible to please God. The actions of unregenerate men abstractly considered may be good and profitable to

mankind, yet owing to the improper motives which excite them, the principle from which they spring, and the end they have in view, they are entirely and essentially defective; because they spring from and terminate in *self* as the *all*, instead of a supreme regard to the general good, and the glory of God and his kingdom. In short, none strictly and scripturally speaking can be denominated *good men*, but those who are regenerated and born from above; and no sacrifice can be acceptable to God, but by Jesus Christ. These are called living stones, built up a spiritual house unto God: they are the excellent ones of the earth, being born, 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And of these, how great the multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues! What an august assembly when all the ransomed of the Lord shall meet in one general assembly! What pure delights, and everlasting pleasures shall they experience in the presence of the king amidst the unsullied enjoyments of the heavenly state! In this life there are three things which prevent the full society of good men:—they are separated by *distance of time*;—*distance of place*;—and *difference of sentiment*. The souls of good men are knit and bound together by the purest ligaments of disinterested affection. They are relations for eternity, and expect to dwell together in glory. But *distance of time* has long prevented that full society and happy intercourse of good men on earth, which is so sweet and desirable. We have heard of righteous Abel—of holy Enoch who walked with God—of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Job, and many others eminent for piety. But we have never seen these good men. Could we but only see and converse with them, what a heavenly intercourse it would be! Were they now on earth we might learn from them to walk with God too! Well, in a very little time we shall see them all. O what a blessed association will it be! There behold the good old patriarchs and goodly Prophets! Jesus and his holy Apostles, and the long list of martyrs, whose blood was shed for the testimony of Jesus. Here also thousands and millions more of whom we never heard, bought with the same blood and ransomed by the same power. No long centuries shall ever roll between the redeemed of the Lord any more.

But here also we are separated by *distance of place*. The church of Jesus Christ is not confined to one particu-

lar spot on the globe. The family of the faithful is considerably extensive in Europe and America, there are a few in Asia and Africa, and the lesser seas surrounded with vast waters contain thousands more. It is pleasing to a pious mind to reflect, that on every Lord's day there are hundreds of faithful watchmen on Zion's walls sounding the gospel trump all at the same time in different parts of the world, and hundreds and thousands more that hear the joyful sound, and are on the march to the heavenly Canaan. But mountains lift their tall summits, and oceans roll between the dear followers of Jesus. Some of our dearest relations and friends, whom we ardently esteem on account of their early lessons of wisdom and examples of piety, are often absent and at a great distance from us. The consideration of never seeing them in this world again, greatly abates our pleasure. Well, we shall all meet in glory, and part no more. No bleak mountains, with perpetual snows, no frozen seas or boisterous oceans with waters deep and wide; no solitary island or wide spread continent, no intervention of time, place, or circumstance, shall ever sunder the dear people of God any more. Nothing shall ever separate them from eternal intercourse and communion with one another amidst the infinite splendours of eternal glory.

But good men are often separated here by *difference of sentiment*. Real Christians do not differ so much about the only foundation which is laid in Zion, but it is mostly in the superstructure where the greatest difference lies. While some build on the foundation, *gold, silver, and precious stones*, the pure truths of the Gospel; others intermix more or less of *wood, hay, and stubble* with their building. When every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is; then if any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, which no doubt will be the case of the *gold, silver, and precious stones*, he shall receive a reward. But on the other hand, if any man's work shall be burned, which certainly will be the case of all unsound materials, all unauthorized human inventions which may have been brought into the building by any Christian, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. 1. Cor. 3. 11—15. This ought to widen a little the limits of charity as exercised by some of our modern religionists, and self righteous teachers, who can with unreserved boldness, and disingenuous freedom, brand large

communities with holding forth doctrines which are hatched in hell and handed from the devil, and pleasing to the taste of *hardened sinners and carnal professors*. They would gain to themselves a little more credit, if they were more modest and charitable in their censures respecting their Christian neighbors, considering that themselves may have a considerable portion of perishable materials in their superstructure, which they may yet rejoice to see flaming at last, although they retain them now with the greatest tenacity and confidence. This ought also to silence the ungracious cavils of the ungodly against religion on account of the difference of sentiment among its professors. They ought to remind themselves of their own dangerous condition, and not reject religion because Christians are divided into various classes, and distinguished by several peculiarities. As for those who may call themselves Christians, and at the same time deny the deity, atonement and justifying righteousness of Christ, and consequently reject the only foundation altogether, and substitute in the place thereof a huge mass of wood, hay, and stubble, both for the bottom and superstructure; our charity is not put to the test respecting them;—they cannot be Christians;—they must suffer loss without salvation. But as truth is the bond of union, we necessarily feel more attached to those, whose principles and dispositions are most congenial with our own. Sometimes the differences among Christians are so small, that Christian love and affection bears down those little barriers, and they meet together on the sweet terms of brotherly intercourse and holy friendship. At other times, sorrowful to relate! they seem to be shy and stand aloof from each other as if a cold mountain were between. Prejudice! thou bane of Christian fellowship; thou art one of those “little foxes that spoil the vines.” But in Heaven there shall be no dissensions. Charming, cheering thought! One blaze of light shall illuminate every heart; and as the sun shining in his meridian splendor is to this world, so shall Jesus be to that blessed society. O happy day! when all the redeemed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; when every intervening cause shall be taken away, and they experience no kind of interruption or separation forever. It will then be known whether we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, or whether we were chosen on condition of our faith and repentance. The same truth will be viewed and the same object embraced, and Christ shall be all

in all, And now, my brethren, behold this great and blessed society! Some from all parts of the world, and from every generation since the commencement of the gospel dispensation. Here are men of all climes who never met before; the shivering Icelander and the sun-burnt Moor;—the Asiatics and the sable sons of Africa; the tawny tribes of the desert, and the more civilized sons and daughters of Europe and America;—here all Christ's faithful shepherds, with the lambs they gathered and the flocks they fed with care;—pious parents with their religious offspring, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, who served the Lord together; and the millions of little infants caught from womb and breast, being freely chosen to everlasting life without any foresight, or requirement of those conditions of salvation they were never able to perform. O what a glorious company!

*Hail! ye holy, happy spirits!
Death no more shall make you fear!
Sin and sorrow, pain and anguish,
Shall no more disturb you here.*

And now ye children of Zion what think ye of this heavenly society which you have an expectation of joining when you leave this world, and quit your tiresome pilgrimage? Does not the thought raise thy drooping spirits, that in a very short time you shall leave this house of clay, to dwell among them there? O thou believer raise thy drooping head, cast an eye towards those heavenly mansions, and quicken thy pace in thy christian course, and with patience wait till the great shepherd appears to take you home to rest with him forever.

II. We are next to shew wherein will consist the happiness of this heavenly society.

1. There they shall be *all holy*. If all the inhabitants of this world were holy, we should again have a paradise on earth. The unmingled streams of pleasure would again flow round the world, and the children of men would be happy. But this is not the case: the good man here finds his pleasure much abated by the reflection that the world around him is lying in wickedness, and perhaps some of his nearest relations are farthest from the kingdom of heaven. In his own house he finds himself among dead souls, and is surrounded with many more at the house of God. While he resides in Sodom his righteous soul is vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; and with the Psalmist he is ready to cry out, "woe unto me that I sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Ke-

dar!" He rarely finds a society of his fellow creatures but the greater or less number are unholy. The righteous and the wicked mingle in the same congregation, and it is seldom that a dozen can be found in a family, or society, of whom it may be said; they are *all* Christians. There is either some Judas among the disciples, or unholy sinner among the whole who makes no pretensions to religion. But none of these things are found in heaven: there we shall never behold a sinner, nor be grieved with their conduct any more. It will then be as impossible to find a sinner in heaven, as a saint in hell. No, 'there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.' If heaven were a place suited to a carnal mind, and afforded the gratification which unregenerate men effect, then indeed unholy men might find such happiness there, as in their state they are capable of receiving. But heaven is a *holy* place, the habitation of a *holy* God: it is filled with myriads of *holy* men and angels, who are exercising themselves incessantly in the *holy* employments of praise and adoration. An unholy creature must be destitute of those qualities which constitute a meetness for the heavenly inheritance, and will be forever incapable of relishing, or participating the joys of heaven. What would there be in that place suited to the taste of an unholy being? Could he delight in the society of the glorified, whom he so little resembles, or find communion with them in exercises which were here his burden and aversion? Could he whose spirit is defiled with sin, find pleasure in the presence of God who being omniscient and holy could not but discern and abhor his defiled condition? Would not a consciousness of his power terrify him, and a recollection that he had once cast innumerable angels out of heaven appal him? If secret intercourse with God in the chamber, and social fellowship with him in the public assembly, have been a mere task instead of a delight, how can we suppose that unholy men should instantly find a pleasure in these things in heaven? How could they endure to spend an eternity there in employments, for which they had no taste? But we are assured that 'as the tree falleth, so it lieth, that he who is unjust, will be unjust still, and he who is filthy, will be filthy still.' I can as soon believe in the redemption of the devil, as in the redemption of damned souls from hell; because they are under the curse of the same law and under equal obligations to obey.

But the very essence of the pleasures of the heavenly state will consist in holiness. The saints shall be all holy, and completely separated from the wicked forever: so that there may as soon be found a saint in hell, as a sinner in heaven. But we farther observe,

2. They shall be *eminently* holy. We rejoice in the society of good men when we meet with them; we find a degree of approbation and feel such pleasure that our affections seem to be cemented, and we appear to have a oneness of heart with them. Their meekness and humility, their heavenly walk and godly conversation, their love to Jesus and his holy cause, all these things create in us a prepossession in their favour. But alas! by and by we discover so many defects; in some a little pride, in others a little covetousness, and many other little things, which like the spots in the sun, though they do not obscure its rays, yet become a blemish. Here unbelief begins to fret and murmur; discontent prevails; and heaven-born Charity herself stands pausing and seems at a loss what to say. Christians have their weaknesses and failures, and the best of men are not free from imperfection and liability to go astray. But ever blessed be the name of the Lord! there shall be found no spots or blemishes in Heaven. The members of that blessed society shall never be grieved with each other any more. There all shall shine in white robes, and be presented before the throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; clouded characters shall clear up; innocence shall appear in white garments, and then of a truth, "the king's daughter shall appear all glorious within." O what a blessed company must that be, where all shall be *perfectly* and *eminently* holy!

O glorious hour! O blest abode!

I shall be near and like my God;

And flesh and sin no more control

The sacred pleasures of the soul.

3. There will be *complete happiness* in this society as well as holiness. If there be any real happiness in this life, doubtless it is to be found in religion. Many who have tried both sides of the question, bear an unequivocal testimony in favor of religion. The same testimony we often hear from the lips of many who never experienced it, though for the most part their practice is against it. A wicked Balaam while he seeks for permission to curse Israel for the sake of gain, at the same time wishes to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end

may be like his. Good men are the excellent ones of the earth, and they are looking for their inheritance in a better world; their portion is not in this life, and they do not find complete happiness here. A David's eyes sometimes "run down with rivers of water," and a mourning Jeremiah's "heart is pained and his soul weepeth sore in secret places," because of the pride and transgression of ungodly men. Many of our sorrows in this world arise from sympathy; and religion not only allows, but teaches us "to weep with those that weep, to bear each others burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." A holy Job is suddenly stript of all his earthly comforts and sorely buffeted by Sattan; one poor Lazarus lies "at the rich man's gate full of sores," and another "whom the Lord loveth is sick." Here a dear friend is called to lament the loss of an affectionate wife, a faithful husband, an only child, or a tender parent; death breaks asunder the strongest ties of friendship and those tender cords which bind relation together. Pained limbs and aching heads; dying groans and yawning graves, sorrows, cares and difficulties of life; temptations, fears and disappointments;—these greatly diminish from the happiness of society and abridge the pleasures of life. But these troubles are only for a night and then cometh joy in the morning. Soon the righteous go where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary find rest. In heaven are no tears, sorrow and sighing have no place there, but each shall be as happy as his capacity will admit. There the church shall be at rest, and the inhabitants of that heavenly world shall never say any more, "I am sick." They shall never hunger or thirst any more; and sin and death shall forever fly from those abodes of eternal rest and pleasure. O what shouts of victory and triumph! what eternal anthems & hallelujahs to God and the Lamb will ring through the New Jerusalem when the full chorus of saints and angels with sweetest symphony and heavenly concert, shall swell the eternal round, of praises to the Three One and One in Three forever and forever!

4. *Perfect union in religious sentiments, affections and worship*, will form an essential part of the felicity of heaven. In this world we find a diversity of sentiment among the professors of religion. This often arises from words only, and sometimes from a blinded partiality in favor of certain tenets to which we adhere, having espoused them from our fore-fathers, or taken them upon credit from others, without examining for ourselves, whether they be

true or not. Different articles of faith, and forms of worship too often occasion disaffection among the ministers and professors of the gospel, and often places them at a distance from each other. The want of a proper agreement greatly diminishes the aggregate of social happiness, and evil passions both produce, and are produced by it. But in the heavenly society there will be no difference of sentiment. "Lo here is Christ and lo there," will never be heard in heaven, but we "shall see him as he is." Then will there be no need of faith or hope, for the one shall be exchanged for sight, and the other for real enjoyment. As the sun in the firmament is to all who behold his light and feel his beams in the natural world, so shall the glory of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, be to all those who dwell in the ineffable presence of the everlasting Jehovah. One glorious object, about which they shall never differ, will sweetly attract the whole multitude forever. The object, form, and manner of worship being the same, will produce a perfect union of sentiment and affection. They shall all be of one heart and one soul. A uniformity appeared in the multitude which John saw : they stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, emblematical of purity and innocence, being all washed in the same blood and sanctified by the same spirit. They had palms in their hands in token of victory and triumph ; like those victors who used to return from the field with palm branches in their hands, as the emblems of conquest. They all had the same confession and proclaimed with a loud voice, "salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." And finally they "serve the lord day and night in his temple."

5. In the last place we will observe, that this society shall be blessed with *permanence* and *perpetuity*. There the saints of the most high shall enjoy an eternal sabbath, and the congregation shall never break up. Our social pleasures here, are often damped by the necessity of exclusion from the society of our pious friends, by reason of secular concerns, the intervention of sterner duties, and the unwelcome approach of death by which we are often deprived of our most intimate and valuable friends. Fellowship with Christian brethren is sweet, and while engaged in acts of social worship, we feel the endearing bands sweetly drawn around us ; but soon we are called to part, and parting divides our joy, and we have often to tread "life's darkling vale" alone. But will this be the

case in the heavenly mansions beyond the skies? Will that blessed meeting ever end? No, blessed be the name of our God, as long as he lives and immortality endures, so long shall our pleasures flow in unmingled streams, ever breaking forth from the azure throne, and making glad the city of God. There we shall meet all our pious friends, and the ransomed sons and daughters of the Lord, never, no never more to part. O how sweet the thoughts of an eternity, "where knowledge grows without decay, and love shall never die." If the felicity of the heavenly state were to end after the lapse of ten thousand ages, would not the thought damp the spirits of the good man; strike the harp out of his hand; clip the wings of his faith, and bring him down to despondency? Would not such a thought abate the ardor of the burning seraph, check the adoration of the blessed angels, and chill the flaming zeal and love of all the ransomed spirits round the throne? But why such a thought! The inhabitants of that blessed world shall never part; their felicity shall never end; their souls shall flourish in immortal youth, ever blooming and ever young. Eternity! O thou pleasing, heart-ravishing, soul-devouring thought!

*There where the blessed Jesus reigns,
In heaven's unmeasured space;
We'll stand a long eternity,
In pleasure and in praise.
When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.*

If one day in the courts of the Lord on earth is better than a thousand elsewhere, what must an eternity be, in the holy employment and exercises of the heavenly state, in the ineffable smiles and eternal fruition of Deity! O my soul! Dost thou not at the very thought almost sink under the weight of so pleasingly oppressive a blessedness! O let every believing soul in this assembly with joy and wonder look forward to the day of redemption—that blissful morn—that glorious day that shall never see a close! surely that soul who is longing and panting after the full enjoyment of those heavenly pleasures is now ready to cry out "come Lord Jesus come quickly," while others, as it were involuntarily exclaim, "almost thou persuidest me to be a christian." But we hasten to make a few reflections by way of,

APPLICATION.

1. From this subject we may learn the greatness of the Redeemer's Kingdom. It is true at present the church of Christ comparatively is but a little flock; few are walking in the narrow way that leads to life. But the stone cut out of the mountain without hands will ere long fill the whole earth; the church is in a state of progression, & the gospel will yet spread to the end of the earth, and visit millions who have never yet heard its joyful sound. And who can tell but the number of the redeemed shall at last exceed those who are lost? No doubt there have been millions since the first promise to the birth of Christ who believed & have long ago gone to their rest in heaven. Millions and millions more have died in the faith since the birth of Christ to the present time. To these add the vast numbers that are on their way to glory from different parts of the globe. To these add again the thousands that shall be brought in before the Millennium which perhaps is yet distant. Then add the countless millions that shall be born in that happy period, and who shall know the lord from the least unto the greatest. Christ will then reign a thousand years on the earth in his church: war, famine, and pestilence shall cease; the earth yield her increase and life be prolonged in consequence of the absence of those instruments of death which now sweep off thousands in every age and almost every day. The human family will increase more rapidly than ever, and O who can tell the countless millions this great sabbatic year shall bring into the church of Christ! Add once more the thousands and tens of thousands of the infant race who, (not by a conditional election or salvation on account of a foreseen faith or good works or any such paradoxical and unscriptural notion, but) are of that happy number "*chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world,—loved with an everlasting love;—*predestinated* unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," and "*taken from the evil to come.*" It is supposed that more than a third of mankind die in infancy, and if all such are saved, * then the number of the redeemed

* It is the author's opinion, that all dying infants are saved: not from any native inbred holiness, or because they appear so innocent and harmless, that they do not possess a fallen, wicked human nature. If this were the case, they would need no salvation; for so

must be vastly augmented. From this view of the abounding grace of God through Christ, it is probable, we do not say certain, that the number saved, will be greater than the lost—But even should it be only one third as great, God shall not loose his glory, nor the Redeemer his honor.

2. From this subject we may also learn, what qualification is necessary for heaven. The unregenerate are far from being in a state of fitness for the company and intercourse of that blessed society. How vain are all the hopes of heaven without a change! How, O sinner, could your disterpered and unholy soul be capable of relishing the entertainments of heaven, while you have no taste for them! If you continue in your present character and circumstances, there must be a vast change in heaven itself before you can be happy there. The father of lights must lay aside that holiness which is essential to his nature;—the Lord Jesus Christ must divest himself of his glory which he has with the Father; the temper, character, and disposition of every saint and angel, must be changed, and God must love that which he now hates, and be indif-

talk about their salvation if they be not in a lost condition, would be a contradiction; and to baptize them with water, representing the necessity of the blood of Christ to cleanse their natures, would be nothing but solemn nonsense. But infants are naturally depraved, being 'shapen in iniquity,' and conceived in sin.' Ps. 51. 5. But not being capable of faith or repentance, the ordinary way of salvation, it may be asked, how or in what way are they saved? I answer, he is wholly of grace, (as is the salvation of every other fallen being,) but in a sovereign way that God has not been pleased to reveal unto us. But the author is of opinion, the eternal unconditional electing love of God, (a doctrine despised by many) in Christ Jesus before the world began, is the only proper and consistent ground upon which we can account for the salvation of an infant. And it is on this ground he believes all infants are saved, dying in infancy. Expunge this doctrine from the system of divine truth, he acknowledges that he is left in the dark respecting infant salvation, and would thank any person to shew him a better ground on which he may hope to meet his own dear departed infant in glory. The Arminian notion of a conditional election affords him no hope for the salvation of one infant, nor indeed of any of the human family. In short, the Author appeals to any person denying the doctrine of God's eternal election of men to everlasting life, to know upon what other ground such person can get a dying infant to heaven. The whole world cannot tell.

ferent to the glories of his kingdom before you can be admitted there in your unregenerate state. But can you dare to hope for such an unaccountable, such an inconceivable change as this? 'Infinitely sooner, says one, would God change earth into hell, and bury you and all your character, under the ruins of this world which you inhabit and pollute, than he would thus tarnish the beauties of heaven, and divest himself of the brightest glory of his own divinity.' It is absolutely necessary that you, O sinner, should be changed, if ever you expect to have any part or lot in the future happiness of heaven. And when do you expect that change should be wrought? Be assured it must be before the soul leaves the body or never. So evident is the truth of this assertion that except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." And can you bear the thought of being forever excluded this kingdom? Alas! the conclusion is big with unutterable terror and death. What an awful thought to be banished forever from the presence of Jehovah! And Oh! what a doleful company! what a frightful association must that be, when you shall meet your unhappy companions, among devils in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone forever! Let this consideration awaken the careless, and urge the sinner to flee from the wrath to come. O let him speedily apply to that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and seek that Saviour by whom alone he can be saved.

3. Let us learn from this subject to be reconciled to departing providences, and also to our own death if prepared for a better world. Why should we wish to linger about these mortal shores and fear to launch away? And why grieve for those whom we believe are gone to the sweet abodes of eternal rest? "Precious in the sight of the Lord are the death of his saints;" and all that die in the Lord are gone to this blessed society. Our pious friends were not at home while on earth; they were only pilgrims and sojourners seeking a better country. And have they put to shore at last on Canaan's fair and happy land? And do they now regale themselves with wholesome fruits and generous wines free from all mixture of bitterness and sorrow? Oh! cruel then to wish them back again to sigh and weep in such a sickly climate as this world of sin and misery. And do we expect to join this glorious society from which we are now only separated by this thin veil of flesh; and are we looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and savior Jesus Christ: O then let us with patience and

resignation wait the appointed time, nor shall we have to tarry long. Jesus will soon come and take us home to dwell with him in the blissful mansions of peace and rest forever. Why then should we tremble on the grave's cold brink, or shrink back from Jordan's stormy flood. O what is this world and death itself with all its solemnity and terror, to the first bright moment of the enjoyment of God in glory! Wait then O Christian thy appointed time; submit to all the ways of providence, and be disposed always to say "thy will be done."

4. Let us endeavour from a view of this subject, to render our intercourse with Christians on earth more like that in heaven. There is an indissoluble relation between saints on earth, and saints in heaven. Grace here is glory in the bud, & all who are its happy subjects have drank in the same spirit; and 'as face answers to face in water, so does the heart of man to man.' Believers are kindred spirits, being related to saints and angels, with whom they expect to dwell in glory. Endeavor then, ye children of the Most High, to order your conversation aright, and learn to be better acquainted with the language of Canaan, and let all your exercises and employments be more and more assimilated to those above. Encourage your fellow travellers in the way, and provoke each other to love and good works. Often cast an eye toward that blessed society of which we have been speaking, and endeavour as much as possible to pattern after them in their manner of sentiment, affection and worship. O come ye brethren, let our souls rise with holy ardor, for a growing conformity to the whole will of our God, until we shall have finished our pilgrimage, and earth exchanged for heaven. Oh happy hour! when dropping this fleshly veil we shall ascend pure and joyful spirits to that triumphant assembly where no vitiated affection, nor one sinful thought shall molest the happy soul forever. Come ye drooping pilgrims, cheer up and look forward, for your redemption is near. Fear not little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Oh how happy will you be, when at your journey's end you reach the haven of rest where all is good, all glorious. Let this earthly house be diminished, and let it lie for ages uninhabited and desolate, yet it shall become a temple inconceivably glorious. When the trumpet sounds, on the resurrection morning, believers shall spring from their tombs, shake themselves from the dust,

trample on the broken powers of the grave, put on their beautiful garments, and rise in a cloud to meet their coming Lord. They shall pass the gate into the Holy City, receive the crown of life and the palm of victory, and join with the harpers on the sea of glass in an everlasting anthem of praise. With the most ardent desire that you my dear brethren, may attain to this state of perfection and glory : and with a cheerful expectation, through divine grace that I shall ere long meet many of you in it ; I close this discourse with praying that the Almighty father will at length conduct you to this heavenly society in perfect safety and everlasting triumph.

AMEN.