

THE BRIDE'S LONGING
FOR
HER BRIDEGROOM'S SECOND COMING.

THE BRIDE'S LONGING.

NOTE.

'The Bride's Longing for her Bridegroom's Second Coming' forms a small volume (18mo), published in 1638. Its title-page is given below.* Of Sir Thomas Crew, known by the venerable title of 'The poor man's lawyer,' nothing need be added to the splendid eulogium of Sibbes, which, as in the case of Milton's upon Bradshaw, has proved a more enduring monument than marble and brass. Prefixed to the volume is Marshall's miniature portrait of Sibbes. I have not traced a second copy of 'The Bride's Longing.'

G.

* THE

BRIDES Longing

for her

BRIDE-GROOMES

second comming.

A

Sermon preached at the funerall

of the right Worshipfull, Sir

THOMAS CREVV, Knight,

Sergeant at Law to his

MAIESTIE.

By

The late learned and reverend Divine,

RICH. SIBS.

REV. 22. 17.

*The Spirit and the Bride say, come, and let him
that heareth, say, come.*

LONDON :

Printed by E. P. for G. Edwards, at

the signe of the Angell in green

Arbour. 1638.

TO THE READER.

LOVING READERS,—Lo, here the verifying of that ancient adage, *Quod differtur, non aufertur*, for long looked for comes at last. That which, before a solemn and sad assembly, was publicly preached and committed to the ears of some, is now printed and committed to the eyes of all that have a mind to read it; which thing hath with a long and longing desire been wished and waited for by sundry. This funeral sermon bespake your receiving and respecting of it in a double consideration, each of which, in my opinion, hath an important, rare, and singular ponderation. Behold, first, the man; secondly, the matter. The man by whom, and the man for whom it was made: the one, that worthy divine Dr Sibbes, who in his lifetime intended and approved it for the press, as it now comes forth; the other, that worshipful serjeant, Sir Thomas Crew; men of more than ordinary worth and goodness, whom to name is enough to those that knew them; for if I should enter into a particular discourse and discovery of their deserved worth, I fear I should more dishonour my undertakings, and wrong your expectation, than in any proportion answer the excellency of two such worthy themes. Secondly, for the matter, as the occasion and men's expectations were extraordinary, so shall you find his preparation. Read, and then judge. It sweetly and to the life sets forth the duty, desire, and disposition of the church and spouse of Christ echoing a faithful and prayerful Amen to all the truths of God, especially to the precious promises, and chiefly to that promise of promises, Christ's 'second coming;' which in cold blood undauntedly to desire, is an infallible mark of a true and thorough convert; which that we may do, we must make sure our espousal to Christ here, and get to be clad with the wedding garment of faith and repentance, teaching us to ponder and pray much, and then admirable shall be our confident standing before God, our rich hope, our quietness and heart's ease, our joy, as if we had one foot in heaven already. We shall be able with St Paul to cast down our gauntlet and bid defiance to devils, to men, to height, to depth, to things present and things to come. If all the hearts in the world were one heart, it could not comprehend those rich blessings wherewith true Christians are richly endowed, and those spiritual joys and comforts which shall rain upon them in sweet showers from heaven; rich they are in hand, but richer in hope; rich in possession, but richer in reversion. For what ravishing joy, what inexpressible sweetness shall then everlasting[ly] possess our souls, whenas we who have been a long time contracted to our Lord and husband, shall see that blessed time come, when we shall have that glorious marriage between

him and us, really and royally solemnised, in the presence of God and his holy angels, and shall have the fruition of him and all his happiness, and enjoy such heavenly fellowship, familiarity, and acquaintance with him, transcendently above all the sweetest relations here below, I say, with him who is 'the Prince of peace,' 'the King of glory,' yea, the very glory of heaven and earth, 'the express image of his Father's person,' in whom 'those things which are invisible are seen,' 'the brightness of everlasting light,' the undefiled mirror of the majesty of God, and 'the desire of all nations.' Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, Rev. xix. 9. Whereunto, that you may be admitted as a welcome guest, you must both know and practise what in this treatise is contained.

To conclude, I am bold therefore, in the cause of God's honour and your salvation, to entreat you, as ever you would have interest in Christ's blood and blessedness, sufferings and satisfactions, as you mean to have any fellowship or communion in heaven with the blessed saints and angels, as you intend to have any part in that kingdom which the Lord Jesus hath purchased with his own blood, that you would up and be doing that which the wife of the Lamb is said to have done—Rev. xix. 7, 'Make yourselves ready;' which if you do, his speedy access shall bring to you speeding success; which that you may do, you shall not want his constant and instant prayers, who is

Your Christian and cordial well-wisher,

G. H.*

These initials probably represent the Rev. George Hughes, B.D., of Plymouth, one of the 'Ejected' of 1662, and father-in-law of the illustrious John Howe.—G.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S PROMISES,

AND

THE BRIDE'S PRAYER.

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.—REV. XXII. 20.

As the church of God, being the weakest and the most shiftless* part of mankind, is never without trouble in this world, so God would never have it to be without comfort. And therefore God reveals unto Christ in this book, and Christ unto the angel, and the angel unto John, 'things to come,' from the ascension of Christ unto his 'second coming;' that so, in all conditions of the church, the church might have recourse unto this book, to see what the issue of all would be. This is their comfort, that howsoever things may be carried in this world in a seeming confusion, in a cloud, and in a mystery, yet in conclusion all shall end well on the church's side. Their trouble shall end in peace, their abasement in glory, and their conflict in a crown. This we may see here verified. This revelation doth end in the description of the glorious condition of the church. In the two last chapters, as I take it, the evangelist Saint John sets down the glorious estate of the church of God, even in this world, yet so as it shall end and be consummate in perfect glory in the world to come. For the soul of a Christian, like Noah's dove, cannot rest in any glory here, till it return to the ark, till it come to the enjoyment of perfect glory, and have blissful communion with Christ for ever and ever in heaven. And therefore Christ doth terminate and end the sweetness of his promises in heaven, and at his last coming; and the church likewise stretcheth and raiseth up her desires to that. Howsoever, there shall be glorious times and things here, yet these are but as the first fruits to the whole harvest, and as a drop unto the ocean. Therefore, when you read of a glorious estate of the church to be here upon earth, your minds must have recourse to the upshot and consummation of all in heaven. Jerusalem which is from above must lead us to Jerusalem which is above.

Now, because that man's unbelieving heart is too prone to think that these things are too good to be true, and too great to be performed, seeing such an immeasurable disproportion between his own unworthiness and

* That is, 'without expedients.'—G.

the excellency of the things promised, hereupon the mercy of our blessed Saviour is such, that he confirms this his second glorious coming by all kind of witnesses that may be. Here is the angel, verse 6; Christ himself, verse 7; the spouse, and the Spirit in the spouse, verse 17; and Christ himself again in the words before the text, 'Behold, I come quickly.' Then you have the spouse's answer, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Beloved, faith is a supernatural thing. It hath no friend within us. It hath no help, no cause in the world, except God himself. Therefore, it hath need of all confirmation. God knows us and our needs better than we do ourselves, and you see he useth confirmation to help our unbelief. And besides the witnesses, the thing itself is repeated again and again, three or four times in this chapter: verses 7, 12, 20, 'Behold, I come quickly,' and 'Behold, I come quickly,' and, 'Surely I come quickly.' By every repetition, Christ seeks to gain upon our misgiving souls. 'Behold, I come.' Now because our spirit is exceeding short, and we are ready to cry out, as it is in the sixth of this book, 'How long, Lord, holy and true?' Rev. vi. 10. How long? Why, he answers, 'Behold, I come quickly.' You shall also find in the prophecies of the Old Testament, the same promises delivered and repeated again and again, because of our unbelief; which ariseth from an inward guilt, that cleaves to our consciences, because we are subject to failings, and are not so strict as we should be. But such are the yearning bowels of our blessed Saviour, that it grieves him to see his tender church afflicted and troubled in mind. Therefore he helps all that he can.

Note. Observe then, I beseech you, in the words, the sweet intercourse that is between Christ and his spouse. Christ promiseth again and again, 'Behold I come quickly;' and the church saith, 'Come;' 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' There is no intercourse in the world so sweet as is that between Christ and his church. But we will come unto the words themselves: 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

In these words you have, first, the assent of the church; secondly, the consent—her assent to the truth; her consent to the goodness of the truth. 'Amen:' it is so. Nay, 'Amen:' it shall be so. Nay, 'Amen:' be it so; or, let it be so. There is a wishing included in it. All these are wrought by the Spirit. The Spirit convinceth us both of the truth and of the goodness of the truth. And besides that, in the next words, the same Spirit stirs up a desire and prayer: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' Holy desires are turned into fervent prayers.

Note. 'Amen' is a short word, but marvellously pregnant, full of sense, full of spirit. It is a word that seals all the truths of God, that seals every particular promise of God. And it is never likely to arise in the soul, unless there be first an almighty power from heaven, to seize on the powers of the soul, to subdue them, and make it say, 'Amen.' There is such an inward rising of the heart, and an innate rebellion against the blessed truth of God, that unless God, by his strong arm, bring the heart down, it never will nor can say, 'Amen.'

Note. But now the heart will not be pent in or restrained. The Spirit is an enlarging thing; and therefore, besides 'Amen' (though 'Amen' includes that which follows), the spirit breaks forth and saith, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

A little of 'Amen.'

Christ is said, in the beginning of this book, to be 'Amen, the true and faithful witness,' Rev. iii. 14. And all the promises are said, in Christ

Jesus, 'to be yea and amen,' 2 Cor. i. 20 ; that is, they are made for his sake, and performed for his sake ; they are made in him, and for him ; and they are performed in him, and for him. And when 'Amen'—that is, Christ himself—shall say his 'Amen' to any thing, is it so much for us to give our 'Amen' ?

The point I mean to raise out of this word 'Amen' is this :

Doct. 1. That the hearts of the children of God are pliable to divine truths, to yield to the whole word of God, especially to the good word of God, viz., the promises ; and of all promises, to the promise of promises, the second coming of Christ.

They say 'Amen' to that, and that for these reasons :

Reason 1. Because there is a suitableness of disposition, and a kind of con-naturalness, between a sanctified heart and sanctified truths, between an holy heart and holy things ; insomuch, that if an holy truth, never heard of before, be heard by an holy heart, it will yield present assent ; for his heart is subdued so, that he hath an 'Amen' for it presently.

Reason 2. There is a sweet relish in all divine truths, and suitable to the sweetness in them, there is a spiritual taste, which the Spirit of God puts into the soul of his children. Though there be never so much sweetness in things, if there be not a suitable taste, there is no relish in them. Therefore, the Spirit of God, in his children, works a taste of the sweetness that is in the word of God. And that is a main ground why they say 'Amen,' especially to comfortable truths.

Reason 3. Again, when the soul is once contracted unto God, it hath no will of its own, but it yields up his will to God's will. The spouse hath no will of her own, but her husband's will is her will. So if Christ say 'Amen, I come quickly,' the spouse of Christ saith 'Amen' too.

Reason 4. God deals with his children, likewise, by way of a covenant and a contract. And above all other covenants, the covenant of a contract is the sweetest covenant. Now, in it there must be a consent on our part ; and therefore it is, that the Spirit always stirs up an 'Amen' on our parts too. When he saith 'Amen,' it shall be so, then the soul saith, 'Amen, Lord ; let it be so.' As in civil marriage there is a contract, so here, in the spiritual ; and seeing there is a contract, there is also an assent to the 'second coming' of Christ. The contracted spouse must needs say 'Amen' to the marriage day.

Reason 5. Lastly, the Spirit of God, in the hearts of his children, stirs up in them this 'Amen,' as a seal of their effectual calling. If you should ask me what effectual calling is, I answer, it is nothing else but the heart's echo and answer to God's speech. God calls, and we answer. This is by St Peter called, 'the answer of a good conscience,' 1 Pet. iii. 21. There must be in the soul the answer of a good conscience to all divine truths. Doest thou believe ? I do believe. Doest thou repent ? I do repent. 'Seek ye my face. Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee ; for thou art the Lord our God,' Jer. iii. 22. Unless there be thus the answer of a good conscience, there is no effectual calling. Our calling is then effectual, when the Spirit stirs up in the heart an answer unto it. Therefore, you see there must needs be an 'Amen' wrought in the hearts of the children of God.

Use. Beloved, if this be so, I beseech you let us beg of God, if we find any stubbornness or renitency in our souls to divine truths, the perform-*

* That is, 'striving against.'—G.

ance of the covenant of grace, Lord, thou hast promised fleshy and sensible hearts, tender and yielding affections. Oh now grant them, and work them.

Note. For, beloved, this you must know, howsoever God deals with us by way of covenant, yet when he comes to perform the covenant, he works, in a manner, our part and his own too. In effect, he makes a testament, and not a covenant. In a testament we bequeath; we do not covenant and condition. So that, though God deals with his people by way of covenant, as if you repent, if you believe, if you obey; yet he gives, by way of testament, the grace that he bestows. Therefore, beg of God that, as he requires this condition, that we should assent and be pliable unto his word, so that he would make his covenant a testament and a will—I mean, that he would effectually work it, and make us to do it—this should be our desire of God. And so much the rather—

Motive 1. First, *Because God honours us by it, in having our consent.* Is not this a great honour to us, that he will not perform things without our consent? For indeed he will not accomplish the work of our everlasting salvation without it. But then, if we set our seals to God's seal, and we consent once, we even bind God himself. When he seals to us, and we to him, we bind God almighty, and by that power of faith, subdue hell and all our opposite enemies. When we seal to the truth of God, and cry 'Amen,' it is a word that fills heaven and earth. There is not a joyfuller word in the world, than when whole congregations can say and shout 'Amen.' When God says 'Amen' in heaven, if we presently can say 'Amen' to his truth upon earth, he will say 'Amen' to our salvation. Thus God honours us by it, when he comes for our consent.

Motive 2. *We honour God again, by our sealing to his truth.* Faith is that which seals to God's truth, and 'Amen' is the very voice of faith.

Use 2. It is a pitiful thing, but common in the world, that God should have no more credit with us. Poor distressed souls will say 'Amen' to the lies of their own hearts, and presumptuous persons will say 'Amen' to a liar, to a murderer, to an enemy, to Satan. But God hath so little credit with us, that if he command, we will not say 'Amen;' if he promise, we have no 'Amen' for him; if he threaten, we bless ourselves, saying, We shall do well enough: 'We shall have peace, though we walk after the imagination of our own hearts, adding drunkenness unto thirst,' Deut. xxix. 19. When the Spirit of God saith, 'He will stir up a fire in his anger, and his wrath shall burn unto the lowest hell,' Deut. xxxii. 22, against all such as go on in their sinful courses, yet they will flatter themselves. Well, beloved, we may shake off God's word in the ministry, as profane persons do; but when God comes in the execution of his threatenings, then his wrath shall burn to hell, and not be quenched. Who can avoid or abide that dreadful sentence, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,' Mat. xxv. 41. God's words are not as wind. Indeed, they are such a wind as will blow down all impenitent sinners to hell. We must have a legal 'Amen' to the threatenings of God, as well as an evangelical 'Amen' to the sweet promises. St John here, by the Spirit of God, saith 'Amen' to the promises of the time to come; to wit, for the confusion of antichrist, for the conversion of the Jews, and for the glorious times to come, though he sees no evidence thereof for the present; and so must we to all divine truths.

But we have another kind and company of men that must be taxed, that have indeed an 'amen' and a seal, but it is to a blank. They are pre-

sumptuous persons, and such, which is worse, as will have God to say 'Amen' to their courses. They will be naughty* and sinful, and then study and strive to bring God's word to stand bent to their bow; and so in their lying conceit make God say 'Amen' to their lusts. They account it not sufficient to have their will, but they will have God to be of their mind too, and they will always get some daubers that shall say, 'Go on and prosper.'

An Ahab will always have his false prophets. What a wicked thing is this, that we should make an idol of God, and transform him into the likeness of Satan, his enemies, to make him like that which he hates most. We will continue in our sinful courses, and make as though we had the word of God for us; and, Oh we have the judgment of such and such, and thus bolster up ourselves by building upon such sandy foundations. When we should bring up our souls and resign them to God and his Spirit, we will bring God down to our bent, and make him to say this and that, agreeable to our carnal reason and corrupt affections.

But I must not enlarge myself in this. In a word, therefore, to conclude this point: As there is a sweet harmony in God's truth, so let there be a harmony in our hearts thereunto. God's truth always agrees with itself. Oh let our hearts agree with it. When we hear a threatening, a precept, or a promise, Oh let us say, 'Amen.' It is the sweetest harmony in the world when we can bring our hearts to close with God and his word, with his Spirit and truth, when we can be delivered 'into that form of doctrine which is delivered unto us,' Rom. vi. 17.

But now I go on. 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' We come from the assent unto the consent, yielding unto that which Christ said as true and good. We come unto the desire and prayer of the church: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

Note. 'Amen' is an Hebrew word, and it is still retained, to shew the consent of the Christian church with the Jewish, both with that which was before, and with that which shall be afterward.† And it is expressed and opened here, by a word following, 'yea,' or 'even so,' come, Lord Jesus. You see the church desires, and out of her desire prays, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Now, this desire of the church shews the gracious disposition of the church. These desires are the breathings and motions of the Spirit in the soul, tending to further union. Even as motion tends to rest, so desires tend to the uniting unto the thing desired. The church's desires here are the immediate issue of the soul, and therefore undissembled, and they shew the true character of a Christian soul. We may dissemble words and actions, but we cannot dissemble our desires and affections; we may paint fire, but we cannot paint heat. Therefore God judgeth us more by our desires and affections than by our words and actions.

Now you may know that our desires are holy and good, if so be that they be heavenly; for then it is a sign that they come down from heaven, even as a spring will arise and ascend as high as the spring-head whence it comes. If our desires rise to heaven, as the church's here do, then it is a sign they come down from heaven.

Our desires are as a stream, which I will shew you, by prosecuting that metaphor and allusion in sundry particulars.

1. *A good stream hath a good spring*; so must our desires. The spring of the church's desires here is love: she loves Christ, and therefore desires him to 'come quickly.'

2. *A stream, you know, carries all before it*; so our desires are an holy

* That is, 'naughty,' = wicked.—G. † Cf. Robinson's Lexicon, *sub voce*.—G.

stream issuing from a good spring and carrying all before them. They are efficacious, not a mere velleity,* as they say, a bare wishing and woulding.

3. A stream, *if it be stopped, will swell till it break down all opposition and carry all before it*; so let a good desire be stopped, and it will swell more and more, and grow bigger and bigger, till it makes way for itself.

4. A stream *is restless and incessant till it meet with the ocean and empty itself into the sea*; so, true and holy desires be restless and always in motion. They are not like a standing pool that rests, but they are in motion still, till they have emptied themselves into the boundless and bottomless ocean of endless pleasure.

5. As true streams that arise from a fountain *do wax bigger and bigger the nearer they come to the ocean*, because other rivers join with them, and so they take advantage and augmentation by other streams that run into them, so, if our desires be true, *they are growing desires*; they increase bigger and bigger still till they come to heaven.

6. At length, *we see the streams empty themselves into the sea*. They are swallowed up there, where they have a more constant being than in themselves, namely, of the ocean, the true element and proper place of all waters; and so our desires, if they be holy, as they are restless and growing, so at last they empty themselves into Christ, and join with God and happiness for the time to come; for there is greater happiness for the souls of men, in God, in Christ, and in heaven, than there is in themselves, and there they are swallowed up.

7. Lastly, *We may try our desires by this*. Vapours in a low place do shew that there is a spring there. You know that the springs are there where there are most vapours constantly. So where there be breathings of the soul upward, as there is here of the church, surely there is a spring of love that yields these vapours, and whence these desires flow.

But I come more particularly unto this particular desire of the church, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' I shall make way by some propositions which I shall premise, before I come to the main thing which I shall stand upon at this time.

First, We must take it for granted;

Obs. 1. That there will be a second glorious coming of Christ, that will be far more glorious than the former.

The best times and things are to come for Christians every way. Every day they rise they are nearer to their happiness.

Again, We must know this;

Obs. 2. That a Christian, if he hath true faith in the times to come, he will have answerable desires, and correspondent prayers.

For, beloved, there is always an harmony between the heart and the brain, between the understanding and the will and affections. What we assent to as true, and consent to as good, that we shall both desire and pray for. Therefore, if you know there will be a glorious coming of Christ, and if you assent to it, that the best times are yet to come, surely there will be this prayer too. There is alway a sweet agreement and harmony between a sound convinced knowledge and gracious affections. Hence it is, that in Scripture what we do not wish and affect,† we are said not to know. We see not things in their proper light, when we know and affect them not; but we have received them only by tradition and from others. But when we see proper things with a proper light, spiritual things with a spiritual light, then there will be always prayers and desires accordingly.

* That is, 'wishing.'—G.

† That is, 'choose,' 'love.'—G.

As the church here, after 'Amen, even so,' there is the desire. 'Come, Lord Jesus,' there is her prayer.

And therefore, we may know whether our knowledge be spiritual or not, by this, if the heart be subdued to yield unto it. Otherwise the heart will swell when it comes to petition, and to particular truths. What! Shall I yield to this? No. I have heard of this by the hearing of the ear, but I know not whether it be true or not; I have heard much talk of the Scriptures. But when the Scripture comes to cross a man in this or that particular lust, then if his knowledge be not spiritual, his heart will rise and swell against it, and begin to call into question and doubt; yea, and to think it folly and a base thing for a man to yield to it. I am sure of my pleasures, I am sure of my profits, but I am not sure whether this be true or no. And thus the heart of an atheist comes to stand out, because his knowledge is not spiritual. But if it be, then it carries an assent to it with it, and a desire drawn into a prayer.

Again, You must know this before we come unto the main point,

Obs. 3. That a gracious heart turneth promises into desires and prayers.

The promise was, 'I come quickly.' Here faith clasps about the promise, as a vine about the elm, and saith, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Faith puts the promise into suit presently. Christ had no sooner said, 'I come quickly,' but the spirit of faith saith, 'Nay, come, Lord Jesus.' But then we must be sure that we have a promise out of the word of God. Faith hath no 'amen' for the word of a man, or for anything else but the word of God; and when it fastens upon that, as it doth here, you see it turns it into a holy desire and prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Beloved, we believe not the promise as we should do, else we would do so. We have rich, 'exceeding great and precious promises,' 2 Peter i. 4, but where is our rich, exceeding great and precious faith, to lay hold upon them, and to turn them presently into suits, desires, and prayers? Thus if we would do, we should bind God with his own word; he cannot deny himself, or falsify his truth.

Obs. 4. You see again, that the more assured one is of anything, the more effectually it will make him to pray.

An atheistical heart would say thus: Such a thing will be; Christ will come whether I pray or no; what need I pray then? Nay, therefore pray, because he will come. 'I come quickly;' therefore, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus.' Christ himself was fully assured that his Father would grant him all that he prayed for: 'I know that thou hearest me always,' saith he, John xi. 42; yet you see what an heavenly prayer he makes, John xvii. Nay, God bids him do it: 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,' Ps. ii. 8, &c. Christ himself must ask before God will give him 'the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.' So Ezek. xxxvi., where you have the covenant of grace itself, with many promises attending it; to all which it is added, ver. 37, 'Yet for all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, saith the Lord.' Though he had made great promises to his church, yet he must be prayed to for the performance of them. He will have things received as fruits of our prayer, as well as of his promise and providence. We cannot be so thankful for things that come only as fruits of his providence, as when we look upon them as fruits of our prayers. David was a king of prayers; but Saul came by providence only, and by the people's importunity. Whether was the more blessed?

Oh then, my brethren, though we be never so much assured of things to come, yet let us join prayer thereto; for the assurance of the end will stir

us up to the careful use of the means. None are so careful of the latter as they who are most assured of the former. Witness the church here.

The next thing I shall premise, as making way for that, that I mean more fully to speak of, is this :

Obs. 5. That God's promises have gradual performances.

They are made good by degrees. God goes by many steps to the performance of his great promises ; as here, the promise of Christ's ' second glorious coming ' hath many degrees to the accomplishment thereof. So God promises ' a new heaven and a new earth,' Isa. lxvi. 22. That was one degree of the performance hereof, when the Jews came out of captivity. It had a second degree of performance when Christ came in the flesh. Then all things were new. There was a new priest, a new Sabbath, a new nation. So when the Gentiles were called, and came in, it had a third gradual performance. When the Jews shall be called, when there shall be ' a resurrection from the dead,' as it were, Rom. xi. 15, then all things shall be new. That was a fourth. And the last and full performance shall be, when all things shall be new indeed ; that is, when there shall be ' a new heaven and a new earth.' So this promise here, ' Come, Lord Jesus,' it hath a latitude and a breadth of performance ; ' Come, Lord,' into our hearts first, and set up thy kingdom and sceptre there ; subdue all therein unto thyself, throw down all lusts, thrust out Satan, take thine own interest in us.

And then ' come ' into thy church, as you have it, Mark ix. 1. There is a powerful coming of Christ in the gospel ; therein ' the kingdom of God comes with power.' Come thus in the ministry of thy word. When Christ was bodily ascending up into heaven, he came spiritually in his ordinances. And thus ' come ' thou by thy Spirit.

And then ' come ' to blast antichrist, and to consume ' that man of sin,' 2 Thes. ii. 3, and so make way for the other degree of thy coming. ' Come ' in the fulness of the Gentiles, ' come ' in the conversion of thy people of the Jews, that their riches may be an increase of our riches, that there may be golden times indeed, as surely then they will be.

And then, because there is a certain number of the elect of God, which must be accomplished and fulfilled ; and Christ will delay his last coming till that be done ; therefore, ' come ' and accomplish the number of thine elect, as you have it Rev. vi. 11, ' And white robes were given to every one of them ; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' They must stay till the rest come in. As they that have invited a company of strangers to a feast, do stay till the last be come, so there will not be a glorious coming of Christ until all the elect be gathered into one body. And then shall be the coming of all comings, which is the glorious coming of Christ, to take us to himself, and to make us sit with him, ' to judge the world,' 1 Cor. vi. 2, as so many kings and judges of the world, and to be with him for ever. As the apostle saith, ' Then shall we be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17, 18. And that is a comfort indeed. As he adds there, ' Wherefore comfort one another with these words.' And so you see the gradual performance thereof.

Now I come unto the last, and that which I mean most to stand upon, being a blessed truth, most suitable to this occasion.

Obs. 6. That as it is the duty, so it is the disposition of a gracious heart, to desire the glorious coming of Christ Jesus ; and to desire all his other comings in way and order to this, as they make way for his last coming

In the unfolding of this I shall shew you the grounds and reasons why the church doth so, and then make some trials whether we do so or no, and then give some few directions to help us therein.

Why doth the church desire so much this second and glorious coming of Christ?

Reason 1. Because the church is in want till that time, and the ground of all desire is want. We want our bodies, we want many of our friends, &c. But then there shall be a supply of all.

Reason 2. Because 'our life is hid with Christ in God,' and 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 3, 4. Our glorious head is there already. When he shall be revealed, then our glory shall be revealed, for 'he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those that do believe.'

Reason 3. In regard of Christ himself: Christ is in some sort imperfect till the latter day, till his 'second coming.' For the mystical body of Christ is his fulness. Christ is our fulness, and we are his fulness. Now Christ's fulness is made up, when all the members of his mystical body are gathered and united together; the head and the members make but one natural body. So Christ and the church are but one mystical: 1 Cor. xii. 12, 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ.' Hence it is that the saints are called 'the glory of Christ,' 2 Cor. viii. 23. Christ in this sense is not fully glorious therefore till that time. The church desires therefore that Christ may be glorious in himself, and glorious in them, that he may come to be 'glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. i. 10.

Reason 4. Because, where the treasure is, there will the heart be also, Mat. vi. 21. Now where is the church's treasure but in Christ? Our spirits are supernatural, and carried to the best of spirits; and who is the best of spirits but Christ himself?

Reason 5. Because the members are carried to union with the head. The happiness of the soul is in union with the fountain of happiness, and the nearer the fountain of happiness the more happy. What is it that makes the blessed body of Christ more happy than all the angels and men, but because it is hypostatically united to the second person of the Trinity, and so to the fountain of the Godhead? The nearer to God the happier, the fuller of grace and glory, because he is the God of all grace and glory. Therefore the nearer to Christ the more happy. Now after the resurrection we shall be nearer both in soul and body. We may see this by the contrary. What is it that makes hell so horrible? Because there is an utter and eternal separation from the chiefest and choicest good, God himself. Here the wicked men of the world have the presence of God in the creatures. They taste the sweetness of God's goodness in them. But in hell they shall have none to all eternity. There shall be an utter separation between Christ and them. But now the joining to God, the fountain of all good in heaven, makes heaven to be heaven indeed. If Christ was not there, heaven would be no heaven. Therefore Paul saith, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' Philip. i. 23; and so the church here, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Then we shall be near, not in soul only, but also in body and soul; and in both we shall be for ever joined to the fountain of all good. It is that which the church desires here; and in the Canticles, what is it that the church prays for in the beginning? 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips,' &c., Cant. i. 2. There she desires the first coming of Christ. But you have it afterwards in the conclusion of the book: 'Make

haste, my beloved, and be thou like to the young hart or roe upon the mountain of spices,' Cant. viii. 14. Such is the disposition of the church, that before Christ was come, good people were known by the desire of his coming. And therefore it was the description of holy men, that 'they waited for the consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25. O Lord, come quickly, come in the flesh! But now the first coming is past, they desire as much his 'second coming,' and therefore they are described in the epistle of St Paul to be such as 'love and long for the appearing of Christ; a crown of righteousness is laid up for all those that love his appearance,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. Therefore if we had the spirit of the church, we would echo to Christ when he saith, 'I come quickly,' and say, 'Make haste, my beloved,' &c., as the church saith in the latter end of the Canticles.

Reason 6. Beloved, do but compare the glory of that time with the glory which we have here, and that will shew another reason. I will shew it by way of comparison a little, why the church should be desirous of the 'second coming' of Christ.

If the good things that we have by grace here are such 'as eye hath not seen, or ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to consider of,' 1 Cor. ii. 9 (for the place is meant of grace especially, that is the natural and immediate meaning), how transcendently then unutterable and unconceivable are those things that are reserved against that time! If the 'first fruits' are so sweet, what is the full harvest! Rom. viii. 23. If the 'earnest' be so comfortable, what is the whole bargain! 2 Cor. v. 5; Eph. i. 14. If this 'joy be unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter i. 8, and this 'peace pass all understanding,' Philip. iv. 7, what will the fulness of joy, peace, and pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11, and which shall be then, do!

If the angels wonder at the wisdom of God, in the government of his church here, in the midst of confusion, how shall they be put into a new and greater wonderment, when they shall see Christ glorious in his saints! 2 Thes. i. 10.

If when Christ was born in his abasement, they sang 'Glory to God on high, peace on earth, good will towards men,' Luke ii. 14, how joyful will those blessed spirits be, when Christ and all his members shall be joined in one body in heaven!

If Abraham rejoiced to foresee by the eye of faith the first coming of Christ in the flesh, how should we joy by faith to see the second coming of Christ! If John Baptist leaped in the womb for joy at the presence of Mary the mother of our Lord, how will our hearts dance when we shall see the Lord himself in the great glory and majesty of heaven! Luke i. 44.

If Peter was so ravished with a little drop and glimpse of heaven, when he saw the transfiguration of Christ in the mount, so that he even lost and forgot himself, and 'wist not what he said,' Mat. xvii. 4, how shall we be affected, think you, when we shall see Christ, not in his transfiguration, but in his glorification, for ever!

If old Simeon, when he saw Christ in his infancy, embraced him in his arms and said, 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke ii. 29, how shall we be transported with joy and admiration to see Christ, not in his swaddling clothes, nor in his infancy, but in heaven all glorious!

If the sight of Christ in his ordinances, in his word and sacraments, doth so affect a Christian's heart, as to transform him into the image of them,

2 Cor. iii. 18, what will it do to see Christ 'face to face,' without these glasses! 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

If the promises do so quicken us, as you have it in the Psalms, 'Thy word hath quickened me,' Ps. cxix. 25, *et alibi*, what will the full performance of them do!

If the communion of saints here be so sweet, even an heaven upon earth, 1 John i. 3, what will it be when all the blessed souls that have been from the beginning of the world unto the end shall be all together, and they altogether freed from all corruptions and infirmities! What a blessed sight will that be!

If so be that things prepared by men be so glorious as the temple of Solomon was, what is that glory which was prepared before the world was, and is in preparing still for the church!

If rest from labour be so sweet, what is 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God!' Rom. viii. 21. A little liberty from corruption, a little freedom and enlargement of spirit here, how sweet is that! When we are set at liberty to serve God, when we have the liberty of the spirit to go boldly to God and to the throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16, how pleasant is that! But oh the liberty of glory! that is true liberty indeed. Beloved, these things deserve and desire admiration,* rather than expression. Therefore I leave them to your wondering and admiring, rather than I will study long to express them. O ye blessed souls, stand still a little, and consider by the eye of faith these glorious things and times to come. You see then by this, the church hath great reason to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Reason 7. Besides, do but consider the estate of the church here in this world; even at the best, 'while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord,' 2 Cor. v. 6. But for the most part, the church is in this world as Daniel in the lions' den, as sheep in the midst of ravening wolves, as a ship in the midst of the waves, and as a lily among thorns. All the birds of prey do seize on the poor turtle dove of Christ, and they bear a special and implacable malice against God's church and children. Yea, oftentimes, those that profess religion in the form of it do let out the heart-blood of it indeed, and deny the power thereof. We see it hath been so ever since Christ's coming, and it will be so to the end of the world. Satan abuseth the great ordinances of God, and makes them serviceable to his own ends; so that there is nothing free from Satan's defilement, no, not the best ordinances of God. We see how boisterously and roughly the poor church of God is handled. Are there not oftentimes in the church within itself prejudices, surmises, jealousies one against another, that the company of one another is not so sweet and delightful? And 'woe to the world because of offences,' Mat. xviii. 7. Are there not scandals and offences in the church, that hinders the comfort of it, and many times do cause the falling out of those that are otherwise truly good? So that in regard of Christians themselves, there is not such a sweet complacency and delight one in another as there should be, and as there shall be then. Where there is a different sight and a different light, there will be different judgments and affections. Now all Christians in this life have both a different light and sight, one sees things clearer than another, and so their judgments differ a little, and therefore their affections too: those promises of the lion and the lamb dwelling together, Isa. xi. 6, shall not exactly be performed until this his 'second coming;' but there shall be something of the lion and of the wolf in the best Christians. But then it shall be fully satisfied. Then

* That is, 'wonder.'—G.

all wolfish and lionish dispositions shall be subdued; then there shall be no infirmity in others to displease us, nor any in us to give distaste to them; but then we shall have an eternal communion together. Therefore is there not, in regard of ourselves, good reasons for Christians to say, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus?' Then, in regard of every one in his own particular, doth not every one find that true in himself that Paul saith of himself, that we carry about with us 'a body of sin and a body of death'? Our corruptions, that we carry about with us, are like a dead body tied unto a living body. Now, what an odious and loathsome thing is it for a man to carry about with him a dead body! Thus we do, and the more we grow in grace, the more noisome it will be to us; for the more we grow in grace, the more life we have, and therefore the more antipathy against sin. The more we grow in grace, the more light we have to discern the bad, and the more will our love to grace increase. Now the more light, and life, and love, the more shall we be annoyed carrying about with us this body of sin, and 'the thorn in the flesh,' 2 Cor. xii. 7. Some corruptions are as grievous to us as a thorn that rends the flesh. And this is the disposition of the best in this life. Therefore, in regard of the church and the enemies of it, in regard of ourselves and every particular Christian, in regard of their conflicting and afflicted condition, have we not cause to say, 'Amen; come, Lord Jesus'? Thus we see the grounds which the church hath to say so.

Let us now come to the second point, to try whether we can indeed express this desire that the Spirit of God makes. For it is only the Spirit in the spouse that saith, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' Let us see whether the Spirit says so in us.

We shall not say much. It may be known by that which hath been said in the beginning, and it is evident also besides. Therefore, in a word or two.

Trial 1. Let us try ourselves by this. *What benefit have we by the first coming of Christ, by his death, and the shedding of his blood?* Doth that pardon our sins? Are our consciences 'besprinkled by that from dead works to serve the ever-living God?' Heb. ix. 14. Are our hearts set at liberty to go to the throne of grace? Have we thus any benefit by his first coming? Then we cannot but with a long and longing expectation look for his second.

But, on the contrary, he that hath no good by the first, cannot truly desire nor comfortably expect the second coming of Christ: for why? The second coming is but to make good what is begun here. The first is to redeem our souls, the second is to glorify our bodies. If our souls be not redeemed, never look for the 'redemption of our bodies,' Rom. viii. 23. The first and second coming of Christ are of so near connection, that oftentimes they are comprised together, as the regeneration of our souls and the regeneration of our bodies, the adoption of our souls and the adoption of our bodies; to shew that wheresoever there is the true redemption and adoption of the soul, there the redemption and adoption of the body will follow, and an expectation thereof also. Christ will be redemption to us when he hath been redemption to our souls first, in the assurance of the pardon of our sins. Look then to that first.

Trial 2. If we desire the second coming of Christ, *we will prepare for it.* If a man says, he desires to go to some great person, and yet never thinks of any preparation for it, it is but a pretended desire if he doth not put on

his best clothes, and fit himself for it, as Joseph did for Pharaoh, Gen. xli. 14. So if a man hope for this coming of Christ, he will 'purify himself for it, even as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 3. He will not appear in his foul clothes, but will 'put off the old man, and put on the new,' Eph. iv. 22. He will fit himself as the bride for the coming of the bridegroom. Beloved, if the thoughts of Christ's second coming be not efficacious to work in the soul a great care to fit and prepare for it, it is but a false conceit and lying fancy, it is no holy desire.

Trial 3. Examine it by this, *whether your hearts be the kingdom of Christ, whether he rule in your hearts here?* Do we think to rule with him in heaven, in his kingdom, if we will not yield up our hearts to be his kingdom upon earth? No; he will come into our hearts before we shall come to him; he will come to rule in us here, before we shall ever think to come to rule with him in heaven. Therefore all they that stand out against the ordinances of God, and will live in sin against their knowledge and conscience, do they spend any thoughts or wishes on Christ's second coming? He will come indeed, but it will be a 'day of darkness and gloominess' unto them, Joel ii. 2. Such persons cannot say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' but 'Mountains come, and rocks come, come quickly: fall upon us, and hide us from the presence of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,' Rev. vi. 16. Nothing will be more terrible to such than that day. Fire is the most comfortable thing, and the most terrible; and so God is most comfortable to his, and yet most terrible to such that do not prepare for his coming. 'Who amongst us,' saith the prophet, 'shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isa. xxxiii. 14. Who shall appear before Christ? To them, then, that live in their sins, in this glorious light of the gospel, there is a most terrible threatening, even from the coming of Christ. 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus,' when he is discovered clearly in the gospel, 'let him be Anathema, Maran-atha,' 1 Cor. xvi. 22, which is a more terrible curse than any is in the law. As the greatest blessings are from the coming of Christ, so from the same is the more terrible threatening. There is not a more terrible curse in all the Scriptures again, as that is in the Corinthians. So that 'the Lord shall come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to all them that know him not, and that obey not the gospel,' 2 Thes. i. 8. Therefore take heed of this.

Trial 4. Try it again by *holy exercises*. They that desire indeed the coming of Christ, they exercise themselves much in holiness: they exercise themselves in the beginning of heaven here upon earth, in reading and hearing the word, in the communion of saints, in praying and acquainting themselves with God, &c. In what else shall we be employed when we come to heaven? There shall be the perfection of these graces and exercises begun here upon earth. Many a profane wretch's heart swells when he comes to prayer or any divine exercise. He is proudly brought up, and his heart is not subdued to holy exercises here. Heaven will not brook* such, and such will not brook heaven. There is nothing but praising God continually. Now if you will not endure these holy exercises here, what should you do in heaven? Therefore let us not deceive our own souls, I beseech you. If we say this truly, 'Come, Lord Jesus,' undoubtedly it will have an influence into our lives, it will stir up all graces in the soul: as faith, to lay hold upon it; hope, to expect it; love, to embrace it; patience, to endure anything for it; heavenly-mindedness, to fit and pre-

* That is, 'endure.'—G.

pare for it; faithfulness in our callings, that we may make up our accounts before that time, &c. There is not a grace of the Spirit, but it is stirred up and quickened thereby. Therefore be not deceived. It is impossible that we should have dead, and dull, and cold hearts, and yet believe this, that there is such a glorious time to come. Undoubtedly it will inspire and cause strength and comfort in all our sufferings, and in all our doings, if our hearts do think with the spirit and thought of faith of this glorious appearing of Christ. Therefore we should shame ourselves. What! Can I hear of these things, and be no more affected with them than I am? Thus we should complain of the deadness and dulness of our hearts, and labour to work our hearts to an admiration of the excellencies that shall be revealed then.

But I go on, and come, in the last place, to some few directions how we should come to frame ourselves to this, to be able to utter this desire and prayer.

Direct. 1. Labour to be reconciled to God. Maintain and preserve thy peace and reconciliation with God, and then all things will be reconciled unto us, that are between us and the second coming of Christ. Nay, all shall be ours: death ours, devil ours, to help us to heaven. When we are at peace with God, all shall be at peace with us, John v. 23; Hos. ii. 18. And then we may have comfortable thoughts of that day; then we can think of death, and not be troubled; of hell and God's wrath, and not be disquieted. Therefore, above all, let us get the assurance of the grand point of justification, of being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Let us be sure to be found in that, and appear in it, to understand that point well. St Paul was wonderful careful hereof. He desires to have it as a seal of the righteousness of faith, and 'to be found in him, not having his own righteousness,' &c., Phil. iii. 9, as if he were tender, to touch upon Christ's glory. If we be clothed with the garments of Christ's righteousness, we may go through the wrath of God; for that alone is wrath-proof. That will pacify God, and pacify the conscience too. It is a righteousness of God's own providing and accepting. Be sure that you understand it well; that you appear not in your own, but in his, and then may you think of that day with comfort.

Direct. 2. If we would think of the blessed times that are to come with comfort, then let us labour to grow in the new creature, to be more and more filled with the fulness of God, to strive to have more of Christ in us still. The more we have of Christ in us, the more shall we desire his coming to us. Let us desire and labour to have all the corners of the heart filled up with the Spirit of Christ, our understandings with knowledge, our affections with love and delight, and our wills with obedience. The Scripture calls it, 'being filled with all the fulness of God,' Eph. iii. 19. Now the more we enter into the kingdom of heaven, by growth in grace here, the fitter shall we be for it, and the more shall we desire it. The more suitableness there is between us and heaven, and the glorious condition to come, the more shall we long after it, and rejoice in the thoughts of it.

Direct. 3. Be sure to do what you do quickly and thoroughly. Satan is so wise that he knows his time is but short, and therefore lays about him with great wrath and fury, Rev. xii. 12. Oh let us be so wise as to know that our time is but short. God himself tells us that it is so. Our time is a little spot of time cut out between two eternities, before and after, 1 Cor. vii. 29. Then let us do our work quickly. We may be suddenly

surprised before we be aware ; and as the tree falleth, so it lies ; as a man lives, so he dies ; as death leaves us, so judgment, and the second coming of Christ, shall find us.' We should therefore, as the apostle saith, ' work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12. Many men when they come to die are troubled about this ; Oh, I have not done so ; I should have done this and that, and have not ; but I have done amiss, I have not thoroughly repented ; something is not done that should have been ; I have not made mine evidences sound, I have not ' made my calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. Oh my conscience is troubled, and my soul cannot find that peace in God, &c. Oh do you take warning by them, and now work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; and that upon this ground, because the time is short and uncertain. Beloved, it is a great error in us. We think of reaping as soon as we begin to sow, nay, we begin to sow then when we should reap. Then we begin to think of God and goodness when we lie a-dying. That should be a time of reaping the comfort of all our former life, and to think of the time to come with joy. Oh what a comfortable thing would it be if we can with St Paul look backward and say, ' I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,' &c., 2 Tim. iv. 7. He looks back with comfort, and therefore he looks forward with comfort too ; ' From henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day,' &c., verse 8. When a Christian man hath done the will of God, and looks backward and saith, I had a race to run, and I have run it ; I had a faith to keep, and I have kept it ; I had a fight to fight, and I have fought it ; and then looks forward, and sees a crown of eternal glory before his eyes : what a comfort and ravishing joy will this afford ! Whether he looks backward or forward, all is glorious. But if we be careless and negligent, and will not work out our salvation, then we cannot with Hezekiah look back with comfort, and say to God, ' Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth and uprightness of heart, and have done that which was right in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. Neither can we with St Paul look forward with any comfort. Beloved, heaven is a pure place, and requires a great deal of purity in those that come thither ; and Christ is holy and glorious. Therefore we must set no measure and pitch to any holiness in this life, but grow still more and more heavenly till we come to heaven. Therefore the apostle sets it down by way of wonderment in the last of St Peter : ' Seeing all these things shall he dissolved,' saith he, 2 Peter iii. 11. What saith he to that ? He cannot tell what to say. Therefore he says nothing in particular, but in general : ' What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness !' Some men will set a measure and stint to themselves, and if any go beyond their measure, then they are such and such, curious, nice, and precise, &c.* Why ! What measure of holiness should be set to them that look for the second coming of Christ ? ' What manner of persons ought we to be !' He cannot tell what to say in particular, and therefore leaveth it to admiration. We must not then set up our staff, and put any measure to any perfection here in this world ; but still grow in grace and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord.

Direct. 4. Let us take all advantages to help us in this desire and prayer for the second coming of Christ, from all the crosses of this life, and from all the businesses of Satan. Satan was shut out of paradise, but he is still

* Cf. note c, Vol. II page 194.—G.

creeping into the paradise of the church. But in heaven he shall never come. He was once there, and was cast down from thence, never to come there again. But in the church he is always stirring. He is never so bound up but he hath some mischief to do. Now let the consideration of Satan and his instruments, that are always some way or other molesting of the church, and are as thorns in their sides, stir us up to desire the second coming of Christ. So from all particular losses and crosses let us help ourselves. If we have lost a friend, let us fill our hearts with comfort from the 'second coming' of Christ, and from the consideration of that, that then the time will come when all friends shall meet together. Do we leave anything in this world behind us? We shall meet with better there, better friends, a better place, better employment; all better. Therefore let us take advantage from everything to help forward that desire. In a word, I beseech you, because there be many things that might be spoken to this purpose, let it be your main care to fit yourselves for that time. It is a time of longing here, while we live. It is the time between the contract and the marriage. Let us labour to be fitted and prepared for that time.

Obj. But you shall have many a good soul cry out, Oh, I am not so desirous of the coming of Christ as I ought.

Ans. True. It may be so because of thy wants, because thou hast not prepared thyself, because thou art not spiritual, because thou art not mortified. This ariseth further, as from other causes, so from this. Thou art ignorant of the covenant of grace, that God is thy Father, and that he hath bound himself as a father to pardon the sins of his children. Therefore, if thy sins be but infirmities, that thou strivest against, thou mayest be comforted. Mark what the apostle saith, 'We ourselves, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our bodies,' Rom. viii. 23. If we labour against our corruptions, it should be so far from hindering our desire of Christ's coming, that we should desire it the rather, because we labour under them; for then we shall be fully rid of them. Labour to understand the covenant of grace more fully. Christ is a mediator and intercessor. For whom? For perfect men? No. But for them that unwillingly run into debt with God every day. Therefore we say in the Lord's prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,' &c., Mat. vi. 11, 12. The ignorance of evangelical points makes us so cold, so dead and dull, as we are oftentimes.

Obj. But you will say, I desire to live still. Those that desire the 'second coming' of Christ, desire that he would come and fetch them out of the world when they have done their work. May not I do so?

Ans. Yes you may, but it must be with a reservation that you may bring to heaven as many as you can, that you may get further evidence of your salvation; and so in other respects you may desire to live, so it may be that God may honour himself by our lives. But simply, and as the thing is in itself, we ought to be of St Paul's mind, 'to desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' which is far better, Philip. i. 23.

Therefore when the time of our dissolution comes, we are to be willing to resign up our souls unto God, not only patiently, but cheerfully. For why? The day of death is a day of jubilee, a day of coronation, a day of marriage, a day of harvest, a day of triumph. We are to be ashamed of the disproportion of our desires to earthly things and to heavenly. Is the labourer loath to think of a sabbath or a day of rest? Is a soldier loath to think of a day of victory and triumph? Is a contracted person loath to think of the

day of marriage ? or a king of the day of his coronation ? They are all desirous of these things, and why should not we be of that time, when all these things shall indeed and really be performed ? All those things are but shadows, and scarce that, of things to come, and yet how earnestly desirous are men of them ? Have not we then just cause to take occasion to shame and blame ourselves, for the disproportion of our desires to earthly and heavenly things ?

But now, when we have finished our work, when God hath been served by us in our generations—as it was said of David, ‘that he served God in his own generation, by the will of God, and after that fell on sleep,’ Acts xiii. 36—then God will take off our desire of living any longer, then he will make us even willing to die. As St Paul, in the last epistle that ever he made, when he had run his race and fought his fight, and finished his course, then nothing but a crown. ‘Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,’ &c., 2 Tim. iv. 8. And in the same chapter afterward : ‘The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom,’ ver. 18. So saith Christ, ‘I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self,’ John xvii. 4, 5. So when the children of God have an item from the Spirit of God, that they have done all that God would have them for to do, then they will be most willing to go hence. In the mean time, they ‘must run with patience the race that is set before them,’ Heb. xii. 1 ; they must fight the fight that God hath pitched for them, and keep the faith ; they must be willing to do all that God would have them, in an humble submission to his will. But when they have done all, then their hearts will be enlarged to desire the coming of Christ, that he would come and call them home.

So, then, this doubt is sufficiently answered. In a word, I will end with this.

When you find your hearts dull and cold, and inactive to good, then fetch fire from hence to inflame them : from the ‘second coming’ of Christ, from the love of God in Christ, from the love of his appearance. Oh, rouse up and quicken your hearts with such considerations. Do you conflict with any enemies, either without or within ? Remember what the apostle saith : ‘Fight the good fight of faith ; lay hold on eternal life,’ 1 Tim. vi. 12. What is the way to fight the good fight of faith ? Why, lay hold on eternal life, and that will make a man fight indeed.

Are you in any disconsolate condition ? If you be, see what the apostle Paul saith to the Thessalonians : ‘Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words,’ 1 Thess. iv. 18. With what words ? Why, ‘We shall be ever with the Lord.’ Oh these words will comfort indeed. Consider, when you have lost your friends, your estate, or anything, it shall be all fully made up there ? Do you, as it were, make it up beforehand, with comforts of a higher nature ? They be things that will comfort indeed.

And so, when you find yourselves dull in doing the work of the Lord, think upon the ‘second coming’ of Christ, and that he will not then come empty-handed, but ‘he will bring his reward with him,’ Rev. xxii. 12. Consider what St Paul said to Timothy : ‘I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his kingdom,’ &c., 2 Tim. iv. 1. The holy apostle had no greater a conjuration to move Timothy to be diligent, and to quicken him in his ministry, than by the coming of our Lord Jesus. So let us stir up ourselves, and comfort ourselves hereby.

Beloved, the soul is never in such a tune, as when the thoughts of these glorious times have raised the affections to the highest pitch and peg. Then the soul is never uncomfortable ; and so long as it is so affected, it cannot sin, for we lose our frame, we let down the soul in base desires, we let loose our thoughts from closing with Christ, and with the time to come, when we sin. When we let them loose, then they sink down to earthly things ; and that is the cause of all sin and of all discomfort.

So long, then, as we keep our hearts in a blessed frame of faith, and in a love of the appearing of Christ, they are impregnable. Satan cannot come between us and our faith, but he labours to loosen our faith and love, and to distract us with the businesses of the world, that we shall have very seldom thoughts of these things. Alas, that we 'who are born again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us,' 1 Pet. i. 4, should have so little and so light thoughts of our inheritance !

If a man were to go a journey by sea a year hence, he would be thinking every day upon his journey, what he should have to carry with him, and what will do him good when he comes there. We have all of us a long journey to go, from earth to heaven ; and we should be thinking of it every day in the year.

But we have a company of men in the world, all whose happiness is in putting off all thoughts in that kind ; in deferring the day of their death, and putting the evil day far away from them ; not thinking upon them ; that so they may drown themselves in pleasure and voluptuousness. Ah, what a pitiful case hath Satan and our own sinful dispositions brought us unto, that we should place our happiness, safety, and comfort in putting off the thoughts of death, in going on presumptuously in sin, and never thinking upon that great day ! Alas, they cannot think of it but as Felix did, who, when he heard Paul dispute and reason of 'righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, trembled,' Acts xxiv. 25.

Why, let Felix tremble, and let the world tremble, but let every Christian that hath made his peace with God, rejoice. Even as poor birds do sing when the spring time is returned again—for it warms them, and puts life and spirit into them, and they entertain the light and heat of the sun with singing and melody—so let us, in our thoughts, entertain Christ's coming with joy and comfort, having made our peace, substantially and solidly, with God. Let us look up, and lift up our heads with joy, for our redemption draweth nigh, Luke xxi. 28.

Now I come to the particular occasion.

It is well known that the particular occasion of this meeting is, to celebrate and solemnise the funeral of that worthy man Sir Thomas Crew, one of the king's serjeants, in regard of whom I made choice of this text. If I wanted matter to speak of him, he had many natural excellent parts, which did commend him. I might speak of the quickness of his wit, of the firmness of his memory, of the readiness of his expressions, of the clearness and solidity of his judgment, able to penetrate into the depth of things, &c. And for his ability in his particular calling, I might say many things. He was a man very eminent in his calling : he was one of the oracles of the law in his time ; one that had gathered very long and large experience, and wonderful great dexterity in that profession. And surely, beloved, these

things are not to be neglected by us, though to God-ward they are not much regarded. For natural parts, the devil excels, and hath more than any man; but yet to men-ward, they are to be esteemed, for they vindicate men from the reproach and obloquy of the world. They will say, Such a man was a religious man, but he had no skill in his calling; a good man, but unlearned. Now then it takes away reproach and disgrace from religion, when it can be said, This was an excellent man in his profession, and withal, a very excellent good Christian. It is the guise and fashion of proud profaneness, to lay religion as low as they can. They will take away or diminish all parts from religious persons as near as they can, that religion itself may seem vile and contemptible. For if religion once should win credit, then their baseness would appear the more; and that their pride will not endure. Wherefore, if these things be to be regarded, in regard of men, we ought to thank God for it, when grace is graced with excellent parts. Therefore, God sometimes vouchsafeth to men that are truly religious, excellency of parts. Otherwise, grace is lovely in itself; but as a precious stone and pearl set in gold is more precious and glorious, so religion, set in the stem of nature and excellent parts, hath more lustre and beauty, and the larger improvement.

You have a company of profane wretches in the world, even in these glorious times of the gospel, that do glory only in their excellent parts, that will seek even to the devil himself, so they may out-brag others, and gain to themselves a reputation of wit; and some will vilely adventure upon sin against their conscience, thinking that they should lose all reputation of wit and parts, if they should become religious once. But you see that God oftentimes adorns religious men with excellent parts of nature. Religion indeed cuts off the froth, the exuberancy and redundancy of parts; but it increaseth the solidity of parts, and spiritualiseth them, and directs them to their right end, to the glory of God and good of mankind. Therefore, they may stand well enough together.

Now, in this worthy man there was a concentrating and joining together of the parts of nature and the parts of industry, and likewise of the parts of grace. And that which did steer his conversation, and rule all aright, was indeed the true fear of God, which caused him to set the stamp of religion on all his courses in his whole conversation.

For the Lord's day, it may a little be discerned by that. He had a wonderful care to keep it holy. He was as eminent as any in his profession for that. He would not intermeddle with the businesses of his calling on that day. He did not think it enough to hear the sermon and divine service, and then to go to the works of his calling. And in this he is to be commended. For whose good hath God appointed the Lord's day? Is it not for our own? Should not we grow base and earthly-minded, if one day in seven we should not be heavenly-minded, and think upon our everlasting condition in another world? Shall we think much then of that which God appoints for us?

But to return. Besides his care of the Lord's day, for he did not limit his religion to a day, he was careful in his family of having morning and evening prayers; yea, and private also, twice in a day at the least. And this, as it did bring strength to his soul, and put a beauty upon it, so it did also sanctify his labours and prosper his businesses, and bring them to a good issue. He lost nothing by it. And seeing it is almost impossible in these profane times but that such courses as these are should meet with envy and scorn from some, therefore he had learned with Moses 'to bear the reproach

of Christ,' Heb. xi. 26. He did account nothing more glorious than the profession of religion. And truly religion is a glorious thing: it puts a glory and beauty upon the soul.

But there are many men in these days that will not own Christ in his cause. How will such look him in the face another day, when he hath said, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels,' Mark viii. 38.

But this worthy man, I say, what he judiciously undertook he constantly went through withal. He would not be scorned or turned out of his course by any man. He was a child of wisdom, able to justify what he did against the spirit of gross and proud profaneness, and against an empty, formal, dead, cold profession. He had not only the word of God to back him, but his own excellencies, and the sweetness that he felt and found in his Christian course, to defend him. And this should all we labour for.

He was, moreover, a man exceedingly conscionable.* He had a very tender conscience, being willing in all doubtful things to be directed and resolved, which was an excellent thing. He knew, and so should all you, that the time would come ere long that a man would give a great deal to have a good conscience, and this was in him.

For his conversation in his family, he was very mild and gentle at all times; not as some, who being sweetened with a fee, are wonderful mild and calm to their clients, but are lions in their own houses. His carriage was not such.

For his conversation with other kind of men, it was sweet and loving, and very useful. He was full of goodness, and offices of love. He did not bear himself big upon his offices or place; but was, as David saith of himself, 'as a weaned child,' Ps. cxxxi. 2. Though his parts did raise him up, and advance him above the ordinary sort of men, yet his grace levelled him, that he made himself equal to the lower sort, and yet in such sort that he had wisdom to understand and know himself in his place, and so grace will teach a man to do.

He was a marvellous great encourager of honest, laborious, religious ministers, for their Master's sake, and for their work's sake, and he lost nothing by it. He had a prophet's reward, the prayers of all good men that were acquainted with him. And I hope that that commendation will not die with him, but that it will live in those that he lives in.†

For his disposition toward the poor, he was very merciful and compassionate. He was the poor man's lawyer; insomuch that the last cause that ever he pleaded was *sub forma pauperis*, for a poor man, and a minister; as it was publicly shewn to the greatest and most judicious magistrates in the kingdom. 'He was a foot to the lame, and eyes to the blind,' as Job saith he was, Job xxix. 15, and 'he made the widows to rejoice.' He was a helpful and fruitful man, 'a tree of righteousness,' full of good fruit. He made the times and places better where he lived. He was a great lover of his country, even in some degree to the prejudice of himself.

It pleased King James, of famous memory, to choose him with some other commissioners, to go into Ireland about public employment, which he performed with such care and conscience, that when he returned home again he was made the king's serjeant, and after that speaker in parliament, and the mouth of the Commons.

* That is, 'conscientious.'—G.

† Qu. 'leaves'?—ED.

He was forty years a practitioner in his calling ; in which time God blessed him with a great increase of his estate. God sometimes doth delight to make good his temporal promises to a religious, industrious, and faithful man, and that in the eyes of the world. Sometimes God carries things in a cloud and in a mystery. We cannot see how such and such men should go back in the world. This will appear to us another day, in the day of revelation. But because God would encourage religion, faithfulness, and industry, he makes good his temporal promises to such faithful men as he was. Such was his faithfulness, such was his dexterity and quickness in dispatching men's causes and business, that men were willing to put their causes and estates into his hands. Therefore it is no wonder, if in so long a time as forty years' practice, God blessed him with so great an estate.

Obj. But some may object his going to London of late times, when his infirmities grew upon him.

Ans. But this much I know, that the exigency and urgency of other men's occasions did importune, and in part draw him to it. And then again his staying at home was very tedious to him. It is death to an industrious man, that hath been in employment, to be idle, as it is death to an idle man to be employed. He was a man of an active spirit, and one that was not hindered by his journeys. Neither would it have holpen or eased him to have stayed at home. Therefore you must judge charitably of that.

But I come in a word to the time of his sickness, and so to the hour of his death.

For these later years he had two several severe churlish monitors that did put him in mind of his end, namely, the stone and the strangury. In these sore diseases he carried himself with wonderful great patience. None did ever hear any words fall from him that witnessed any impatience.

Toward his end, he considered that he was now for another and a better place. Therefore, when he was invited to dinner in the house of which he was, in Gray's Inn, saith he, 'I must dine in another place.'

When his sickness did seize upon him more sharply, though the pain thereof took away a great part of the powers of his soul, yet he did manifest a great deal of strength of faith by divers words that fell from him : 'As the hart brays after the rivers of water, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' Ps. xlii. 1. And as the church doth here, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly : ' and, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.' He was displeased with them about him, that out of their love to him did recall him by cordials out of a swoon, and so protracted his life longer than he would have had it : 'You keep me too long from Christ,' saith he, 'God is merciful to me, and you are not,' with many the like. And when they heaved up his body, his spirit was so strong in him as if he desired to meet Christ before his time.

And thus, at length, this blessed man meekly yielded up his blessed soul into the hands of his blessed Saviour, that had so dearly bought it, sanctified it, and sealed it by his holy and blessed Spirit.

Beloved, I think there were but few men of later times, of whom we had more, and a more general loss, than of this worthy man. His servants lost a kind and loving master ; his children lost a most tender and careful father ; his friends, a true, cordial, and hearty friend ; the professors of the law, a special ornament of it ; the ministers especially, a sweet encourager ; the poor clients, a loving patron ; the richer sort, a grave, wise, and judi-

cious counsellor; religion and justice, a great supporter; the country where he lived, a faithful magistrate. So that here is the loss of many.

But what hath he lost? He hath attained to that which he desired so earnestly, he hath joined himself to Christ and left behind him a monument of mortality, the sad remembrance and remainder of him, his dead body. He hath made an happy change, of earth for heaven; of the company of men for the company of perfect souls and angels in heaven; of troublesome employments here for glorious employments for ever. So that he is no loser.

He hath left behind him likewise another sweet memorial and remembrance of him, as sweet as the ointment of the apothecary, unto the church and people of God.

He lived, to end all, in the best times that have been in the church since the apostles' times all his days. He was born under the gospel and lived under the gospel. He began to favour the best things, even from his youth. And God lengthened his days very long for the good of us. Therefore God miraculously, almost, preserved his weak worn body. It was much that such a spirit should endure in such a body so long under such diseases. But, at length, being full of days, and full of honour with all good people, God having blessed him in his children (for his children's children inherit his blessing), in the comfort and assurance of an happy change, he yielded up his blessed soul, and triumphant spirit, into the hands of God, whom he had loved; whose cause he had owned here in the world, in the midst of this sinful generation, and whom he professed, even unto death; whose coming he desired so earnestly; where, and with whom, we now leave him.

And for you, beloved, that fully know, as the apostle Paul saith, 'his purpose, his manner of life, his faith, his long-suffering, his charity, patience,' &c., 2 Tim. iii. 10, I beseech you, let not his memory die with him; but let those virtues that were in him live in you, so long as you live. 'If there be anything praiseworthy, or of good report' (as indeed there was much in him), 'think on these things,' Phil. iv. 8. If there were any infirmities in him (as, I think, there were as few in him as in any man), love hath a mantle to cover them. He was a gracious man every way; one that adorned the doctrine and gospel of Christ in everything. Therefore, I beseech you, as the apostle saith, 'be followers of him, as he was of Christ.' We must one day give an account to God, not only for what sermons we have heard, but for the examples of those amongst whom we have lived; how we have profited by the lights that God hath set before us in the world, whether we have imitated their examples or no. We must give an account for all the good we might have received, not only by the means of salvation, but also by the precedents of worthy persons set before us.

I beseech you, in the bowels of the Lord Jesus, 'think on these things,' and 'the peace of God be with you!'