

## THE CHURCH'S ECHO.\*

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*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.*—REV. XXII. 17.

THIS book of the Revelation is an history of the state of the church, from the first coming of Christ to his second coming.

These two last chapters set down the glorious condition of the church, in the latter end of the world, and as it shall be in the consummation of all things, when the present state of things shall determine\* in the 'second coming' of Christ. For howsoever, no doubt but there is set down the glorious condition of the church in this world in part, yet the desire of the church rests not in any condition here, therefore it is carried to the consummation and perfection of all. There shall be a kind of new world at the conversion of the Jews; but when the church is under that blessed condition, yet it is under desires still of farther perfection, till an end be made of all things. Therefore this saying here, 'Come,' hath reference to the future state of the church. All the desires of the church are restless till the consummation of all things in the latter coming of Christ. It carries all before it in a desire; 'come, Lord,' therefore to call the Jews; 'come, Lord,' to confound antichrist, which must be before that. For the Jews will never come in till the scandal† of idolatry be removed, and when all this is fulfilled, then 'come, Lord,' to make an end of this sinful world.

As it is with a river, it carries all before it, till it discharge itself into the ocean, where it is swallowed up, so it is with the desires of a Christian. They carry all in the mean time, between heaven and them, in a stream, and never rest till they be swallowed in heaven itself, and the 'second coming' of Christ to finish all things; and then is the period of all happiness, and the accomplishment of all promises, 'when Christ shall come to be glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. i. 10.

\* 'The Church's Echo' forms one of the sermons included in the 'Beams of Divine Light' (4to, 1639). Its separate title-page is as follows:—'The Chvrches Echo. In one Sermon. By The late learned and reverend Divine, Rich. Sibbs: Doctor in Divinitie, Mr of Katherine Hall in Cambridge, and sometimes Preacher at Grayes-Inne. Isay 64. 1. Oh that thou wouldst rent the heavens and come downe, that the Mountaines might flow downe at thy presence. London, Printed by E. P. for Nicholas Bourne, and Rapha Harford, 1638.'

G.

\* 'That is, 'end.'—G.

† That is, 'stumbling-block.'—G.

The words they are, as it were an echo, an answer back again of the bride, the spouse of Christ, unto his promise of his coming, which he makes twice in this chapter, in ver. 7, 'Behold, I come quickly;' and in ver. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly;' and he comes not empty-handed, 'My rewards is with me.' Now the church here echoes back again: Christ saith, 'I come,' and the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' The words contain the most heavenly desire that can be, of the most excellent personage in this world, the queen, the bride of Christ; and it is a desire to the most excellent person absolutely, Christ himself, a desire of his coming; and it is stirred up by the most excellent Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. For the meaning of the words is this, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come,' not as distinct and severed, but the bride by the Spirit saith, 'Come,' the Holy Ghost in the bride, as it is Rom. viii. 26, 'We know not what to pray, but the Spirit makes intercession.' How is that? The Spirit makes intercession, by making us make intercession; for what Christ doth, the Spirit causeth us to do, for there is one Spirit in Christ and us. So the bride, by the motion of the holy and blessed Spirit, says, 'Come.' The order of our discourse upon these words shall be this,

First, to speak of the person wishing, and her condition, the bride.

And then of the desire of this excellent personage, the bride.

And then of the moving cause that stirs up the bride to desire the coming of Christ.

First, For the person, the bride.

The church is sometime compared to a woman for weakness; sometimes to a wife, for faithfulness to her husband Christ; sometimes to a bride, because she is contracted to Christ in this world; sometimes to a mother for her fruitfulness; sometimes to a virgin for her chastity; here to a bride, because this life is but the time of contract, but the consummation of the marriage shall be in heaven. Now this contract [is] between the church and Christ, and between every particular soul and Christ; for both are the bride of Christ. Even as it is the same soul that is in the little finger and in all the whole body, the same soul enlivens both, so it is the same Spirit in the bride in general, and in every particular Christian, therefore the bride is both every particular Christian's and the whole church's. Now the contract that is made between the soul, and between the church and Christ, it is by the Spirit of God, which knits the soul to Christ, and Christ to the soul; and for this end, that Christ might be a husband, and contract this bride to himself in our nature, he married our nature that he might marry our persons.

There is a threefold degree of union:

An union of nature, grace, glory.

The union of nature was, when Christ took our nature upon him. The union of grace is, when we take his nature, when we partake of the divine nature. The union of glory is when we shall all be in heaven. The first is for the second, and the second for the third. Christ became bone of our bone in nature, that we might be 'bone of his bone' with him in grace; and so perfectly one with him in glory. We see the bride, that is the person. Here I might take occasion to speak of the sweet comfort that issues from this, that the second person in the Trinity should dignify us so much, as to take us to unity with and contract us to himself. But I will not speak much of this point, having spoken more at large of it out of the Canticles.\*

\* Cf. 'Bowels Opened,' Vol. II. *in loc.*—G.

If marriage be honourable, what is this marriage and contract which is indeed the pattern of all other? Others are but shadows to this.

*Use 1.* Hence comes *the sweet security and peace of the church, from this contract between Christ and it*; for all our debts are discharged by this. He took upon him our sins. And then the church hath interest in him and all his in this contract and marriage which is to be consummate; all that he is and hath is the church's. 'All is yours, because you are Christ's,' 1 Cor. iii. 21, *seq.* What a large comfort is this, if we had hearts to consider of it and to improve it! His grace serves for the church: 'of his fulness we receive grace for grace.' John i. 16. So we may say of all the privileges that Christ hath, they are first in him and then in the church. The church shines in his beams. And as it is matter of wondrous comfort, so it is likewise matter of more special comfort, in case of infirmities. The church is a woman, therefore the weaker vessel. Now God, that bids us 'bear with the woman, as the weaker vessel,' 1 Peter iii. 7, to honour her with the honour of gentle usage,—for that honour is meant,—he that teacheth man his duty, will he not perform it himself, to bear with his church, as the weaker vessel? Especially when it is the condition of the marriage, Hosea ii. 19, 'I will marry thee to me in mercy.' We may claim mercy as a part of our dowry by Christ, pardoning mercy, forbearing, pitying mercy. We make not use of this comfort when we are discouraged.

*Use 2.* But this teacheth us likewise how to carry ourselves to Christ as we should do, *chastely*. To take heed how we judge of things, we must keep our judgments chaste. A Christian hath not liberty to riot in his opinion, to run at random, to see what carnal reason saith. No; he must think what Christ thinks, and submit his judgment to him. And he must have no will of his own; he must give it up to his contracted husband, Christ, and be content to be ruled by him in all things; he must forget his father's house and his former condition, and not to make this marriage, as carnal professors do, a cover for their adulterous unfaithfulness. What is the course of many Christians? They make the profession of religion a cover for their ill dealing, for their unfaithful courses. What a shame is this! It is abominable. What makes the faults of wives worse than the fault of single persons? Because they are contrary to covenants, besides many other inconveniences, the confusion of offspring and the like. But this is one grand difference, to make the exaggeration of the fault, it is contrary to former covenant. Those that are swearers and filthy persons, that disgrace religion, and yet notwithstanding cover themselves under pretence that they are contracted to Christ, they are baptized and come to the sacrament, &c., such wretched persons shall know ere long what it is to dally with religion. What is the aggravation of the faults of such persons? They deal as filthy adulteresses do, they make religion a cover for their wretched courses. God is merciful, Christ died, we are Christians, we are baptized, &c. This is an obligation to a stricter life. It gives men no liberty, but is a stricter bond to a holy life, the renewing of the new covenant again and again. Therefore there is no comfort for any such wretched persons, that countenance themselves under the profession of religion. It adds a greater degree to their offence. O ye adulterers and adulteresses, saith St James, 'know ye not that the love of the world is enmity with God?' James iv. 4. When we let our hearts loose to vain things, and yet pretend that we are contracted to Christ, we are adulterers and adulteresses.

I beseech you therefore, in the name of Christ, for it is our office that

are ministers, to bring Christ and his spouse together, we are *Paranymphei*,\* friends of the bridegroom, as it is in the New Testament. Let me entreat you in good earnest, those that have not seriously given up their names to Christ, to be contracted to him, to join with him in good earnest, and to resign all to him in your inward man, in your judgments, and wills, and affections, and then you shall find it the most comfortable condition in this world. Indeed, all is nothing to the comfort of this condition, to be in deed and not in outward profession only, in covenant with Christ, to be contracted to him. If not, if you will take liberty under the profession of religion, to live loosely, to be swearers and filthy persons, to use your tongues as you list,† as if you had made no promise to Christ, as indeed we all have, what will be the confusion of your souls ere long! Oh that we dallied with religion! that we were entreated to be as we should be by all sweet bonds! and yet we preferred our own lusts and base affections. This will be the aggravation of hell and damnation itself; this entreaty of Christ, and the excellent prerogatives and privileges that we have in Christ. And in the mean time we stand more upon our own base courses, and will not leave anything to give up ourselves to Christ. But I mean not to dwell on this point. This is the person, 'the bride.' She is called 'the bride,' and not the wife, because she is only contracted here on earth; and she is called 'the bride,' in opposition to the whore of Babylon in this book, that is, the filthy adulteress, the false church. The true church of Christ is a bride and a virgin; in heaven she shall be a wife. The false church is a whore. She defiles herself with idolatry and abominations. So partly for distinction from itself in heaven, where it shall be a wife, and partly in opposition to the false church, she is here called a bride.

To come, in the next place, *to the desire of the church.* How should the church know she is a bride? This is one way, the desire of the marriage. Where there is a true contract, there is a desire of the marriage, of the consummation of it, a desire of the coming of Christ. In this there are two things considerable.

First, *that Christ will come.*

And then the church hath a desire of this coming. That Christ will come, I need spend no time to prove it, for it is an article of faith, 'He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' And he will come to make an end of what he hath begun here. He came to redeem our souls. He must, and he will come to redeem our bodies from corruption. He came to be judged and to die for us. He must come to be judge of the quick and dead. He came to contract us, he will come again to marry us and to take us where he is. He loved us so, that he came from heaven to earth where we are, to take our nature, that he might be a fit husband, but he will come to take us to himself. We shall enter 'into his chamber, to the palace of the great King,' Ps. xlv. 15. He will come, there is no question of that.

The uneven carriage of things in this world to the eyes of men evinceth so much. You see how it is here with mighty persons that shake off Christ's yoke, how they bear sway, how Satan plays freaks‡ in opposing Christ; he rules in the children of pride. This must not alway be so. There must and will be a time when Christ will 'be glorious in his saints.' Now the life of Christ in the saints is a 'hidden' life; there must be a day of revelation. And even as it was in Christ's first coming, there was all kind of arguments and witnesses to prove that he should come in the flesh, a choir

\* That is, from *παρanympῆσις* = brideman.—G.

† That is, 'choose.'—G.

‡ Misprinted 'reaks.'—G.

of angels from heaven to witness it ; and on earth, the wise men among the Gentiles ; and among the Jews, old Simeon. There was men and women, all kind of witnesses. So in his 'second coming,' there is all kind of witnesses. In this chapter here is Christ, and the angel, and John, and the Spirit, and the spouse, the church in general and every particular soul. Their desire of his coming shews that he will come ; for the desires stirred up in the heart by the Holy Ghost, they will not be in vain. The desires of his coming shew that he will come ; for spiritual desires must have their accomplishment. There will be a coming of Christ, there is no question of that.

And the church here desires it. It is the disposition of the church to be carried in her desires to it ; wherein we will shew the ground of this desire, and then the use that we are to make of it.

The grounds why the church desires the coming of Christ are manifold.

1. First of all, look but to the present condition of things in this world, the state of things, *the scandals that are in the church*. There will be a desire in the church that all scandals and offences may be removed, as it is in the gospel, 'Christ will come and take away all that offend.'

2. Look again to the state of the church here, it is but a *persecuted, afflicted estate*, nay, those that should countenance the poor church, how roughly is the poor church used oftentimes of those ! Those that should encourage the church, their rugged and rough usage stirs up this desire in the church, when those that should be most encouragement are oftentimes the greatest discouragement.

3. Then again the church hath *antichrist to oppose it, and false brethren in it*, false persons that hang in their affections to the world. And however they make a show, yet their minds are carried to pomp and to a false religion, because they are besotted with a proud carnal disposition, which they prefer before the simplicity of the gospel ; vain persons in the bosom of the church, that know not what the glory of the church is.

4. Then again, if we regard even *the weakness of the church itself*, it breeds a desire of Christ's coming ; for, alas ! there is but a weak sight in men ; and variety of sight where there is weakness, breeds variety of judgment ; and where there is variety of judgment, there will be jealousies even among good persons ; and these are irksome to the Spirit of God in any that love the sweet peace and concord of Christians, that are contracted to Christ. This will not be avoided in this world. Only those that are wise and strongest in grace, they will be the greatest peace-makers, and bear with the weak in this kind.

5. Then again, while we are in this world, there is not the best thing but *Satan will put his foot and claw in*, except grace overpower him. The magistracy and ministry, alas ! how are they many times profaned and abused by Satan and corrupt-hearted men, that know not how to manage them graciously and fruitfully ? The magistracy that is for good, it is turned oftentimes for grievance, as if all the world were made for them, and they to do nothing but to have others idolise them. And then for the ministry, those that should be teachers of others, many times discourage those that they should cherish ; and as the prophet complains in this time of the false prophets, they discourage those that they should encourage, and strengthen the bands of the wicked, and grieve those that God doth not grieve by their false carriage, taking contrary ways to God's Spirit. They grieve those that they should cherish and comfort, and strengthen the hearts of those that they should take down, by flattery and false applications. This will

be to the end of the world, notwithstanding the excellent ordinance of God, by which God works his own good ends. While the world stands there will be a taint upon God's ordinance till Christ come, and then all that grieve and offend shall be taken away. There shall be no sun nor moon then, for the Lamb will do all. There shall be no magistracy nor ministry then, 'God will be all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28.

And so for all conditions. There is no condition nor nothing that is good in the world, but Satan labours to bring a vanity upon it, and the corrupt heart of man is prone to yield to him; this will be to the end of the world. Therefore we should not be over much offended, to see things carried otherwise than we would have them. Why should we wish for that condition that will never be in this world? Wish we may, but we must wish it in its own time. It will be hereafter. Let us labour that it may be so then, and bear with all here as patiently as we can.

6. Again, take the best Christians of all, in themselves, in their own particulars. Alas! *what a conflicting life hath a Christian with his own heart!* Sometimes, in general, he can see truths very clear, but, in a particular, some passion or other, of anger or revenge, &c., it clouds his judgment, that he cannot see what is to be done, what is best. The reason is, the imperfection of the work of mortification, hinders him in his passages and business, that he cannot clearly decide of what is best at this time. St Paul complains of this, that he '*could not do the good that he would, and that he did the ill that he would not,*' Rom. vii. 21. There are none but they carry some of these dregs with them in this world, that hinders them in their designs and determinations. Only those that have the power of God's Spirit in a greater portion than the rest, they get more victory over these things, and can more clearly see anything than others. Yet notwithstanding, all have some impediment this way, even the best.

7. *The necessities of this life enforce a great deal of trouble;* the supplying the necessities of nature and of the condition that God hath set us in, which all shall have an end then.

8. Then again, *the relation between Christ and this contracted spouse, and every faithful soul,* enforceth a desire of his coming. It is the time of the church's contract; she is a bride now, she is contracted. Now all the time between the contract and the marriage, it is a time of longing and desire; therefore the church cannot but desire the second coming of Christ. It is the nature of imperfection, where there is truth in imperfection, to desire perfection. You see the little seed that is sown in the ground, it breaks through the thick clods, because it is not in its perfection till it be in the ear. Nature hath given it an instinct to break out. So where the seed of grace is, it will break out and shoot forward to desire still and still, till it comes to perfection. Grace being an imperfect state here, it puts forward in desiring that perfection that it cannot attain in this world, but in the world to come. Therefore the Spirit and the spouse say, 'Come.'

9. And then, *from the nature of the affection of love itself, where it is planted.* It is an affection of perfect union. Contract will not serve, but marriage must come after. Love will not satisfy itself in imperfect union, but it cries, 'Come, come,' still. It is carried in a restless desire till it come to perfection. Therefore put the case the Jews were called and converted, and antichrist subdued, hath the church an accomplishment of the period of her desires, to say no more, 'Come?' Oh no! Yet Christ is not come as he will. There is not a perfect consummation of all; until

that of time itself, there will be a desire of the bride and spouse to say, 'Come.' Thus we see what grounds there are of this desire.

*Quest.* But is this only true of the church militant here below? Doth not the church in heaven say, 'Come,' too?

*Ans.* Yes, the church in heaven saith, 'Come,' too. The church in heaven and earth are but one family. They are, as it were, but one parliament. There is the higher house in heaven, and the lower on earth, and both say 'Come.' What is the reason that the church in heaven saith, 'Come?' Because the church in heaven have bodies that be rotting in earth; which bodies helped them to serve God on earth, fasted with them and prayed with them, and endured pains and toil with them. The soul accounts itself imperfect till it be joined to its old companion the body again. Therefore it desires, 'Come, Lord,' that my body may be united to me again; that so we may both perfectly praise thee in heaven.

Then again, they have not all their company; all the saints are not gathered; and they will not be merry indeed till they all meet in heaven. Therefore that all may meet, even the church in heaven hath a desire, 'Come, Lord.' So both heaven and earth agree in this, they meet in this desire.

*Use 1.* This may be a ground of trial, *whether we be truly the bride of Christ or no.* The ground of the trial may be gathered hence. Whither is the bent of our desire carried? Is our condition so here, as that we desire to be as we are still? Then all is naught with us. The church, we see, saith 'Come.' Nothing will content her in this world. So those hearts that are wrought upon by the Spirit of God, nothing here will content them, but still they say, 'Come.' The disposition in carnal persons is clean contrary. They say, as it is in Job, 'Depart from us, we will none of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14; they are of the mind of the devil in the Gospel, 'Why dost thou come to torment us before our time?' Mat. viii. 29. Do not come. If it were in the power of most men in the church, whether Christ should come to judge the world or no, do you think they would give their voice that way, that Christ should come? They would never do it: for they know how unfit a condition they are in for the second coming of Christ. If thieves and malefactors might have liberty to choose whether there should be assizes or no, surely they would never have any. So it is with the men of the world, that live in sinful, wretched courses; that abuse their tongues and their bodies; are they of the disposition of the bride, to say, 'Come?' Oh no! They know they have not done their duty. Therefore let us enter deeply into our own souls, and try whether cordially we can yield this desire of our hearts to say, 'Come'?

(1). Therefore, to spend a little time in further search, if we can truly say 'Come,' *we will desire Christ to come into our souls now,* to rule our souls now, to come and make way for himself in our hearts. Is it possible for the soul to desire to go to Christ, that will not suffer him to come to it? If Christ rule not in us, we shall never reign with Christ: if Christ's kingdom come not to us, we shall never enter into Christ's kingdom. Therefore the soul that hath this desire truly, to say, 'Come,' it will give Christ entrance into it and let him 'come' by his ordinances. 'Come,' Lord, by thy word! come by thy Spirit into my heart! close with my heart! drive out whatsoever is there that will not give thee liberty to reign as thou wilt! These desires will be in a true heart. It will not cherish wilfully those desires that are contrary to this.

Shall we think that that Christian that saith these words in good earnest

will put Christ away in his ordinances, and not care for to hear his word, nor care to meet Christ here in earth, and yet pretend a desire to meet him in heaven? Where is Christ here? Is he not in his congregations and assemblies of his saints? Those, therefore, that despise the ordinances of God, and yet pretend that they desire that Christ should come, do they not profane the Lord's prayer when they say, 'Hallowed be thy name,' 'Thy kingdom come'? They patter\* it over; they do not mean it in good earnest. When they despise the ministry and the ministers, and whatsoever is Christ's, despise the motions of his Spirit, and will not suffer him to rule in their hearts, but are ruled by rules of policy and reason and flesh, can they say, 'Come'? No! They do abominably profane the Lord's prayer. What kind of service is that, when their desires are quite clean contrary? It is a protestation contrary to their faith, and therefore it is a nullity. They profess in their prayers that they would have Christ to come, and yet their course of life is contrary; they would not have him come.

(2.) Again, those that truly desire Christ should come, *they will be subordinate helpers under Christ, to promote those things that tend to his coming.* Before Christ comes, antichrist must be abolished and consumed; the Jews must be converted, and the number of the elect must be consummate and finished. Therefore what shall we say, when those that pretend to desire the coming of Christ shall countenance heresies that must have an end first? And those that are against wholesome laws to be made in that kind, those that countenance idolatry and false worship, stablishing what Christ must abolish before he come, can they say, 'Come,' in good earnest? Their course is contrary to what they pray. Therefore in deed and in good earnest we pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' and say with our souls as the church here, 'Come,' when we set ourselves to abolish heresy and false worship of God, that is adulterous, and promote the true service of God; when we labour in our places that the number of the elect may be consummate; when we labour that our children may be God's children, and our servants may be God's servants, and every one in our places labour that the kingdom of Christ may be enlarged—if we put not to our helping hand to that we pray for, it is a contradiction. Those, therefore, that live scandalous lives, in scandalous courses and speeches, and hinder the conversion of people's souls, and labour to draw them to wicked, hellish courses, when they post to hell themselves, and labour to draw others into cursed society with themselves, they cannot truly say, as the church here, 'Come.' Let us take it to heart, that we do not mock and dally with religion. It is a greater matter than we take it for. It is impossible but a Christian that saith his prayers in earnest, should be thus affected, unless we make a mockery of religion.

(3.) Again, if we can indeed say 'Come,' *there will be a fitting for this coming*, a preparing ourselves for it, for our going to Christ. Is it not so in civil things? And doth not grace work that that nature doth, in a higher degree? If we desire that a great person should come to us, will there not be a fitting of our houses, of our apparel, and entertainment suitable to the worth of the person? or else a man may say, Surely you look for nobody this day; there is nothing fitted and prepared. So if we pretend we desire Christ to 'come,' and yet notwithstanding we are careless of getting knowledge and of purging our souls, of growing in grace, careless of being such as Christ may delight to come unto, this carelessness of fitting and preparing

\* The allusion is to the *pater noster* of popery.—G.



ourselves shews that we do but in hypocrisy speak the words when we have no such thing in our hearts. Those that desire the kingdom of Christ, and the happy condition of Christians in another world, they desire the way of it here, that is, by fitting and preparing themselves for that estate; and indeed it will work those effects as it is Tit. ii. 12, and other places. What is the motive there to live a holy and righteous and sober life? 'Looking and waiting for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' There he inserts a holy life between the two comings of Christ, shewing that the believing the end of both, will work this effect in the change of our lives, 'to be sober to ourselves, and just to others, and holy to God.' 'The grace of God hath appeared,' that is, in the first coming of Christ, 'teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,' &c., and then looking forward still for the second coming of Christ, ver. 13. So that he believes that the grace of God hath appeared in saving our souls by the death of Christ in his first coming; and he that believes that he will come to be glorious after in his second coming, certainly he will live justly and soberly and righteously in this present world; he will fit himself for that estate that he professeth to desire. Let us try ourselves by these evidences in some measure, and not think our state good till we can say from our hearts, 'Come.'

But are Christians always in this state of soul that they can say, 'Come'?

*Ans.* I answer, they are always in some degree fitting themselves for Christ; but, notwithstanding, they are not always so exact and watchful, that they could wish that he should come at this time. Take the comparison from a wife, a spouse: she heartily desires the coming home of her husband; yet perhaps sometimes things may not be in so good order as to wish that he were here now; nay, I have not yet prepared. This is the state of careless Christians, that have soundness of grace, and yet are careless. They desire the coming of Christ, and they love the glory of the life to come, and endeavour weakly for it; yet they are so careless; some corruption hangs on them, that they have not so mortified and subdued as they should do; they are not yet so fitted as they should be. Therefore God often rouseth such by afflictions and other courses in this world, to wean them more from the love of the world, and to prepare us, because we are slothful and careless to prepare ourselves. So I say that sometimes the best Christians may be more indisposed than at others, by reason of security growing on our souls, so weak are we and beset with temptations. Therefore let none be over much discouraged with that, but let us strive as the church here, to be in such an estate as we may always say, 'Come.'

Well, upon trial, if we find ourselves not so disposed as we should, how shall we carry ourselves that we may say, 'Come'?

*Use 1.* Let us labour to *purge ourselves by mortification more and more.* 'He that hath this hope purgeth himself,' 1 John iii. 3. And let us endure God's purging of us, and justify God's purging of us by afflictions, and think that God hath this aim. Certainly this is to make me more heavenly-minded, to raise my affections up. I will therefore bear the anger of God; I have deserved it, and he hath holy ends in it to make me partaker of his righteousness. Let us purge ourselves by grace, and endure the course that God takes to purge us by daily crosses, for God aims by it to wean us more and more from the world.

*Use 2.* And let us labour *daily more and more to unloose our hearts from the things below.* Those that would remove a tree, they loosen it from the root of it; so our affections are rooted to earthly things, therefore we should

labour to loose them daily more and more, by the consideration of the uncertainty and vanity of all things. They are not that that will stick to us and give us content, when we shall stand in most need of them. Here we must leave the things of the world, as we find them here, we must part with them. Therefore we should labour to unloose our hearts, and to plant, and set, and pitch them where they may be safe, and swallowed up in better things.

*Use 3.* And to this end often meditate of the excellency that shall be in the second coming of Christ. Oh the glorious time then! See the means how the church comes to be stirred up here to say, 'Come.' Christ saith before, that he was 'the root of David,' the 'bright morning star.' He sets out himself gloriously, and the gloriousness of that time. Then the church, hearing what the excellency of that state will be then, and the excellency of Christ, the Church hath desires suitable to those manifestations. Therefore let us meditate of the state of the church what it will be, and of the excellency and glory of Christ when he shall come to be glorious in his saints, what a happy condition it will be! And to feed our meditations, let us be oft in hearing and reading of these things. If we hope for anything to come in this world, as if a young heir that shall have great possessions, the more he grows towards years, the more he thinks, I shall have this manor and that, he thinks of the possessions he hath; so a Christian, the nearer he grows to heaven, the more he thinks upon and talks and is willing to hear of that condition that he shall have. The more we are in meditation, and, to help meditation, the more we are in thinking, and speaking, and conferring of these things, what will befall us ere long, if we be God's, the more our affections will be raised up, as we see in the spouse here; upon the manifestation of the excellency of Christ comes this desire after the coming of Christ. This is one reason of the deadness of our hearts. We do not awaken them with such holy thoughts as we should, and we are not under those means as we might oftentimes. There cannot be anything more sweet and powerful to draw up our souls than meditation in this kind.

*Use 4.* Again, that we may be able to say 'Come,' let us *labour to be more and more spiritual*, that the Holy Spirit may rule our spirits; and then the Spirit is always for 'Come.' Nature saith not 'Come,' because it is above nature; I mean nature not corrupt saith not 'Come.' It is a hidden secret to nature. Nature saith, Stay still. It hath no desire to it. The flesh is contrary altogether. But the Spirit in the spouse saith, 'Come.' The Spirit doth all. As the soul doth all in the body,—it acts it, and leads it, and comforts it, and gives beauty to it,—so the Spirit first knits Christ and us together. There is the same Spirit in Christ the head and in the church, there is one common Spirit in head and members. And when it hath done so, it acts, and leads, and sanctifies, and purifies the church. It acquaints the church with the good things that God hath given her, acquaints her with the deep meaning of God, the love of God in Christ. It acquaints God with our desires. He knows our meaning in our prayers, and we know his meaning. It acquaints us with the state we shall have after, and assures us of it. It is the 'earnest' of the inheritance. The Spirit and the graces of it are not only the earnest but a part of that inheritance, a part of heaven where our bodies shall be spiritual; not that they shall turn to be spirits, but they shall be ruled wholly by the Spirit, as the soul rules the body.

As it is in a river, it is impossible that the stream should run higher than

the spring-head from whence it comes, so it is impossible that our desires should rise higher than the spring from whence they come. The desires of nature cannot go higher than nature. The desires of the flesh are fleshly, but spiritual desires, as they spring from heaven, they have a noble original and head, so they carry to heaven again. Therefore, as the Spirit comes from God the Father and the Son, so it carries us back again to the Father and the Son; as it comes from heaven, so it carries to heaven back again. That is one way to know whether our desires be spiritual or no. Our desire of death and of the coming of Christ, if it be from wearisomeness of life, and from afflictions in the world, so nature may desire. I were better be dead than to be thus, as Jonas wished death, and the children of Israel, and Elias in a passion, Oh that I were dead, &c. But if those desires spring from the Spirit, then they come from heaven, from the consideration of the excellency of the state we shall have there, that it shall be better with us, and that death is but a dark passage to a glorious condition. We may know our desires are spiritual from the rise of them, if they come from spiritual and holy and heavenly considerations. The Spirit doth all in the spouse that is holy and spiritual.

Therefore let us give entertainment to the Spirit of God; and be where we may have further and further communion with the Spirit in spiritual ordinances. The preaching of God's holy word, though it be meanly esteemed by the world, it is the ministry of the Spirit. In the hearing of it the Spirit is given. If we would have the Spirit, let us attend upon the ministry of the Spirit. And let us study Christ, and make him all in all. Saint Paul questions with the Galatians; saith he, 'I would know of you, how came ye by the Spirit? by hearing of Christ's gospel or of the law preached?' No; it was by the gospel, Gal. iii. 2. So that not only the ministry in general, but the evangelical ministry that unfolds Christ, and the infinite love of God in Christ, the excellent condition we have in this world and look for in the world to come; the Spirit is effectual with these thoughts to make us holy and heavenly. The law beats down, but the gospel, especially these evangelical truths, make us spiritual. Therefore we should be willing to hear spiritual points. There are a company of men that love to hear curious\* and nice points, and if a minister be quaint, and satirical, and unfold points suitable to their apprehension, they can digest this; but come to speak of things about nature, of Christ, and the benefits by him, they are spiritual, they are remote and transcendent about their nature, that they cannot relish them. But he that hath the Spirit of Christ, of all points, there are none to those that unfold Christ and the benefits by him, the glory that we hope for by him in another world.

And let us not grieve the Spirit, but give way to his motions. The Spirit is now among us in his ordinance, knocking at our hearts, and desiring entertainment. Let us give way, and not quench the good motions that he stirs up; and the Spirit shall be given more and more to us: 'The Holy Ghost is given to them that obey him,' Acts v. 32. And let us beg the Spirit. God 'will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him,' Luke xi. 13. As if he should say, the Spirit is the best thing God can give. You that are evil can give 'good things to your children;' but your heavenly Father hath one good thing instead of all; he will give his Spirit. Therefore, when we find our hearts dead, and dull, and earthly, and base-minded, think thus, Alas, I am a lump of flesh now. Where is the Spirit of God? Certainly if I had the Spirit in me, I could not be as I am. If we love our

\* That is 'over-curious.'—G.

souls, we will take this course; we trifle with religion else. God doth all by the Spirit. The Spirit is Christ's vicar. Here is no need of a ministerial head between the spouse and Christ, the Spirit and the spouse are so near together. There is such a conjunction between Christ and his church, that where the Spirit is, he stirs up desires of his coming. Only let us attend upon the means and ordinances that he hath left in his church, and let us consider we are not for this life; we are not to live here alway. The child in the womb is not for that life, and when it is in the world, it is not for this life. There is a third life that we are for. An imperfect state rests not till it come to perfection. Our best is behind. Let those that are naught\* fear the second coming of Christ. Let Herod, and Judas, and the beast of Rome fear, that shall be cast into the burning lake. Let Felix tremble, the corrupt judge, and all that live in corrupt courses. But we that profess ourselves to be Christians, and hope for better things in another world, let us labour to banish base fears: and to this end let us labour to be spiritual, and not to be led by the flesh. Whosoever is Christ's, hath the Spirit of Christ, or else he is none of his, as it is sweetly, and largely, and heavenly proved, Rom. viii. 14, *seq.* We have nothing to do with Christ, unless we have his Spirit, to stir up motions and desires of better things than this world can afford.

\* That is 'naughty,' = wicked.—G.