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COMMENTARIES

EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF SOLOMON'S SONG, COMMONLY CALLED CANTICLES

VOL. 2

by John Gill

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth*
— Psalm 60:4

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EXPOSITION

OF THE BOOK OF

SOLOMON'S SONG,

COMMONLY CALLED

CANTICLES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

WHEREIN

*The Authority Of It Is Established And Vindicated Against
Objections, Both Ancient And Modern; Several Versions
Compared With The Original Text; The Different Senses Both Of
Jewish And Christian Interpreters Considered, And The Whole
Opened And Explained In Proper And Useful Observations.*

BY JOHN GILL, D. D.

*Cantium canticorum spiritualis quaedam sanctarum est voluptas
mentium, in conjugio illius regis & reginae civitatis, quod est Christus &
ecclesia; sed haec voluptas allegoricis tegminibus involuta est, ut
desideretur ardentius, nudeturque jucundius, & appareat sponsus, cui
dicitur in eodem cantico, aequitas dilexit te, & sponsa quae ibi audit,
charitas in deliciis tuis. AUG. de Civ. Dei, 1. 17. c. 20.*

VOL. 2.

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CHAPTER 4.

VERSE 12.

*A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

CHRIST, having admired his church's faith and love, her language and her dress; proceeds to give farther commendations of her, and makes use of new metaphors to describe her by; in which he represents her as a well-watered and fruitful garden.

First, He says, she is, 'a garden inclosed:' the titles he gives her, 'my sister, my spouse, have been explained in verse 8,9. I shall only here inquire why she is called a garden, and that an inclosed one. And she is said to be a garden,

1. Because a garden is a piece of ground distinguished and separated from others for the owner's use: the church of Christ is distinguished and separated from others by electing and redeeming grace; by efficacious calling grace saints are also made to differ from others, and do in their lives and conversation live separate from them; and being set apart for God's own use, service, and glory, are a peculiar people to himself.

2. In a garden is a variety of flowers, herbs and plants: in Christ's church are many members, and those of different sorts; they have gifts differing from one another, and grace also; some have greater gifts, and larger measures of grace than others have; Put in them all there are many of those sweet flowers and precious plants.

3. In a garden, flowers, herbs and plants, do not grow up naturally of themselves, but are either set or sown; nothing but weeds grow up of themselves; so in Christ's garden, the church, and in the members of it, the graces of the Spirit do not grow up of themselves; they are sown, planted, and raised up by the Spirit of God; for in their hearts naturally grow nothing but the weeds of sin and corruption.

4. The ground must be dug and prepared far the setting of plants and herbs therein: the hearts of God's people before conversion are like fallow-ground; God is the husbandman, and they are his husbandry, this ground

must be dunged, as well as dug, before it becomes good ground, or ever these flowers, herbs, and plants will grow there, which method Christ takes with his garden, and the several parts thereof.

5. To keep a garden in order, requires a deal of labor and care; the stones must be gathered out, the plants must be watered, the trees pruned, the ground dunged, and the fences kept up: all this, and much more, does Christ to his garden, the church; he gathers out those things which offend and hinder the growth of his plants; he watches over them night and day, and waters them, every moment; he lops off the fruitless branches, and prunes those that are fruitful, that they may bring forth more fruit, and keep up the fences thereof, that ‘the wild boar of the forest’ may not enter in, and destroy his garden.

6. Gardens are places where persons delight to walk: Christ walks in his garden, the church; in the midst of his golden candlesticks; you frequently hear of him in this song, that ‘he is gone down into his garden, to feed’ there, and ‘to gather lilies;’ nay, he not only takes his walks, but takes up his residence in his church.

7. A garden is usually but a small piece of ground; and so is Christ’s church, in comparison of the wilderness and waste places of the world; it is a little flock, a small remnant, a few that shall be saved.

8. A fruitful and pleasant place; and so is the church, when compared with the world, ‘which lieth in wickedness,’ and is overrun with the briars and thorns of sin.

Also the church is said to be a garden inclosed,

(1.) For distinction-sake: the church is by God distinguished from others; the fence with which it is inclosed, and by which it is made to differ from others, is the free, special, and distinguishing grace of God.

(2.) For protection: Christ’s church, as it is distinguished by God’s grace, so it is protected by his power; he is ‘a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of’ it; a noble fence indeed! a glorious inclosure! Jerusalem with all its mountains, and Zion with all its bulwarks, were not so well fenced as this.

(3.) For secrecy: it is hidden from, and is not seen and known by the world; it is like a garden that is walled around, and closely locked and

barred^{f1}, whose flowers emit a sweet and fragrant odor, but are not seen; the saints, though they are exceeding useful in the world, yet are not known by the world; but are hid and shut up till the resurrection-morn, when it shall appear what they really are, for at present it does not.

(4.) It is compared to a garden inclosed, or locked and barred; for so the word^{f2} properly signifies, because it is not pervious to every one, neither ought it to be; every one has not a right to enter there, it should remain inclosed, bolted and barred, to all but those who believe in Christ; none ought to walk here but those who come in at the right door, Christ Jesus and every one that climbs up, and gets into this garden any other way, is reckoned by Christ as a thief and a robber.

(5.) It is said to be a garden inclosed or locked up, because it is only for Christ's use; therefore, in verse 16 she desires him to come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit: for this garden is only, his, and the fruits of it for his use alone: in chapter ²¹⁸5:1 agreeable to her request, he tells her, that he was come into his garden, had gathered the fruits of it, and had eat; it being his sole property, which others had no right unto, he keeps it inclosed, locked and bolted. The allusion perhaps is to a garden near Jerusalem, which Adrichomius^{f3} calls *hortus regius*, the *king's garden*, which was shut up, and was only for his use and pleasure; which is much more likely than what Mr Maundrei relates^{f4}, that at a little distance from Bethlehem, are pools of water; and below those runs a narrow, rocky valley, inclosed on both sides with high mountains; which the friars will have to be the inclosed garden alluded to.

Secondary, He says that she is 'a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed.' I put these two together, because they seem to intend much one and the same thing; though perhaps the one may be more strongly expressive of the church's fullness and excellency than the other; a fountain may intimate a larger quantity of water than a spring, and sealing signify a stronger security than bare shutting; but are both designed to inform us, that Christ's garden was well watered, and that there is, no danger of the herbs, flowers, and plants withering and perishing.

The Septuagint render the first of these expressions as before, κήπος κεκλεισμένος, 'a garden inclosed, or shut up;' and so do the Vulgate

Latin and Tigurine versions, reading \hat{n} for $l n$; Cocceius translates, ‘a heap locked up;’ and thinks the church is compared to a heap of spices or fruits, which are locked up in a private place, that they may not be spoiled nor stolen away from the owner: Christ’s church congregated together is a heap, but not a confused one; it is like an heap of spice or fruit laid in order; nor is it a heap of any thing, but of sweet-smelling spices and pleasant fruits, such as are mentioned in verses 13,14 to which add also, it is an heap that is valued and cared for, and therefore kept up safe under lock and key. The other version of ‘a spring shut up,’ is more usually received and acknowledged, both by Jewish ^{f5} and Christian Expositors, which also our Translators follow. Now the church is said to be a spring and fountain from whence waters flow, to water all the plants in Christ’s garden; which are either,

1. The graces of the Spirit, which are in her as ‘a well, and rivers of living water, springing up unto eternal life,’ ~~ROM4~~ John 4:14. and 7:38,39 and are called waters, because they are of a fructifying and reviving nature; the plants in Christ’s garden being watered with these, revive and lift up their heads, become green, flourishing and fruitful; the souls of God’s children drinking them in, and being filled with them, become like a watered garden, whose springs fail not. Or else,

2. The doctrines of the gospel: the gospel is thought to be the fountain, spoken of in ~~JOEL~~ Joel 3:18 which should ‘come forth of the house of the Lord, and water the valley of Shittim:’ it is with its gracious truths that the faithful ministers of the gospel water Christ’s garden; the spirit of grace does it efficaciously, they do it ministerially; Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; the doctrines of grace oftentimes flow in the ministry of the word, like floods of water upon the dry and parched ground, which soften, moisten, and make it fruitful; souls are refreshed, grow, and flourish thereby; their graces are revived, quickened and drawn forth into exercise, and every thing looks gay and beautiful, as in a fruitful and pleasant garden. Now we are not to suppose that the church is so properly this spring or fountain, as Christ and his Spirit are; she has not an indeficient supply in herself, she receives all from another; but because of the abundance of grace, and the means of it, which Christ is pleased to grant unto his church, therefore he calls her a spring and fountain; though she has grace enough to ascribe all the glory to him, and own him to be the alone spring and fountain from whence she is supplied, as in verse 15 will be made more manifestly to appear.

Moreover, the church is said to be ‘a spring shut up, a fountain sealed;’ springs and wells of water being highly esteemed, and much valued in those hot countries, were highly preserved; they used to roll a large stone at the mouth of them, and, for farther security, seal it; as that stone was which was laid at the month of the lions den, in which Daniel was cast; and that at the sepulcher in which Christ was buried: now these fountains were shut up and sealed, not only that the waters might not be bemudded by beasts, but also that they might not be converted to the use of others; thus it is reported, that, among the Persians ^{f6}, were such fountains that only the king and his eldest son might drink of; it being a capital punishment for any others to do so: and perhaps Solomon might have such a spring and fountain in his garden, which was shut up and sealed, and kept for his own private use, to which the allusion is here made; either at Jerusalem, or at Ethan, where he had a pleasure-house; which, for the delicate gardens, walks and fountains, and the fruitfulness of the place, he took great delight in ^{f7}: and near the pools at some distance from Bethlehem, supposed to be his, is a fountain, which the friars will have to be the sealed fountain, here alluded to; and to confirm which, they pretend a tradition, that Solomon shut up these springs, and kept the door of them sealed with his signet, to preserve the waters for his own drinking: and Mr Maundrel ^{f8}, who saw them, says, it was not difficult to secure them; they rising under ground, and having no avenue to them, but by a little hole, like to the mouth of a narrow well. And if we apply this to the doctrine of the gospel, it intends,

1. The secrecy and hiddenness of them to the men of the world; ‘for if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whom the god of this world hath blinded,’ says the apostle, in ~~ROM~~ 2 Corinthians 4:3,4 it is an hidden gospel to some, a book sealed both to the learned and unlearned, who are in a carnal and unconverted state: from many it is hidden, as to the external ministry of it; and to others it remains a secret, in the midst of the clearest light, and most powerful ministrations of it; it is shut up in parables, and appears to be nothing else but dark sayings to a mere natural man.

2. That they are peculiarly intended and designed for the elect of God: it is for their sakes he has sent it into the world; and for their sakes he will continue to keep it there, maugre all opposition, until every one of them are called by powerful and efficacious grace; ‘I endure all things,’ says the apostle, ~~2~~ Timothy 2:10, ‘for the elects sake, that they may also obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory;’ that is, I preach the gospel: and in doing it, undergo all the sufferings I do, purely upon

their account; that salvation may be brought unto them, and they brought at last into the eternal possession of it: and as it is sent into, and continued in the world for their sakes, so it is only blessed to them for conversion and consolation: though the gospel is preached to others, as well as to them, yet it does not Become profitable to them, because it is not mixed with faith by them; for whilst it is the ‘savor of life unto life’ to some, it is the ‘savor of death unto death’ to others; and though these waters of gospel-doctrines flow to, and fall upon others; yet it is but like water that falls upon a rock, that quickly glides away, and makes no impression; and not like streams of water which run about the plants, and soak to the very root. The elect of God are only savingly converted, refreshed, and comforted by gospel-doctrines; they are peculiarly designed for them, and eminently blessed to them; they are only for their use, and are to them ‘a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed.’

And if we apply it to the grace of the Spirit, it denotes,

- 1.** That it is hidden, unknown, and is not communicated to any but to the elect of God: the natural man knows not the things of the Spirit, namely, the grace of the Spirit in regeneration and effectual vocation; these things are mysteries to him; he is a stranger to them, and unacquainted with them; they are only communicated to, and wrought in those to whom God would make known the exceeding riches of his grace: thus things are said to be shut and sealed up, which are kept secret and hidden, and are not conveyed to the knowledge of persons, as in ^{<TARG>}Esther 8:16; ^{<TARG>}Daniel 12:4-9.
- 2.** That it is safe and secure: the grace of God’s people is shut up and sealed; it can never be taken away from them; their life, and all their grace, and the fullness of it, ‘are hid with Christ in God’; and what is given forth unto them, and wrought in them, is an immortal seed and that good part which cannot be taken away.
- 3.** It may intend the confirmation of it to the saints; so things are said to be sealed, when they are ratified, confirmed and made sure; grace and glory are both so to the saints; the Spirit is the author of their grace, and the earnest and pledge of their glory, by whom they are ‘sealed unto the day of redemption.’
- 4.** It may signify Christ’s special property in his church, and her inviolable chastity to him; and this I take to be the most proper sense of all these expressions; she is ‘a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed;’

she is Christ's garden and none but his; Christ's spring and fountain, to which none has a right but himself; she is his spouse and bride, and no other's; and being espoused unto him, as a chaste virgin, by mighty grace is kept so. The Jewish writers ^{f9} generally understand it of the modesty and chastity of the daughters of Israel; and this sense seems to be abundantly confirmed from ^{<115>}Proverbs 5:15-18. 'Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well,' etc. Let thy fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

VERSE 13,14.

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, camphire with spikenard. Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

CHRIST having compared his church to a garden, and observed that it was well watered, having in it a spring and fountain; he proceeds to shew the fruitfulness of it, that it abounded with the choicest trees, the most pleasant fruits, and the chief of spices. In explaining these words, it will be proper,

- I. To inquire what are intended by the church's plants.
- II. Why these plants are said to be 'an orchard of pomegranates.'
- III. Take notice of the several trees, fruits, and spices here mentioned, and what may be meant by them.

I. Who are meant by the church's plants. The Targum and Jarchi expound it of the young men in Israel; and it is nor. unusual in scripture to call children plants; see ^{<108>}Psalm 128:3 and ^{<112>}144:12, therefore, by her plants, may be intended the members of the church, her children, young converts, believers in Christ, who are 'planted in the house of the Lord, and flourish in the courts of our God:' these are not mere education plants, who spring up in churches, and join themselves to them, because their parents did; and espouse religion, because they were brought up in it: these are not mere outward profession-plants, who have a name to live, and are dead; have lamps, but no oil in their lamps; and have a form of godliness, fruit but deny the power thereof, such plants as these are fruitless ones; they are like the barren fig-tree, from which three years successively fruit was sought, but none found; if ever there was any appearance of fruit on

them, it never came to any thing, but withered away; and whatsoever fruit they do bring forth, it is to themselves, and not to God; like Israel of whom it is said, ^{<3800>}Hosea 10:1 that he is ‘an empty vine, and brings forth fruit, to himself:’ and the reason of this is, because they have not the root of the matter in them; nor are they engrafted into, and rooted in Christ Jesus; and therefore are like the stony ground-hearers, who heard and received the word with joy, but it did not last long, because they had no root in themselves; and such being none of the Father’s planting, shall be plucked up, according to what Christ says, ^{<40513>}Matthew 15:13.

Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up;’ and shall be bundled together, as fit fuel for the fire, like the unfruitful and withered branches, or like the tares in the end of the world: but these plants in the text, are such who,

- 1.** Are by divine grace transplanted from the wilderness of the world, they are Christ’s vines, which he brings out of Egypt; his fir and myrtle trees, which he causes to spring up instead of briars and thorns; these he either takes out of the wilderness, or else makes it a fruitful garden by planting them there; he calls them out of the world, and translates them into his own kingdom, whereby he enlarges his church, and of a garden makes it an orchard.
- 2.** Who have the grace of the Spirit planted in their hearts; who works in them every sort of grace, which he raises, cherishes, and at last brings to perfection.
- 3.** Who are engrafted into Christ Jesus: by nature they belong to, and grow upon the wild olive: but are by grace broken off from that, and are engrafted into the true olive, Christ Jesus; they are planted into the likeness of his death, and into the likeness of his resurrection, and so receive the benefits of both; they abide in him, as the branch in the vine, and, receiving sap and nourishment from him, become fruitful souls.
- 4.** They are such who have received the ingrafted word; it has been planted in them, and powerfully impressed upon them; they have received it in the love of it; it has effectually wrought in them, and brought forth fruit in them from the very day they heard and received it.
- 5.** Such as these who are transplanted from the wilderness of the world, and are planted in Christ, and have had his word and grace planted in their

souls, have a right to be planted ministerially in his church; and being planted there, will grow and flourish. Now such plants as these are choice and select ones; they are plants of renown, and pleasant ones to God and Christ; they are planted in a fruitful soil, and by rivers of water, therefore their leaf is always green; neither do they cease from yielding fruit; hence they shall never be plucked up; neither sin, nor Satan, nor the world can do it; and Christ Jesus never will; for they are his Father's planting, in whom he is, and will be glorified, and then is he so when they bring forth much fruit.

II. These plants are said to be an orchard, or like unto an orchard of pomegranates. The word for plants, is by the Cabalistic doctors ^{f10}, rendered waterings or rivulets; which, being derived, make her a garden of pomegranates, as full as an orchard is of them: and it may be rendered gardens ^{f11}; particular churches, which make an orchard, or are like one; even a paradise, .as the word is rendered by the Septuagint, and in other versions ^{f12}; it is generally thought to be a Persiac word; see ^{<K18>}Nehemiah 2:8. but Hillerus ^{f13} derives it from **drp** to separate; it being a garden separate and inclosed, as before one like Eden's garden, exceeding pleasant and delightful; and not like an orchard of any sort of trees, but of pomegranates; of which there were plenty in the land of Canaan; called 'a land of pomegranates,' ^{<K18>}Deuteronomy 8:8 many places in it had their names from thence, ^{<K18>}Joshua 15:32 and 19:13 and 21:24. And the church ^{f14}, with her plants, may be called so, in allusion to the garden of Eden, the earthly paradise of our first parents; where the 'Lord God made to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food;' in the midst of it stood the tree of life, and out of it went a river to water all the garden, and was on all accounts exceeding pleasant and delightful: in Christ's garden, the church, are planted all manner of trees of righteousness, which are both pleasant and profitable; God, stands the tree of life, in the midst of this paradise of Christ Jesus; but with this difference from the tree of life in Eden's garden; for Adam might not put forth his hand, and take of that; but of this, whosoever will, may pluck and eat, and happy is every one that does so: here runs a river of boundless love and grace, the streams whereof water and refresh all the plants herein; and upon all accounts is an Eden of pleasure, a paradise which Christ has made for his own pleasure and delight ^{f15}, and for that reason bears this name: but these plants are not only said to be an orchard, but an orchard or paradise of pomegranates, that is, in which pomegranates grew in great plenty. The church, like the land of

Canaan, is a land or orchard of pomegranates; and the church's plants, believers in Christ, who are planted and grow there, may be compared to pomegranates, that is, not to the fruit and shell, as in verse 3 but to the trees,

- 1.** Because there are various sorts of them ^{f16}, which bear fruit differing from each other; which may denote the difference there is in saints, by reason of their gifts and graces; they have grace and gifts differing from each other; one has more grace and larger gifts than other's have; they are not all of an equal size and bigness; they have not all a like measure of the Spirit, and yet they are all pomegranates, trees of righteousness, of the right planting.
- 2.** Pomegranate-trees in some countries are very large; and so they were in the land of Canaan, as appears from ~~Q142~~ 1 Samuel 14:2 and perhaps may here denote such who excel others in gifts and grace; who are officers in churches, and are set over others in and by the Lord; as by the other trees, fruits and spices, after mentioned, may be intended lesser saints, who are of a lower form in the church of Christ.
- 3.** They are very fruitful trees: the fruit they bear, as it is full of a delightful juice, so of grains or kernels; which may denote the saints being full of grace, and all the fruits of righteousness and good works, as the Targum and Jarchi observe here.
- 4.** They grow up straight and upright, and so denote the saints uprightness, both in heart and life; they are men of upright hearts, and of upright conversations; are looking upwards to, and growing up into their head, Christ Jesus.
- 5.** They do not grow any where, in any soil; the wilderness, through which the Israelites traveled, could not furnish them with any, though the land of Canaan could when they came thither: these plants or trees of righteousness, do not grow any where; they are not to be found every where; they grow in Christ's garden; in his house they are planted, and in his courts they flourish.

III. Here are several other trees, fruits and spices, which are said to be in this garden or orchard; for it is added, with all pleasant fruits; that is, whatsoever is valuable, precious, and desirable, such as those after mentioned; as camphire with spikenard; both these have been observed in

chapter ^{<2112>}1:12,14. but are here mentioned in the plural number, cypresses, or cyprusses with nards ^{f17}; the camphire, or cypress, on the account of its fruits or berries; and the spikenard, because there are various sorts of it, as *nardus Italica*, *nardus Celtica*, and *nardus Indica*, which last is the right spikenard; and it may be, because the leaves which grow out of the root, are like a bunch of ears of corn: saffron; it is no where else mentioned in scripture; we call it by this name from the Arabic, *zaffran*; it is called so on account of its yellow and golden color; its nature and usefulness are well known among us; according to Schindler ^{f18}, it seems to have been read *carcos*, the same with *crocus*, which has its name from *Corycus* ^{f19}, a mountain in Cilisia; so Pliny, lib, 21. c. 6. where it grew, and was the best; it is properly joined with spikenard, since itself is a spice, and is called *spica Cilissa* ^{f20}; it bears a blue flower, in the midst of which are three stylets, or little threads, of a fine red color, which are what is called saffron: *calamus and cinnamon*; both these were ingredients in the holy anointing oil, ^{<2123>}Exodus 30:23, both grow an India, and in Arabia ^{f21}, and in Ethiopia; *calamus* is the sweet cane, mentioned in ^{<2324>}Isaiah 43:24, it grows in India and Arabia; and is said to scent the air, where and while it is growing, with a fragrant smell; and cinnamon is the middlemost bark of a tree, that grows in Ceylon in the East Indies; it is mentioned in ^{<1077>}Proverbs 7:17, as the harlot's perfume, and in ^{<6183>}Revelation 18:13, as part of the wares or merchandise of the whore of Babylon: some say ^{f22}, what we call cinnamon is the cassia of the ancients; Herolotus ^{f23} fabulously relates, what, from the Phoenicians, is called cinnamon, are stalks or barks, which the Arabs say, are found in the nests of certain birds. 'With all trees of frankincense, myrrh;' frankincense chiefly grew in one of the Arabias, hence called *thurisera*; ^{f24} and is said to come out of Syria; ^{f25} it was used in the holy perfume, as was myrrh in the anointing oil, ^{<2123>}Exodus 30:23-34 which is a gum, from a shrub in Arabia, of a bitter taste, but fragrant; and with both these the church is said to be perfumed, chapter 3:6 and aloes; either the ling-aloes, so the Targum here, of which mention is made in ^{<9216>}Numbers 24:6. called *agallochium*, an aromatic plant, which grows in India and Arabia, and is of a sweet odor, as Isidore ^{f26} says; or the herb aloes, which is of a bitter taste, but of a sweet smell, and with which garments were perfumed, ^{<91818>}Psalms 45:8; ^{<1077>}Proverbs 7:17 together with all chief spices, or precious ones; Solomon's gardens might be furnished with these from Arabia Felix, where all sorts of spices grew, hence called *aromatifera*, the spice country: ^{f27} and be they what they will, they are all to be found in Christ's garden, or what is answerable to them. Now by

these may be meant, the several graces of the Spirit, which are to be found in all those who are plants or members in Christ's church; which are called by these names, and compared to these fruits, herbs, and spices,

1. Because the graces of the Spirit are many, and therefore many herbs and spices are mentioned; see ~~482~~ Galatians 5:22.
2. They are various, of different sorts; for as it makes for the pleasantness of a garden or orchard to have many trees, plants, herbs, and flowers, so to have them of different sorts; for if there were never so many, and all of one sort, it would not be so delightful: the church of Christ, and believers in Christ, as they have many, so they have various graces; there are faith, hope, love, etc. faith is a grace differing from hope, and hope differs from faith, and love from them both.
3. They are rare and excellent: the herbs and spices here mentioned, such as spikenard, saffron, camphire, cinnamon, etc. are not to be found everywhere; they do not grow in every garden; they are very rarely to be met with: the graces of the Spirit do not grow any where, in any heart; there are but few that have them; they are exceeding rare, valuable and precious.
4. These herbs and spices are all of them of a sweet smell: and so are the graces of the Spirit to Christ; they are a sweet perfume to him; the smell of these ointments is preferred by him to all spices, in verse 10.
5. Some of these herbs and plants cheer the heart, ^{f28} and revive the spirits, as saffron, cinnamon, and camphire: the Spirit of God, in his operations of grace, and in exciting and drawing forth grace into exercise, wonderfully cheers our hearts, revives our spirits, and keeps us from fainting and swooning fits: in the multitude of our thoughts within us, his comforts delight our souls.
6. Some of them preserve from putrefaction, as myrrh and aloes; and therefore were used in embalming dead bodies, ~~489~~ John 19:39 the grace of the Spirit is of such a nature; it is by this our dead souls are quickened, by this they are kept in life, and are preserved from putrifying and rotting in sin.
7. Some of them are green in winter-time; as saffron and the aloe: ^{f29} grace is always alive, and ever green, even in winter-storms and tempests, though it does not always appear so to us; it is an immortal seed which never dies.

8. Some of these grow up higher and taller than others; the calamus, ^{f30} cinnamon, myrrh, and ethers, grow up taller than the spikenard and saffron: now these may intend the graces of faith, hope, and love, which rise upwards in their actings on the Lord Jesus Christ; and the latter, the graces of humility, meekness, lowliness of mind, etc.

9. All these emit the most fragrant odor, when they are either cut, bruised, or burnt; so do the graces of the Spirit, when they are exercised and tried in the furnace of affliction,

10. They are all, one way or another, more or less medicinal, and are healthful to the bodies of men; and so are the graces of the Spirit to the souls of men. Solomon understood the nature of all sorts of herbs and plants, and no doubt these are aptly chosen to set forth the graces of the Spirit by; and had we but his wisdom, we should know better how to apply them.

VERSE 15.

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

CHRIST having commended his church as a well watered garden, and declared her fruitfulness; she breaks forth in these words, and ascribes it all to him, saying, ‘O fountain of gardens, and well of living waters,’ etc. as the words are rendered by some: ^{f31} though others ^{f32} take them to be the words of Christ; but rather are the church’s. It is true, as if she should say, I am a garden, and a garden inclosed by thy sovereign grace, where the streams and flows of thy grace run and water all my plants, and make them so fruitful as they are: but I am not the spring, the fountain from whence they flow it is thou who art the fountain of gardens, from whence I am supplied, and am put into, and kept in the flourishing condition I am; it is not owing to myself, but it is by thy grace I am what I am; and therefore I will ascribe all the glory to thee.

So that the church here acknowledges Christ,

- I.** To be ‘a fountain of gardens’.
- II.** ‘A well of living waters.’ And,
- III.** His grace to be like ‘streams from Lebanon.’

There seems to be a respect to several places called by these names: there was one called ‘the Fountain of Gardens,’ which flowed from Lebanon, six miles from Tripoli, and watered all the gardens about, whence it had its name, and all the country that lay between those two places: ^{f33} and there was another, called ‘the Well of living Waters,’ a little mile to the south of Tyre; it had four fountains, from whence were cut various aqueducts and rivulets, which watered all the plain of Tyre, and all its gardens; which fountains were little more than a bow’s cast from the main sea; and in which space six mill, were employed: ^{f34} and there is a rupture in mount Lebanon, as Mr. Maundrel ^{f35} says, which runs up in seven hours traveling; and which on both sides is steep and high, and clothed with fragrant greens from top to bottom; and every where refreshed with fountains, falling down from the rocks, in pleasant cascades, the ingenious work of nature: and Rauwolff, ^{f36} who was on this mountain in 1575, relates;

‘We came, says he, into pleasant groves, by delightful rivulets that arose from springs, that made so sweet a noise as to be admired by king Solomon,’ ²⁰⁴⁵ Song of Solomon 4:15.

I. She acknowledges him to be ‘a fountain of gardens.’ By gardens may be intended, either particular believers, whose souls are made like watered gardens, whose springs fail not; or rather, particular churches: Christ has mere gardens than one; every particular church is a garden; such were the churches at Rome, Corinth, Colosse, Philippi, Thessalonica, and the seven churches of Asia; but though there have been, and still are many gardens, yet there is but one fountain, from whence they are supplied, and by which they are all watered, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the church here owns; in him all fullness of grace dwells, and from thence believers ‘receive grace for grace;’ he is the fountain from whence it all flows, all justifying grace flows from this fountain; in him alone is our justifying righteousness before God; by him are all the elect justified, and that from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses; in doing which abundance of grace is displayed, both in bringing it in and applying it to the ungodly sinner; all which grace flows from this fountain: all sanctifying grace flows from hence; a holy nature, as well as a justifying righteousness, we have from Christ; he is both our sanctification and our righteousness; to him we must look for, and from him we must receive the one as well as the other: all the streams of pardoning grace take their rise from hence; Christ shed his blood to obtain the pardon of sin, and he has obtained it thereby for all his people; so that now as forgiveness of sin is according to the

riches of God's grace, it is also upon the foot of justice, being founded upon redemption through the blood of Jesus; hence God's justice and faithfulness are concerned in the pardon of sin, as well as his grace and mercy displayed; Christ is 'the fountain opened,' to wash in 'for sin and for uncleanness;' it is his blood alone which 'cleanseth from all sin' whatever: He is the fountain of all the blessings and promises of the everlasting covenant; of all that light and life that we are made partakers of; of all that strength and wisdom that are given forth to us, to act for him in our several stations of life; and of all that joy, comfort, and peace in believing, which our souls are at any times possessed of: He is the fountain of all fructifying and persevering grace, by which the plants in his garden become fruitful, and continue to do so: in short, he is the fountain from whence all his churches are supplied not only with grace, but with the gifts of the Spirit; he is ascended on high, 'that he might fill all things;' he is filled himself as man and mediator, with the Spirit without measure; he has received 'the promise of the Father,' and plentifully sheds it abroad among his people; he fills his churches with members and officers, and all these with suitable gifts and graces for their respective places; all comes from this 'fountain of gardens.'

II. She declares him to be 'a well of living water:' we read, in ^{<2313B>}Isaiah 12:3 of wells of salvation, in the plural number, which intend the same as here; and are so called to denote the fullness, completeness, and excellency of salvation in Christ: Christ is a well that is,

- 1.** Large and deep; like that which Isaac called Rehoboth, either from the largeness of it, or the liberty he had then obtained in enjoying it; or like Jacob's well, which was very deep, at which Christ met the woman of Samaria: the fullness of grace in Christ has its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths; it is bottomless and unfathomable, it is immeasurable and incomprehensible.
- 2.** Christ is a full well: we read, ^{<60217>}2 Peter 2:17 of some that are wells without water; but such an one is not Christ; he is a full well, and not full of any thing, of any sort of water, but of living water; he is full of grace and truth,
- 3.** This well was dug by, and filled alone with sovereign grace; it pleased the Father; it was an act of his sovereign grace, that Christ should be the mediator, and that all fullness of grace should dwell in him as such; when

he treasured up in him before the world began: the Lord, says Wisdom, ~~<1822>~~Proverbs 8:22. possessed me; with what? with all fullness of grace; and when did he do this? in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; O boundless, sovereign grace!

4. Faith is the grace with which we draw from hence: it may indeed be said to us, what the woman of Samaria said to Christ, ~~<4011>~~John 4:11. ‘Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep:’ we have nothing of our own to draw with; but Christ, who has opened our eyes, as the Lord did Hagar’s, to behold himself, the well of living waters, gives us faith, whereby we draw out of the wells of salvation, and receive from this overflowing fountain grace for grace.

5. The waters we draw from hence are living ones; such Christ told the woman of Samaria he could, as undoubtedly he afterwards did give unto her, even living water. Christ is a well, and a well full of living waters; which are so called,

(1.) Because grace given forth, from Christ’s fullness to dead sinners, makes them alive; these waters are like the waters of the sanctuary, in Ezekiel’s vision; which, wherever they come, not only keep alive those that are so, but quicken such who are dead in trespasses and sins, and in this respect excel them: we are told, ~~<2001>~~Proverbs 10:11 that the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; certainly Christ’s mouth is so, when he says to sinners, whilst in their blood, live; his grace may then be said to be living water.

(2.) Grace given forth from Christ’s fullness, revives and quickens saints when dull, lifeless and fainting; it comforts their hearts, and makes them cheerful, lively and active.

(3.) Grace maintains and supports life in believers: we have our life alone from Christ; he is the author of it, and with him it is hid, secured, and preserved; it is by his mighty grace that our souls are upheld in it; from his fullness we have all the communications of it; and because he lives, therefore we do, and shall live also.

(4.) It is this grace of Christ’s that gives saints a right to, prepares them for, and will end in eternal life; justifying grace gives them a right to eternal life; sanctifying grace makes them meet for it, which is in them ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life,’ ~~<4014>~~John 4:14.

(5.) These are called living waters, because they are ever running ^{f37}; and so opposed to standing waters, which are dried up in the summer season: Christ's grace is perpetual, everlasting and inexhaustible; like himself, it is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;' the fullness of grace in Christ, and the communications of it, are like those living or ever-running waters, mentioned in ^{<3848>}Zechariah 14:8. 'And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be;' that is, at all times and seasons of the year shall these waters flow: the saints before and after the flood, the saints before and under the law; the saints under the Old Testament, and the saints under the New, have all received from this fountain and fullness of grace in Christ; all the grace that angels have, and all that men have or shall have. all comes from hence; and yet it is an ever-running, overflowing, and inexhaustible fullness, And this I take to be the principal reason why it is called 'living water.'

III. The church here acknowledges the grace of Christ to be like streams from Lebanon: mount Lebanon gave rise to Eleutherus, etc. and as these took some rivers, as Jordan ^{f38} their rise and streamed from thence, so does grace from Christ, 'whose countenance is as Lebanon,' chapter 5:15, who is intended here from this high, goodly, pleasant, fruitful, and fragrant mountain, flow all the streams of divine grace to our souls. Now by this expression are intended,

- 1.** The discoveries and breakings forth of grace to those who are the objects of it: the river of God's love ran under ground from eternity; so that those who are interested in it, and are the objects of it, know nothing of it, till it breaks forth in effectual vocation; when it comes pouring in unto them, like streams from Lebanon.
- 2.** This expression may denote the rapidity, force, and power of divine grace; as the streams from Lebanon fall with great rapidity: ^{f39} grace comes like a mighty torrent, and carries all before it; throws down the strong holds of Satan, and is a match for the corruption of nature; for when this works, nothing can let; all mountains become a plain; all obstacles and impediments are removed out of the way; and nothing can stand before it, when the exceeding greatness of its power is exerted; it is irresistible, invincible, end always victorious.

3. This phrase may be expressive of the abundance of grace which flows from Christ: there are aboundings of sin in our nature; but grace, streaming from Christ, abounds overall; where sin abounded, says the apostle, <8581>Romans 5:20 ‘grace did much more abound;’ it flows into, and it overflows in a believer’s heart; the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, **ὑπερεπλεόνηκε**, it abounded; yea, it superabounded with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus: there is an abundance of grace given forth to a single believer; how much then must it be that is given forth to them all! and how large that fullness which is in Christ!

4. Though this grace flows in abundance to poor sinners, yet it is in measure; grace is in Christ without measure, but in us in measure; it is in him as in a fountain, but is given forth to us in streams; and these streams should lead us to the fountain from whence they flow; for though we should rejoice in, and adore grace for the streams, yet we should not rest contented, without often going to the fountain itself.

5. The communications of grace are called streams, and said to be as streams from Lebanon, because they are exceeding grateful and delightful to souls; even as streams of water were in those hot countries: the streams which flow in this river of divine grace make glad the city of God; a spring of water to a thirsty traveler in the Arabian deserts, cannot be more welcome and delightful than the discoveries of grace, those streams from Lebanon, are to a believing soul; and therefore Christ is said to be ‘as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,’ <3310>Isaiah 32:2.

6. It intends the continued supplies of grace to believers: grace is always running, streaming, flowing to them; could the communications of grace be stopped, were those streams from Lebanon to cease; they would soon be in an empty, miserable, and wretched state and condition; but this ‘river of the water of life is proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb;’ it ever did, and so it does still, and ever shall; ‘my God will supply all your need,’ etc. <31049>Philippians 4:19.

7. It intimates unto us the freeness of it; it is like the streams from Lebanon; it runs freely; whosoever will, may come and take of this water of life freely. The first of these expressions in the text, denotes the fullness of grace in Christ; the second, the perpetuity and inexhaustibleness of it; and this third, the exceeding freeness of it.

VERSE 16.

Former part. Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. —

CHRIST having taken notice of the fruitfulness of his garden, the church, in verse 12-14, and she, in verse 15, having acknowledged that it was all owing to himself, who is the fountain of gardens; he, in this verse, that nothing may be wanting to continue and increase the fruitfulness thereof, calls to the north and south winds, the one to awake, and the other to ‘come and blow upon his garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.’ The reason why I take these words to be the words of Christ, and not of the church, as some, ^{f40} are,

1. Because the language seems best to suit with him; who has created the winds, and gathered them in his fist, and holds them there; who opens his hand and lets them loose, and can and does recall them at his pleasure; Who has his storehouse and magazines of them, and, when he pleases, brings them forth out of his treasures; who, in the days of his flesh, gave a surprising instance of his power over them, in rebuking the wind and sea, and commanding a calm, when the disciples, with others, were in imminent danger; which occasioned the men to say, ‘What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him!’ he can shut up and let loose the winds, when he thinks fit; he has them at his command, and uses them as he pleases; so that it may be truly said of him, what the heathen poet ^{f41} said of his Jove: *Protinus AEoliis aquilonem claudit in antris, Emittitque notum ; madidis notus evolat alis.*

2. It does not appear so agreeable that the church should petition Christ to let loose the north wind upon her; especially, if by it we understand, as I think we must, some rough dispensation of providence, as afflictions, temptations, etc., which though Christ knows they are wholesome and useful to his people, and he makes them so, and therefore in his wisdom and grace sends them; yet they are not desirable to the saints; they do not pray for them.

3. The person here speaking, claims a right and property in this garden, on which the south wind, is to blow. Now the church is not her own garden, but Christ’s, as she in the following part of the verse acknowledges; therefore it appears to be Christ who here speaks, and says, ‘blow upon my

garden.’ Taking them then to be his words, I shall now consider what he says. And,

I. He calls to the north wind to awake, ‘Awake, O north wind.’

Which some ^{f42} understand as a command, to remove and be gone, and blow no longer upon his garden: in ^{<19A75>}Psalm 107:25 we read that God commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind; it is in the Hebrew text, **dm [yw** ‘and causeth the stormy wind to stand;’ so that the raising of the wind, and continuing it, in that language was called a causing it to stand; and perhaps a recalling it was, as here, called an awaking or raising it up, in order to be gone: and there are some reasons which may be alledged why it may be supposed that it was not the design of Christ, that the north wind should blow, but rather that it should not,

1. Because it was now spring time; ‘the wither was past, the rain was over and gone; the flowers appeared in the earth, the fig-tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell.’ Chapter ^{<2111>}2:11-13, and therefore it was time for the north wind to cease blowing.

2. It being a cold and nipping wind, would be hurtful and injurious to the plants in his garden, mentioned in verses 13,14, and therefore it may be supposed that he would not have it blow.

3. The verb **yj wph** blow, is in the singular number, and seems to be only in construction with the south wind; and therefore is alone ordered to blow, and not the north wind.

4. Winds diametrically opposite to each other ^{f43}, as the north and south be, cannot blow together under one and the same horizon with a continued blast; for if they blow with equal force, they will hinder each other from blowing freely; and if one is more powerful than the other, the weaker will be obliged to join the other, or else subside; though winds contrary may blow together obliquely and sideways; but the more oblique they are, the greater tempest they raise, which cannot be supposed to be Christ’s design here: and now, when he orders the north wind to awake, arise, and be gone, he intends every thing that may be noxious, hurtful, and injurious to his garden. Though others think the meaning of this phrase, ‘Awake, O north wind,’ is, arise, exert thyself, and blow, together with the south wind, upon my garden; and so the Jewish writers think, ^{f44}, that both winds are designed to blow. The north wind, though a cold and nipping wind, yet

Pliny says ^{f45}, that it is the most wholesome wind that blows: and the scripture informs us, that though out of the north comes forth the cold; yet also from it proceeds fair weather; ^{<1830>}Job 37:9-22, and Solomon tells us, that the north-wind drives away rain, ^{<1253>}Proverbs 25:23. and then by the north wind, as I hinted before, we may understand rough dispensations of providence, as temptations, afflictions, etc. which Christ is pleased to suffer to come upon his people, and which he brings them under, for their good and his glory: and this shews,

(1.) That none of these things come upon the saints without Christ's knowledge, permission, or appointment; there is not a wind blows upon them without his will and order: afflictions do not come out of the dust, nor trouble spring out of the ground, but are sent from heaven to the saints as covenant mercies; no temptation comes upon them, but what is common to man; and Christ takes care that they are not tempted above that they are able to bear, and in his own way and time gives them deliverance from it.

(2.) These are all for their good; it is, if need be, they are in heaviness through manifold temptations; all adverse and rough dispensations of providence, all afflictions, work together for their good; they are all in mercy to them, otherwise he that holds the wind in his fist, would not suffer the blustering north wind to blow upon them.

(3.) They serve to make the spices flow out; that is, they are useful for the trial, exercise, and increase of grace; tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; that is, tribulation exercises and tries these graces, and makes them to appear more bright and glorious: the manifold temptations the saints are attended with, are suffered to come upon them, 'that the trial of their faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ,' ^{<6006>}1 Peter 1:6,7.

II. He calls to the south wind, to come and blow upon his garden. The church is compared to a garden, in verse 12, and why it is so, has been there shewn. Here Christ claims a property in it; and it is his,

1. By choice; he chose this spot of ground, and preferred it to all others, for this purpose and use.

2. By gift; he asked it of his Father, and he gave it to him; ‘thine they were, and thou gavest them me,’ ^{<BIB>}John 17:6.

3. By purchase; he has bought it, and at a clear rate; not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the invaluable price of his own precious blood.

4. By his powerful and efficacious grace, has distinguished and separated it from the wilderness of this world.

5. He uses it as his own; he purchased and set it apart for his own use and recreation, and here delights to walk;’ he is frequently to be found, seen, and heard of here: and this being his own garden, which he himself chose, his Father gave him, which he has purchased with his own blood, distinguished by his grace, and where he delights to take his walks; he therefore calls upon the south wind to blow upon it. And by the south wind, and blowing of it, I apprehend, is intended the Spirit of God, in his powerful operations, and special influences of grace, in and upon the hearts of God’s people; and shall now consider how he may be compared,

First, To the wind in general. The Spirit of God bears the same name, and several of the properties thereof are applicable to him.

1. The wind, as our Lord says, ^{<BIB>}John 3:8, bloweth where it listeth; the Spirit of God is a free agent; he works how and where he pleaseth; he acts freely in the first application of grace to a poor sinner; and so he does in all the after actings, operations and influences of it, as well as in the donation of those gifts, which he bestows upon men for different purposes; for though there ‘are diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and diversities of operations; yet all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit; dividing to every one severally as he will,’ ^{<BIB>}1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

2. The wind blows imperceptibly; thou hearest, as Christ says in the above-mentioned place, ‘the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; and so is every one that is born of the Spirit:’ the workings of the Spirit of God in regeneration are invisible and imperceptible to the natural man; he can no more discern the Spirit’s grace, than he can see the wind when it blows; he can no more tell from whence this grace comes, and how it is acted, than he can point at the treasures of wind, and tell from whence they take their rise, and why they blow sometimes one way and sometimes another; why sometimes only in a

gentle breeze, and at other times rise to violent storms; why sometimes their drive on in a direct line, and at other times have a circular motion: and as he cannot account for these things, no more can he for the operations of the Spirit; for he neither knows his person nor his grace.

3. It blows powerfully and irresistibly; there is no stopping of it; it blows when, where, and how it listeth, for any thing that man can do; none but he who has created the winds, and gathered them in his fist, can rule them at pleasure; and, when he lets them loose, and gives them a command, they carry all before them; throw down houses, pluck up trees by the roots, rend the mountains, and break the rocks in pieces; for which reason the Spirit of God is compared to ‘a mighty rushing wind,’ ^{<40>}Acts 2:2, which filled the house in which the disciples were, on the day of Pentecost, and filled them with extraordinary gifts: the Spirit of God, in his mighty operations of grace upon a sinner’s heart, carries all before him; there is no withstanding his grace and power; he throws down Satan’s strong holds, and demolishes the fortifications of sin; all mountains become a plain before him; and the whole posse of hell, and the corruption of a man’s heart, are not a match for him; for when he works, none can let: he has conquered the hearts of the vilest and most notorious sinners; such as a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalene, and a persecuting Saul; there is no resisting his grace and the power of it, nor holding of his almighty arm.

4. The wind is of a purifying nature, therefore some call it nature’s fan; it clears the air of infectious and noxious vapors; we are scarce sensible how much our health is owing to it; for without this, the air would soon be stagnated, and quickly destroy the life both of man and beast: the Spirit of God purifies our hearts by faith; with he does by leading it to the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin; and by sprinkling it upon our consciences, whereby they are purged from dead works; these dead weights and heavy clogs, which hinder us in serving the living God.

5. It is of a piercing and searching nature; it penetrates into every hole and cranny: the Spirit of God searches, not only the deep things of God, but the deep things of man also; what is said, ^{<41>}Proverbs 20:27, of the spirit of man, may in a higher sense be said of the Spirit of God, that it is ‘the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly; it penetrates into the utmost recesses of a man’s heart, and discovers those hidden swarms of corruption, which before lay indiscernible; it pierces even to the

dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is both a discerner and revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

6. It is of a cooling nature; so is the Spirit of God, in his operations of grace upon a sinner's heart; which is often enflamed with wrath, through the workings of a fiery law, and the injections of Satan's fiery darts; the heat of which he allays, by acting as comforter, and as the spirit of promise, bringing home and applying to the conscience of the distressed sinner, the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, which cool and refresh, by removing wrath and terror from thence.

Secondly, He may be compared to the south-wind in particular,

1. Because it blows warmly, brings heat with it, breaks up frosts, and thaws the ice; 'when ye see the south-wind blow,' says Christ, ^{<D125>}Luke 12:55, 'ye say there will be heat, and it cometh to pass:' so the Spirit of God brings heat along with him to the cold heart of a sinner, 'dead an trespasses and sins;' and by the mighty influence of his grace, thaws and melts his hard and frozen soul; and with his soul-warming gales, and comfortable discoveries of love, warms, enlivens, comforts and refreshes the saint, when in a cold lifeless and uncomfortable frame.

2. It brings serenity along with it: it is not a blustering and tempestuous wind, as the north-wind is; but is still, gentle and quiet; blows softly as Elihu said to ^{<K8717>}Job 37:17. 'Dost thou know how thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth by the south-wind? the Spirit of God brings peace unto, and commands quietness in the heart of a distressed sinner, where were nothing before but storms and tempests: the fruit of the Spirit is peace, a conscience peace, 'a peace that passeth all understanding;' which he works in the sinner's heart, by leading him to the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ.

3. It is very fructifying; by its warmth, together with the sun, it loosens the trees, and causes the sap to flow, which was congealed by the cold, and clothes them with leaves, flowers and fruit: the Spirit of God, by his mighty grace and special influence, makes souls fruitful in every good word and work.

4. The south-wind usually brings rain, hence it is called *nubilus auster*; ^{F46} and therefore the poet represents it as flying, *cum madidis alis*, with wet and moistened wings. Pliny ^{F47} says, it produces greater flood; than others

do; which suits well with Junius's version, who renders the next clause thus, 'let the waters flow through the spices thereof.' ^{F48} the Spirit of God blows, and causes the floods of grace to rise; which, running about the several plants in the garden, makes them fruitful.

Thirdly, According to the mind of some Expositors ^{F49}, the Spirit of God is intended by both winds, the north and south; and that,

1. On the account of his different operations; for which reason we read of 'the seven spirits' of God, ^{ⓂⓂⓂⓂ} Revelation 1:4, not that there are so many distinct spirits personally existing; but by them are intended the variety and perfection of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit of God, who works them in, and bestows them on whom he will.

2. If the Spirit is intended by both winds, it may be expressive of the usual order of the Spirit in his operations: he is first as the north-wind, sharp and knipping; and then as the south-wind, warm and refreshing; he first acts the part of a convincer, and then that of a comforter; he first kills, and then makes alive; wounds, and then he heals; he humbles souls, and makes them low in their own eyes, and then exalts them: he brings them 'into the wilderness,' and then 'speaks comfortably to them.'

3. It may shew that Christ's garden stands in need of both winds: that the saints sometimes need the Spirit as a reprover, to bring them to a sense of themselves; as well as a comforter, to relieve them under their distresses: the cold and nipping north-wind, as well as the warm and comfortable south-wind.

4. Both winds are called upon, and that to cause the spices to flow out, that the odor of them may be spread far and near, that it might be carried from pole to pole, even all the world over. Now when Christ is here represented, saying to the Spirit, 'come and blow upon my garden;' it must be understood of him as mediator, calling unto, and as it were demanding of the Spirit to do his work assigned him in the church which does not suppose any inferiority in the Spirit to Christ for all the three persons having jointly agreed in the everlasting council and covenant of peace, to take their several distinct parts in man's salvation; and the Father having distinguished this spot of ground, this garden, by his grace; and Christ having purchased it by his blood; and the Spirit having planted it with precious plants, herbs and spices; Christ calls upon him, by virtue of this former agreement, to do the remaining part of his work; see ^{ⓂⓂⓂⓂ} John

14:16. and ~~6107~~16:7, to blow upon his garden, that it may grow and flourish, and the sweet smell of these spices be carried far and near. Which brings me to consider,

III. The reason why he would have the south-wind blow upon his garden; and that is, ‘that the spices may flow out;’ might emit a fragrant smell: though Virgil ^{f50} represents the south-wind as hurtful to flowers, so it might be in Italy, where it dried them up, as Severius on the place observes; and yet be useful to them in Palestine, where it blew from the sea, by which the south is sometimes called, ~~647B~~ Psalm 107:3. Now by *spices*, we must understand the graces of believers; which, like spices, are rare, excellent, precious, sweet and odorous, especially to Christ Jesus, by whom they are preferred to all spices: and the ‘flowing out’ of them intend, either,

1. The exercise of them: grace is not always in exercise, but is like flowers, shut up; or like plants, herbs and fruits, which seem to be withering; or like coals covered with ashes, that want to be ‘stirred up’ ^{f51} or blown upon, as in ~~5006~~ 2 Timothy 1:6, but this believers are not capable of doing themselves; for they can no more exercise grace, than they can work it of themselves: Christ knew full well, that this is the Spirit’s work; therefore he calls upon him to blow, and thereby open these flowers, revive these plants, and blow off the ashes from these coals, and draw forth grace into exercise upon himself, the proper object of it. Or,

2. The evidence and shewing forth of it to others: Christ would not only have grace in the hearts of his people, but would have it exert and shew itself in the life and conversation; he would have these ‘lights shine before men,’ and this grace appear, not only to himself but to others. Or,

3. The increase of grace: that these herbs and plants might be fruitful, the spices smell, and the whole garden be in a flourishing condition; in short, that the Spirit would be ripening and bringing to maturity grace in the souls of believers, and finish what he had begun there. Or else,

4. The diffusive odor of them: that their, graces might emit such a sweet odor, both to himself and others, as a garden does, when, after a delightful shower of rain, the wind gently blows upon it. Which request, or rather demand of his, no doubt was answered, as appears from the following words.

VERSE 16.

*Latter part Let my beloved come into his garden,
and eat his pleasant fruits.*

THE north-wind being awaked, and the south-wind having blown upon Christ's garden, the church, according to his order, the spices did flow out; her graces were stirred up, and begin now to exercise themselves; which causes her, before he had well done speaking, and made a stop, to break forth in these words, and earnestly desire his presence and company in his garden; so that in this one verse we have both Christ and his church speaking. In these words are to be considered,

- I.** A title or character she gives him; 'my beloved.'
- II.** A request or invitation she makes him; to 'come into his garden.'
- III.** Her end in it; to 'eat his pleasant fruits.'

I. Here is a title or character which she gives him, 'my beloved;' which, as it comes from her mouth, is expressive,

1. Of her love to him: he was the object of her love, him whom her soul loved; and indeed how could she do otherwise than love so lovely a person, one who loved her so dearly, and had given such undeniable demonstrations of it? love, we usually say, begets love; and no wonder that Christ's love should beget love in her, when we consider his person, the nature of his love, and how undeserving she was of it.

2. Of her faith, as to her interest in him; she could point him out, and distinguish him from all others, and had strength of faith enough, to claim him as hers; faith and love go together, they are twins; they are born together in a regenerate soul, and grow up together; when one is in exercise, usually the other is also; for 'faith works by love.'

3. She makes use of this title as an argument to obtain her request, or make her invitations the more forcible: she who in this manner earnestly desires that he would come into his garden, was one who dearly loved him, stood nearly related to him, and had an interest both in his person and affections: arguments taken by the saints from their union and relation to Christ, and their interest in him, have very great influence upon him, and are not disregarded by him: David knew this, and therefore uses this way of

speaking at the throne of grace, 'I am thine', says he, ^{<1939>}Psalm 119:94, 'save me.'

II. Here is a request made, or an invitation given, by the church to Christ, to 'come into his garden.' By the garden is meant the church; and why it is so called, has been shown on ^{<2151>}5:12, and in what sense it is Christ's, and how he came to have a right to it, and property in it, has been observed in the former part of this verse, where Christ claims it, and the church here owns it; he calls to the south-wind, and says, 'blow upon my garden;' she here says, 'let my beloved come into his garden:' believers are willing to acknowledge that all they have, or are, belong to Christ; that they are not their own, but 'are bought with a price;' and therefore all they have and are, are for his use, and at his service; which they openly declare, and would have others take notice of, and therefore say, ^{<1940>}Psalm 100:3. 'Know ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;' that is, who hath re-made as: we are new creatures in Christ, and are his workmanship, and not our own; 'we are his people,' in a way of special and covenant-grace; 'and the sheep of his pasture,' whom he has taken the care and charge of, as the great shepherd; has laid down his life for, and feeds and leads into good pasture.

The next thing to be taken notice of, is, what is meant by Christ's 'coming into his garden.' There is a threefold coming of Christ, mentioned in the scripture.

1st, His coming in the flesh. This was what the Old Testament saints earnestly desired, prayed and longed for: it was not only the wish of David, but of the whole church; he spoke the language of all their hearts, when he said, ^{<1941>}Psalm 14:7. 'O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!' This being long promised, and long expected, the faith of the saints sometimes grew weak and languid concerning it; therefore the promises which respected it, were frequently renewed and repeated, and the prophets bid to say, ^{<2334>}Isaiah 35:4, to them that were of a fearful heart, 'Fear not, be strong, your God will come and save you;' and when they by faith saw the time near at hand, and him approaching, they were filled with joy and exultation; hence it is said, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! behold thy king cometh unto thee,' etc. ^{<3009>}Zechariah 9:9, but this, I apprehend, is not intended in these words of the church.

2dly, There is his coming at the last day to judge the world, which is usually called his second coming; which is what the apostle intends, when he says, ^{<3023>}Hebrews 9:28. ‘Unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.’ The first time of his appearing in the flesh, though it was without sin of his own, yet not without the sins of his people; which were imputed to him, charged upon him, and he answered for them; but when he appears the second time, it shall be without them, they being already expiated and atoned for. He came the first time to obtain salvation for sinners, and will come the second time to put them into the full possession of it; and as the first coming of Christ was desired by the Old Testament saints; so this is desired by the New Testament saints; who, upon Christ’s saying, ‘Surely I come quickly,’ answer, ‘Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus:’ it will fill the saints with wonder and joy; for he, when he comes, will be both glorified in them, and admired by them, though it will strike the wicked with dread and terror, and fill them with the utmost consternation; for his coming will be ‘in flaming fire, to take vengeance’ on them. But neither is this, I think, she coming intended here. But,

3dly, There is a spiritual coming of Christ; which is, when he comes and pays a visit, grants his presence, manifests his love, discloses the secrets of his heart unto his people; which was what he promised his sorrowing disciples, when he was about to remove from them, and they were no longer to enjoy’ his bodily presence; says he, ^{<3148>}John 14:18. ‘I will not leave you comfortless, ^{<3148>}ὀρφανούς, orphans or fatherless, I will come to you;’ which promise Christ made good unto them, as he does to all his people at one time or another; for, says he, ^{<3143>}John 14:23. ‘If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him:’ that is, Father, Son, and Spirit, ‘and make our abode with him;’ which is what the church desires here, that Christ would grant her his spiritual, gracious and comfortable presence, and that she might have more intimate communion with him. From whence we may observe,

1. That Christ is sometimes absent from his church and people: He does not always manifest himself unto them; he sometimes hides his face, withdraws his presence, and seems to stand at a distance from them; he is sometimes *Deus absconditus*, the hidden God; he was so to the Jews in the days of his flesh, and he is so sometimes to his own flesh for ‘he hideth his face from the house of Jacob;’ his own church and people, for whom he has the greatest love and regard: not that Christ is ever really and wholly

absent from his church; he is always in his garden; he has promised to be always with his people and ministers unto the end of the world, and his faithfulness stands engaged to make it good; but he does not always alike manifest himself unto them; they have not always alike views of his person, discoveries of his love, and enjoyments at his presence; which sometimes makes them say, with Job, ‘O that I were as in months past!’ etc. nay, sometimes in their apprehensions he is intirely gone, which is the church’s case, in chapter ^{228B}5:9, and such is their infirmity, and the strength of unbelief in them, that they are ready to say, He is gone, and will never return more; and therefore, as David did, read all that in the affirmative, which you will find in ^{397D}Psalm 77:7-9, though I do not think this to be the case of the church here; she seems not to be without the manifestation of Christ’s love, and enjoyments of his presence, being in such a fruitful state, the south-wind having blown upon her, her grace appearing to be in exercise, and she in a comfortable frame; though she wanted more nearness to him, more intimate communion and fellowship with him: believers never think themselves near enough to Christ, nor never wilt, till they are with him in glory: the highest enjoyment of Christ here below, though exceeding ravishing and delightful, falls short of giving full satisfaction; for still the soul desires more and greater: the apostle Paul, who had as much communion and fellowship with Christ, as perhaps ever any man had on earth; and yet, when he had in view that eternal being with Christ hereafter, speaks as if he had never been with him here; all his communion with him here was nothing, when compared with that which he expected in another world, and therefore he had ‘a desire to depart, that he might he with Christ.’

2. From hence may be observed, that Christ’s presence is exceeding desirable to believers; this is the one thing they seek after, and cannot be easy without; which, when enjoyed, gives them the utmost pleasure, and fills them with inexpressible joy: and the reason why Christ’s company and presence is so desirable to them, is because he is nearly related to them; he is their beloved, their head and husband; they are ‘members of his body, his flesh, and of his bones;’ he is their ‘all in all;’ and when he is in the garden ^{f52}, all they want, and all they desire is there; for there is none in heaven nor in earth with them comparable to him; his coming revives the plants and herbs, and makes them fruitful; it causes the spices to flow, grace to appear in exercise; it is like ‘the rain, and as the latter and former rain unto the earth.’ also it is doing the saints the greatest honor; they have reason to

say, Whence is this to us, that not ‘the mother of our Lord,’ as Elizabeth said to Mary, but our Lord himself should come to us? and yet this honor have all the saints. Moreover, Christ’s coming is always beneficial to believers; he never comes empty-handed; he never pays a visit, but he brings something with him; he never sups with his people, but he is at the charge of the whole entertainment. Again, it is Christ’s presence that makes his garden, the church, an Eden of pleasure, a heaven on earth; which makes it a Bethel, and ‘the gate of heaven:’ it is this which makes Christ’s tabernacles ‘amiable and lovely, his ways, ways of pleasantness, and his paths, paths of peace;’ it is this which makes his ‘yoke easy?’ and his ‘burden light,’ and all his commandments not to be grievous, but delightful; and when all this is considered, it is no wonder that believers are so desirous of Christ’s presence and company in his garden.

3. Hence it appears, that Christ’s granting his presence with his church, is an act of wonderful grace and condescension; and therefore she asks it as a favor of him; and a surprising instance of his grace it is, that he who is the high and lofty one, should vouchsafe his presence to such vile and unworthy creatures as we be. The Septuagint render it, ‘let him descend into his garden’ ¹⁵³; and, agreeable hereunto in chapter ~~216~~6:2, he is said to be ‘gone down into his garden,’ intending his wonderful condescension: Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, said, ‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth?’ We have reason to say with Judas, not Iscariot, ‘Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?’ especially when, with the centurion, we consider, that we are not worthy that he should come under our roof.

III. The end of her making this request or invitation, is, that he might ‘eat his pleasant fruits:’ in which may be considered,

1st, What these fruits are.

2dly, Whose they are.

3dly, That they are pleasant ones. And,

4thly, What is meant by eating them.

1st, What these fruits are. By fruits are meant, either the graces of the Spirit, which are called ‘the fruit of the spirit,’ ~~412~~Galatians 5:22, or else, the duties and services of God’s people, their good works, which are performed in the exercise of grace, believers are ‘trees of righteousness;’

and the fruits which they bear are called ‘fruits of righteousness;’ being by grace made good trees, they bring forth good fruit, and are said to be ‘fruitful in every good work;’ now these Christ is here invited to eat. The Targum expounds it of the offerings of the people, which God graciously accepted.

2dly, Whose fruit is this, is the next inquiry; and they are said to be his, that is, Christ’s: the garden is his, and all the fruit of it; only, as one ^{f54} well observes, the weeds are hers; every thing else in the garden, that is either for service or pleasure, belongs to him. The graces of the Spirit are his,

1. He is the procurer and possessor of them; he obtained all grace for his church and people in the everlasting covenant; he then asked for it, and it was granted him and given to us in him, on condition of his performing certain articles then agreed upon; so that, as the glorious mediator of the covenant, he is ‘full of grace and truth, and from his fullness do saints receive grace for grace;’ it is all lodged in his hands, and from thence given forth to us.

2. He is the author of all grace; he is said to be the author and finisher of faith; and as he is the author of that, so he is of all other grace; he gives it to us, and by his Spirit works it in us; he is the green fir-tree, from whom all our fruit is found, for otherwise we have none of ourselves.

3. He is the object of all grace, particularly faith, hope, and love; he is the person in whom we believe, trust and depend on for life and salvation; on whom our hope of glory is fixed, and to whom our love and affections are drawn; so that these fruits may be truly said to be his; also our duties, services, and good works, performed in the exercise of grace, are his; for,

(1.) They are performed by virtue of union to him; and therefore the fruits of righteousness are said to be by Jesus Christ; and ‘as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine,’ no more can any bear fruit, or perform good works aright, except they are engrafted and abide in Christ: he is the root which bears the branches, and from whence they receive sap and nourishment, which causes them to abound with fruit; ‘the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit,’ says Solomon, ^{<0121>}Proverbs 12:12. now the righteous man’s root is Christ.

(2.) They are done, ‘not in their own strength, but in his;’ for without him they can do nothing; it is he who works in them, both ‘to will and

to do of his good pleasure;’ therefore they ascribe all their works, duties and services to him; and say, as the apostle did, when he had asserted that he had labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles, corrects himself thus, ‘yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’

(3.) They are designed for his honor and glory, when performed aright; they do not seek themselves, their own carnal interest, nor worldly applause, nor expect to merit any thing by them; but what they do, is in a way of obedience and gratitude to Christ, and that he in all things may be glorified; they are performed in his strength, and designed his use; and so are properly his; which being considered, destroys that notion which advances the merit of good works.

3dly, These fruits are said to be pleasant, that is, grateful, well-pleasing, and acceptable to Christ; so are the graces of the Spirit, especially when in exercise, as appears from verses 9,10, and so are the good works of his people, when performed in faith, from a principle of love to him, and are directed to his glory; the smallest services of his saints to him, and the least acts of charity to his, are acceptable to him, when performed in the exercise of grace; and he will take notice of them, and openly declare it one day before angels and men, how well pleased he is with them.

4thly, What is meant by eating them: and this intends Christ’s acceptance of them, and delight in them, as also his enjoyment of them; the phrase of eating and drinking being; with the Jews, expressive of enjoyment: and it also farther declares, the church’s acknowledgment of Christ being the owner of the garden; for who should eat of the fruits of it, but he who has planted it, and takes care of it, and to whom all the fruit belongs? knowing it therefore to be so, she here invites him to his own; which invitation is not disregarded, but observed by him, as appears from the following words.

CHAPTER 5.

This chapter begins with Christ's answer to the church's request, at the close of the preceding chapter; in which he inform her, that he was come into his garden, as she desired; and gives an account of what ha had done there; and kindly invites her, and his dear friends, to feast with him there, verse

1. Then she relates her case and circumstances, which followed upon her sleepy frame, and ungrateful carriage to her beloved; which he resenting, he withdrew from her, and this gave her sensible pairs, verses 2-6. Also what treatment she met with from the watchmen; her charge to the daughters of Jerusalem; and the questions they put to her about her beloved, verses 7-9, which led her to give a large description of him, by his several parts, head, hair, etc., verses 10-15. And the chapter is concluded with a general commendation of him and his loveliness, and a claim of interest in him, verse 36.

VERSE 1.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered
my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honey-comb with my
honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink,
yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

THIS verse properly belongs unto, and is a part of the preceding chapter. The bible, when first wrote, was not divided into chapters, as now it is: this is a work purely human and not divine, therefore liable to correction. And I much wonder that the authors of this work should begin this chapter with this verse, which ought to end the former, as both the words and sense of them manifestly show; for this chapter ought to begin at verse 2, where the church begins a new account of her state and case, and of some other remarkable occurrences which befell her, not hitherto spoken of. In this verse may be observed,

I. Christ's reply to the church's request, in the latter end of the former chapter, where she desires and invites him to come into his garden.

II. An account of Christ's carriage and behavior, or what he did when he came into his garden.

III. A kind invitation given by Christ to his friends to feast with him.

I. Here is a reply made by Christ to the church's request or invitation; 'I am come into my garden, my sister; my spouse.' The titles which he gives her, have been already taken notice of and explained, in chapter ²⁰¹⁸4:8,9, and this reply of his unto her may be considered, either by way of denial to her, so some ^{f55} interpret it; as though Christ did not answer the church's wishes and desires, but rather gives a reason why he does not; and wherefore she had no reason to expect his presence a long time; because, says he, I have been in my garden already, and there I have gathered my myrrh and the rest of my spices; I have got in my harvest or vintage, and I have eat my honey and honey-comb, and drunk my wine and milk; and therefore to what purpose should I now come into my garden? thou canst not expect me, until more myrrh and ether spices grow: or else, as a correction of her mistake, as if he should say, Dost thou invite me to come into my garden, as if I was absent from it? thou art mistaken, I am always in it, and never out of it; and am now there, gathering my myrrh and spice, eating my honey and honey-comb, and drinking my wine and milk, From hence may be observed, that Christ may be in his church, among his people, or with particular believers, and they not know it; so God was in the place where Jacob was, and he knew it not: and thus it was with Mary at the sepulcher; Christ was at her elbow, and she knew him not; he speaks to her, and yet she is ignorant, and takes him for the gardener, until he calls her by her name, Mary, and then she knew him, and turns herself, 'and saith unto him, Rabboni, that is to say, master.' Though I rather think the words are to be taken as a direct answer of Christ's to the church; she desires and invites him to come into his garden, and accordingly he does come, and lets her know of it: in which we may take notice,

1. Of the speediness of it; she no sooner asks, but it is granted; no sooner invites, but he comes; and before she had well done speaking, makes a reply; his answer was ready; he was as willing to come, as she was to desire him; which makes good what is said in ²⁰¹⁸Isaiah 65:24. 'And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer,' that is, will be ready to give an answer; 'and while they are yet speaking, I will hear:' a famous instance of this kind we have in Daniel; who, 'while he was speaking in prayer,' and confessing to God his own sins, and the sins of his people, the

angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to him; who informed him, that at the beginning of his supplications, as soon as the good man was on his knees, and had opened his mouth in prayer to God, ‘the commandment came forth,’ orders were given, and he, as a messenger from heaven, dispatched to bring him an answer; but God does not always do so; ‘the vision is for an appointed time,’ and must he waited for till it comes.

2. The nature of this answer is worth observing, being exactly according to her request; Christ does not always do so: when the apostle Paul had ‘a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him,’ he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him; but it does not appear by the answer which was given him, that his request was granted immediately; the answer, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee,’ was a very glorious one, enough to support him under his present exercise, but gives us no intimation that it immediately freed him from it; it being sometimes most for our good and for God’s glory, not to be immediately and exactly answered: but here, as she was answered speedily, so exactly; she desires him to ‘come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;’ he tells her, that he was come into his garden, and did eat his honey-comb with his honey: which shews,

3. That her request was according to his will, in that she was answered so speedily and exactly; for ‘if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and therefore our great concern in prayer should be, that we might be under the directions and influences of the Spirit of God, and that he would make intercession for us, according to the will of God, who perfectly knows it; and when we ask a favor or intreat a blessing, it should be always with submission to the divine will, in imitation of our dear Lord, and so shall we be most likely to succeed.

4. It may be observed, that Christ not only answers her, but lets her know it; not only grants his presence, but gives her intimations of it; he himself acquaints her with it; for, as has been observed, Christ may be present with believers, and they not know it: so he was with the two disciples who were going to Emmaus; he walked with them, conversed with them, opened the scriptures to them, and their hearts burned within them while he did so; and yet they knew him not, till he was made known to them in breaking of bread: it is not only an instance of Christ’s grace to be present with us, but also to assure us that he is so. I have shewn in chapter ²¹¹⁶4:16, what is intended by Christ’s coming into his garden; and therefore,

II. Shall now proceed to take notice of his carriage and behavior there, or what he declares he did, or was doing; being there.

1st, He says, ‘I have gathered my myrrh with my spice? Myrrh is one of the chief spices, was a principal ingredient in the holy anointing oil, and was used in other ointments. We read of the oil or ointment of myrrh, in ^{<1702>}Esther 2:12, with which Esther and the other maidens were purified, in order to be presented to king Ahasuerus: this, and other sorts of ointments, as spikenard, were used in feasts, and were poured upon the heads of those who were the guests, as appears from ^{<414B>}Mark 14:3, to which custom the Psalmist alludes, ^{<192B>}Psalms 23:5. Christ being about to make a feast, not only for himself, but for others, gathers myrrh, with other spices, to make an ointment of, to entertain and refresh his guests with. By *myrrh*, with the rest of spices, may be meant, either repentance and humiliation for sin, and mortification of it, according to some interpreters; ^{f56} and indeed repentance and humiliation for sin, when evangelical, being the work of the blessed Spirit, springing from right principles, and *κατα Θεὸν*, according to God’s mind; when it arises from an apprehension of sin, as committed against a God of love and grace; and when it springs from faith’s viewing a crucified Christ; though, like myrrh, it is bitter to the soul, yet is odorous and well-pleasing to Christ; it is taken notice of by him, as Ephraim’s bemoanings, repentance and humiliation, were by God; he has a bottle to put such tears as these in, which drop from faith’s eye: and so mortification of sin, considered as the Spirit’s grace, is regarded by him, according to ^{<8183>}Romans 8:13. ‘If ye, through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.’ Or else, according to others ^{f57}, by myrrh with other spices, are intended the suffering saints and martyrs, who have undergone bitter afflictions and persecutions for Christ and his gospel; whom he values, esteems, takes notice of, and gathers into his Father’s house; where he clothes them with white robes, puts palms in their hands, and everlasting hallelujahs in their mouths; see ^{<6119>}Revelation 7:9-14, or rather, the sufferings of Christ himself, and the fruits thereof; which, though bitter to him, yet are of a sweet-smelling savor to God the Father, and to all the saints; the fruits of which, appearing in the everlasting salvation of his people, are very delightful to him; for he now sees of the ‘travail of his soul, and is satisfied;’ he is now reaping with pleasure a glorious harvest of all his sweat, toil and labor. Though I rather choose to understand hereby in general the graces of the Spirit, which Christ delights in, and which go under the name of myrrh and other spices, in chapter ^{<2013>}4:13,14. Christ

having got in his harvest, as the word signifies, and the Septuagint render it, provides a feast for himself and others; as was the custom of those times and nations, as it is now with us. And therefore,

2dly, He says, ‘I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.’ Honey was the food, not only of infants, but of grown persons, as is manifest from ^{<2372>}Isaiah 7:22, but that he should eat the honeycomb with it, seems to have some difficulty in it. The Septuagint read it thus, I have eaten my bread with my honey ^{f58}, that is, either bread dipped in honey, or honey being put upon it, or else bread made with it; which sense is favored by those words in ^{<2363>}Ezekiel 16:13. ‘Thou didst eat fine flower, and honey, and oil,’ that is, bread made thereof: R. Sol. Jarchi says, it is the honey which grows in canes; he means, sugar, which, by Arrianus ^{f59}, is called μέλι καλάμινον; and that for the exceeding love he had for it, he is said to eat it out of the cane; but it rather seems to be a piece of an honeycomb full of honey, just took out of the hive; such an one as the disciples gave Christ; and this was had in no small esteem among the Jews. The word for honeycomb signifies a wood or forest ^{f60}, and may design such honey as was found in woods; though here, it should seem, in a garden, of which there was plenty in Judea, ^{<0945>}1 Samuel 14:25, which of its own accord dropped from the comb, and ran down the tree from it, in which it was, and was reckoned the purest honey: and the other word for honey, may signify common honey, or honey made of the fruit of the palm-tree; which, the Jewish writers say, is the honey meant in ^{<0808>}Deuteronomy 8:8, ^{f61} and so the words may be rendered, ‘I have eaten my wood-honey with my palm-honey;’ for it cannot be thought that the honey and the comb were both eat together. And by the honey and honeycomb, may be meant the doctrines of the gospel, or the words of Christ’s mouth, which are said to be sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb:’ so that Christ delights, not only in the graces of the Spirit, but also in the doctrines of the gospel, and the preaching of them.

3dly, He says, ‘I have drunk my wine with my milk.’ Having eat, he drinks, to shew that he had a complete feast, and nothing was wanting to give him satisfaction; not only wine, but milk was used for drink, by many nations, and no doubt by the Hebrews: we find that Jael gave Sisera milk to drink when he was thirsty, as being preferable to water; but that wine and milk should be drank together, is not so usual; though it may be observed, that a mixture of wine and milk was used by the ancients ^{f62}, and is by us, which, Clemens of Alexandria says ^{f63}, is a very profitable and healthful mixture. Some of the Jewish writers think, that by wine, is meant red wine, and by

milk, white wine; and so the Targum expounds the words of God's acceptance of the drink-offering of red and white wine, which the priests poured upon the altar: R. Aben Ezra gives it as the sense of some of their Rabbins, though he does not approve of it; that by milk, is meant the white which ascends upon the wine; I suppose he means the froth or head that is made by pouring it out. But to leave these empty conjectures, this seems in general to intend the plenty of provisions, and satisfaction therein, which Christ found in his church; by which may be meant the doctrines of the gospel. Gospel grace is represented hereby, in ²⁸¹¹Isaiah 55:1. 'By wine and milk, without money and without price:' wine revives and cheers the spirits, makes a man to forget his poverty, and to remember his misery no more; so do the doctrines of the gospel, when they come with power to a poor sinner, sensible of his poverty and misery; they make him to forget it, and fill him with an unspeakable joy: milk nourishes and strengthens; and so do the doctrines of the gospel; therefore says the apostle, 'I have fed you with milk,' meaning the wholesome and nourishing words of faith. Now from all this I would observe,

- 1.** That here is a variety: as at a feast, there is a variety of dishes, different sorts, both for eating and drinking; so here are myrrh and spice, honey, and the honeycomb, wine, and milk.
- 2.** That here is nothing but what is sweet, savory and wholesome; myrrh and spice are of a delightful odor; honey is sweet to the taste, and wine and milk are wholesome and nourishing.
- 3.** That all these are Christ's own; it is his own he feasts and makes himself welcome with; he does not say, 'I have gathered thy myrrh with thy spice,' which grow in thy garden; 'I have eaten thy honeycomb with thy honey; I have drunk thy wine with thy milk;' but it is my myrrh and my spice, my honey' and my honeycomb, my wine and my milk: Christ would have but a poor entertainment, if he had no other than what we can provide for him of our own.
- 4.** Christ appears exceedingly delighted and well pleased with all this; therefore he plucks and gathers, eats and drinks: the smallest degree of grace, and the weakest performances of his people, he takes notice of and regards; he eats his honeycomb, as well as his honey, and drinks his milk, as well as his wine; for a 'bruised reed. shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.'

III. In these words is also an invitation of Christ to his friends to eat and drink; he is not willing to eat his morsel alone; as he feeds, feasts, and delights himself in the graces of his own Spirit in his people, so he will have them feed and feast upon his person and grace; into whatsoever heart Christ comes, he will not only sup with them, but will make them also sup with him. And here are to be considered,

1st, The persons whom he invites.

2dly, What it is he invites them to.

1st, Who the persons are whom Christ invites; and they are here called friends and beloved; by whom are meant, not the angels, which is the mind of some ^{f64}; though it is true, they are Christ's friends, and rejoice at the conversion of elect sinners, and in the prosperity of his church and people; yet I think they are not intended here: nor the priests, whose right it was to eat the remainder of the sacrifices, as many Jewish writers ^{f65} expound the words: but rather believers in Christ, who of enemies are made friends; being first reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and then to himself by his Spirit and grace; whom he regards and treats as such, by granting them his presence, paying them visits, and disclosing the secrets of his heart unto them; and so he said to his disciples, ^{<B154>}John 15:14,15. 'Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you:' now these are enabled, through divine grace, to shew themselves friendly to Christ again, by valuing his presence, delighting in his company, regarding his ordinances, and observing his commands; for though these things do not make friends, yet they shew them to be so; as Christ says, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' These are also the beloved of his soul; he has loved them with an everlasting love, and has given the fullest proofs and clearest demonstrations of it that possibly can be; which being manifested to their souls, begets love to him again; on the account of which he calls them friends and beloved. But,

2dly, It will be proper to consider what he invites his friends and beloved to; to eat and drink, yea, to drink abundantly: but what is it they are to eat and drink of, or to feast upon? why, Christ himself, who is the bread of life, and the hidden manna, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed; which if a man eats, and feeds upon by faith, he shall never

hunger, nor die the second death, but live for ever: moreover, his love is what they ate to drink of, and that largely; it being preferable to wine, may be drank of, without danger, plentifully; they may drink, yea, be inebriated with loves ^{f66}, as the words may be rendered; for here is enough of it, and no fear of receiving any danger by it; and all this together makes up that feast of fat things, of wines on the less well refined, which the Lord's supper is a representation of. And this shews,

1. The plenteousness of the provisions which Christ makes in his house for his people: it is not an empty house that Christ keeps, a niggardly feast that he makes; but here is food, and that in plenty, and drink enough and to spare.
2. That a believer is heartily welcome to the entertainment which Christ makes: it is true, we are unworthy creatures of ourselves; but seeing Christ has made such entertainments for us, and has so kindly invited us, let us use freedom and eat; and the more heartily we feed on these royal dainties, the more welcome we are; and to assure believers that they are so, he, in his invitation to them, gives them the titles of friends and beloved: nay, the very manner of the invitation, not only declares the plenteousness of the feast, but also the largeness and sincerity of his heart in it.
3. It also lets us know, that Christ neither invites nor allows any to feed and feast with him, but those who are his friends, whom he accounts and makes so; this is a privilege peculiar to them, which indeed none can enjoy but they. And as for the external ordinance of the Lord's supper, that feast of love, none have a right to eat of it, but those who are Christ's friends; and to none but those is it profitable and edifying; for he does not manifest himself, nor discover his love to any other: these are his darlings and favorites; with these he grants his presence at his table, and satisfies their souls with the goodness of his house.

VERSE 2.

I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, ray dove, ray undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and ray locks with the drops of the night.

THESE are the words of the church, who here begins to give an account of her present state and condition; how that after this spiritual banquet, which

she had partook of with Christ, she fell asleep, as the disciples did in the garden, after they had been with Christ, at his table: and also, what methods he made use of to awake her; how basely and ungratefully she treated him; which he resented, and shewed by a departure from her; which when she was sensible of, was troubled at, and made enquiry after him, first of the watchmen, who abused her, and then of the daughters of Jerusalem, who question her about him; which gave her occasion to give that large and excellent account of him, which closes this chapter: and it may be observed, that as Christ speaks most in the preceding chapter, so she does in this. In these words are these two things,

I. The church's account of her present state and condition.

II. Christ's carriage and behavior to her in this condition.

I. The account she gives of her present state and condition; 'I sleep, but my heart waketh:' like persons half awake and half asleep, whom Cicero ^{f67} calls *semisomni*; the phrase is sometimes used to describe a sluggish, slothful man ^{f68}. This case which the church was now in, is different from that recorded in chap. in. there she was upon her bed indeed, but not asleep; there she was seeking after her beloved; but here he is seeking to her, and intreating her in the most kind and affectionate manner to arise, and let him in; there she of her own accord arose and sought him in the streets and broad ways; but here she continues in this sleepy and lazy condition, notwithstanding the pressing instances and powerful arguments which he made use of, until he exerted his mighty grace, which caused her to arise and open to him; but then he was gone: there she inquires of the watchmen, who, though we do not read of any answer they gave her, yet they did not abuse her; but here they smite her, wound her, and take away her veil from her; there, a little after she had passed from them she found him; but here she appears to be even sick of love before she found him. In this account of hers, two things are asserted by her,

First, That she was asleep. Yet,

Secondly, Her heart was awake.

First, She acknowledges that she was asleep. 'I sleep.' This is not the dead sleep of sin, in whom all unconverted per. sons are; nor that judicial slumber, which God suffers to fall upon some; but such an one, which though displeasing to Christ and unbecoming the believer, yet is consistent

with a principle of grace. The church here was not so fast asleep, but she could hear, know, and distinguish the voice of Christ; her sleep is much the same with that of the wise virgins, who all slumbered and slept, as well as the foolish, and yet had oil in their lamps, which they had not. And in taking notice of this part of the church's case, I will endeavor,

1st, To shew wherein this sleepy frame, which sometimes attend believers, does consist, or wherein it shews itself.

2dly, What are the springs and causes of it, or from whence it proceeds.

3dly, The danger of such a frame.

1st, It will be proper to shew wherein this sleepy frame of spirit does consist, or wherein it shews itself,

1. It consists in a non-exercise of grace; though there is grace in the heart, yet it is but very little exercised by persons in this condition, it lies dormant; faith is weak and languid, hope abates in its former liveliness, and love in its warmth and fervency; it grows cold; there is such a thing as a leaving, though not a losing our first love.

2. It appears in a sluggishness and slothfulness to or in duty; for though persons have not wholly cast off the fear of God, and restrained prayer before him, as Eliphaz, ~~<18504>~~ Job 15:4 wrongfully charged Job; yet there is a backwardness to it, and a laziness appears in the performance of it; there is a want of that fervency and spirit, which formerly discovered itself whilst they were serving the living God.

3. It manifests itself in a contentation in the external parts of religion: Internal religion is at a low ebb in their souls; they hear, and read, and pray, and attend on ordinances, contenting themselves with the bare performance of these things, without having their hearts engaged, their faith in exercise, and their affections raised; and so come short of answering the character of being worshippers of God in the spirit; either under the influences of the eternal Spirit, or with their own spirits influenced thereby, which formerly was their great concern in religious worship.

4. It discovers itself in a carelessness, lukewarmness, and unconcernedness for the cause of Christ: persons in such a condition may be observed sensibly to abate in their zeal, both for the doctrines of the gospel, and the

discipline of God's house; they seek their own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's; they mind their own celled houses, and let the house of God lie waste; they come far short of imitating Christ, their glorious head, of whom it is said, ^{<1800>}Psalm 69:9, that the zeal of God's house eat him up; things may go how they will for ought they care, who have got into this frame of spirit.

5. It shews itself in an unconcernedness, as to omission of duty, and commission of sin: time was, when these persons could not omit a duty occasioned by the hurrying business of life, but it gave them great uneasiness; could not do those things which by some are not accounted sinful, but it burdened their consciences; but now they can neglect duties time after time, fall in with the customs and corruptions of the age, and be very little concerned about it.

6. In a willingness to continue so: they do not love to be jogged; grow peevish when any attempts are made to awaken them; their language is that of the sluggard, ^{<1800>}Proverbs 6:10, 'yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.' This seems to be the case of the church, who being asleep, did not care to be disturbed; and therefore made those idle excuses she did, when called upon in the most tender and affectionate manner to arise.

2dly, What are the true springs and causes of this sleepy frame, or from whence it does proceed,

1. From a 'body of sin' they carry about with them; which fleshly, gross and earthly part in them, induces heaviness, and inclines to sleep: the cold humors of sin benumb the soul, and bring upon it a spiritual lethargy; 'like the poison of asps,' it operates this way; the deceitful charms of sin sometimes lull them asleep.

2. Worldly cares have sometimes this effect upon God's people; an immoderate thirst and pursuit after the things of this world, oftentimes makes persons grow indifferent about the things of another; it runs them into many temptations and snares; it frequently causes them to omit private and family duty, and 'chokes the word' and ordinances, that they become unfruitful; being surfeited and overcharged with it, they fall into this drowsy and sleepy frame.

3. It arises sometimes from a cessation from spiritual exercises; idleness, or a want of exercise induces sleep: when believers grow weary of well-doing, and grow remiss in the duties of meditation, prayer, hearing and reading; grace, as to the exercise of it, declines, and their souls fall into a spiritual slumber.

4. It sometimes springs from, and is increased by an absenting from the ministry, especially an awaking one, which might be useful to rouse them; and from the company of lively Christians by conversing with whom, their souls, through the blessing of divine grace, might be kept awake; but instead of this, they' neglect the ministry of the word, leave off the company of those warm and lively souls, and converse with cold and formal professors, which bring them into, and continues them in this sleepy frame.

5. Sometimes it follows upon an enjoyment of ease, peace and liberty; therefore some ^{f69} interpret these words of the state of the church in Constantine's time, when the church not only enjoyed freedom from persecution, but also abounded in riches and prosperity, and upon it grew careless, secure and sleepy; by reason of which many errors, both in doctrine and discipline, crept into the church; and I am afraid, that the long enjoyment of peace and liberty which we have had, has brought us into much the same frame of spirit.

3dly, The danger of being in such a state and condition,

1. When the church of Christ is in such a condition, it lies liable to be filled with hypocrites, and pestered with heretics: to be filled with hypocrites, because it has not then such a spirit of discerning; these may then more easily impose themselves upon it: to be pestered with heresies and heretics, of which there have been lamentable instances, that 'while men slept, the enemy sowed tares;' which roots of bitterness have sprung up with the wheat of sound doctrine, and have troubled some, and defiled others; and I wish I could say, that this is not the case of the churches of Christ now, nor these the dreadful consequences of her being in such an one.

2. Particular believers, who are got into this sleepy and drowsy frame, are exposed to every sin and every temptation; therefore said Christ to his disciples, ⁴²⁶⁴ Matthew 26:41, 'watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;' knowing, that when asleep, they might easily be led into it: What may not the 'devouring lion' be suffered to do to persons in such a

condition? Into what sins and snares may he not be permitted to lead them, though he shall never destroy them?

3. They are liable to be deprived of Christ's presence, which was the case of the church here: she had had a glorious enjoyment of Christ's presence; he had been with her in his garden, and had made a noble entertainment for her and his friends, quickly after which she falls asleep; and after he had made some attempts to awake her, and had given some notices of his regard to her, withdraws himself from her, verse 6.

4. Such may be robbed of what is valuable and dear unto them; a man that is asleep, any thing that he has, money, jewels, etc. may be taken from him; so a believer, though he cannot lose his grace, nor that treasure which he has in heaven, yet he may lose his comfort and liveliness; and the truths of the gospel may be more easily wrung out of his hands.

5. Such a sleepy, lazy frame, tends to spiritual poverty; it brings leanness upon the soul: grace, as to its exercise, is brought low thereby, and the soul into a declining condition.

6. Such persons are liable to be surprised with the midnight-cry; though it is true those who are real believers, shall never be found without oil in their lamps, but shall be always ready in Christ for his appearance; yet it will not be so startling and surprising to the waking, as to the sleepy virgins.

7. Such a frame is both displeasing to Christ and uncomfortable to themselves: a lukewarm frame Christ so resents, that he threatens to 'spew such out of his mouth;' neither is it very comfortable to themselves; it is but broken sleep they have; they are disturbed with many startlings and joggings of conscience; like persons who know it is their duty to arise and be about their business, and yet have no power to do so, being overcome with sleep.

Secondly, She declares, that notwithstanding she slept, yet her heart was awake. R. Sol. Jarchi divides these words, and refers the former clause, 'I sleep,' to the bride; and this here, 'my heart waketh,' to the bridegroom; and so he says, it is expounded in an ancient book of theirs, called Pesikta^{f70}: and then the sense is, Though I have been, and am in a sleepy frame of spirit, yet he who is my heart^{f71}, my life, my soul, my all; he whom I love with all my heart, and who is the rock, the strength of my heart, made my portion for ever; he, I say, never slumbers nor sleeps, but watches over me

night and day even when I am asleep, that nothing hurts me. But in another ancient book of theirs, called Zohar¹⁷², I find both clauses referred to the church, and so they are to be understood; ‘my heart waketh,’ that is, my regenerate part, which is sometimes called in scripture, ‘the spirit,’ and the ‘inward man;’ that is to say, so far as my carnal and unregenerate heart prevails, ‘I sleep;’ and so far as I am renewed and sanctified, ‘my heart waketh:’ she was not so fast asleep, but that,

- 1.** She had some thoughts of heart concerning Christ; he was not wholly out of her mind; though she was asleep, her thoughts were running upon, and employed about her beloved; his image was so impressed upon her mind, that she thought him present; and every thing that stirred, supposed it was he, and that she heard his voice; even as lovers in their sleep, have their thoughts running upon the person who is the object of their love.
- 2.** There were some stirrings of affections in her towards him; though she had got into this sleepy and lazy frame of soul, yet Christ was still the object of her love; and therefore she says, ‘it is the voice of my beloved;’ she was not so fast asleep, but that she could not only know and distinguish the voice of Christ, but she could also call him ‘her beloved?’
- 3.** There were no doubt some convictions of sin upon her conscience: we must not suppose her to be in such a dead sleep, as to be ‘past feeling,’ or to have her ‘conscience seared with an hot iron;’ she was sensible of her evil, in indulging such a flame; though, being overcome with sleep, she had no power to guard against it.
- 4.** It is highly probable, that she was not without some desires after being in her duty, as being uneasy in her present case; it seems to be with her, as it was with the disciples when asleep, of whom Christ says, ‘that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;’ they, with her here, had a will to duty, a will to watch and pray with him; ‘but how to perform they knew not,’ being overpowered with this fleshly and earthly part.

Now from this whole account which she gives of herself, as sleeping, and yet waking, we may observe the following things.

- (1.)** That a believer has two different principles in him; a principle of corruption, and a principle of grace; the one he brings into the world with him, the other is wrought by the Spirit of God; and these are represented as two different persons, both by the church here, who

speaks of and that sleeps, and an *heart* that wakes; and by the apostle elsewhere, who speaks of a new man, and an old man; of himself, as having no good thing dwelling in him, and yet of an I that sinneth not; see ~~4178~~ Romans 7:18-20. ~~402~~ Ephesians 4:22-24

(2.) That these two different principles may exert themselves, at one and the same time, in a believer; ‘the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other: the law in the members wars against the law in the mind, and the law in the mind opposes the law in the members;’ and at the same time she sleeps, her heart wakes.

(3.) That corruption may seem to have the ascendant, in a believer’s heart for a time; it seems to have had k in the church here; sleep overpowered her, though her heart was awake: this law in the members may carry captive for some time, and have such a power over the believer, as that he cannot do the good which he would.

(4.) Notwithstanding, true grace cannot be lost in a believer; it is an immortal seed which remains and abides; grace is always alive, though not always alike lively; it is ‘a well of living water springing up into everlasting life.’

(5.) The difference between a carnal and a spiritual heart; the one is in a dead sleep, the other, though asleep, yet his heart wakes; the one has spirit as well as flesh, the other is nothing but flesh. And, considering these as the words of the church, they inform us,

1. That believers have a discerning of their state and condition; when in the lowest, they know in some measure how it is with them, and can observe a difference in themselves, from themselves, and from what they have formerly been, which an unconverted person is a stranger to; he is not capable of making such a remark as this upon himself, which the church here does; though it is true, the believer may be left sometimes to make a wrong judgment of himself.

2. That believers are ingenuous in acknowledging their sins, failings, and infirmities; which is an evidence of the truth of grace, and that there are more or less some stirrings of it, where this spirit is.

3. That it is the duty of believers to take notice of their grace, as well as of their sin; and therefore the church takes notice of her ‘waking heart,’

as well as of her 'sleeping I:' we should be careful how we deny or lessen the work of the Spirit of God upon our souls, but speak of it to the glory of him who is the author of it; who can, does, and will keep our hearts awake, grace alive there; though we, with the church, may be sometimes suffered to fall asleep: thus much for her state and condition. Now follows,

II. Christ's carriage and behavior to her when in this state, as acknowledged by herself.

1st, He called unto her, and that so loud, that she, though asleep, could hear, and own it to be his voice, saying, 'It is the voice of my beloved.' By the voice of Christ, we must understand the gospel, as preached by his ministering servants; by whom he often calls to his drowsy and sleepy saints to awake, as he does here. In what sense the gospel is the voice of Christ, and how it may be and is distinguished by believers from the voice of strangers, have been shown in ²¹⁰⁸Song of Solomon 2:8. I need only add here, that as it is a distinguishing character of believers to know Christ's voice; so they are capable of doing it, even when in a carnal and sleepy frame of soul: believers sometimes, under hearing the word, are very dull and heavy; there is but very little exercise of faith in them; yet: they can then distinguish the gospel from what is not so; though they are little affected with it, and receive but very little advantage by it: nay, it may be further observed, that she could say, it was the voice of her beloved; for though her faith and love were very low, yet they were not lost; but then let it be carefully remarked, that though she was capable of making such observations on what she heard, yet she was not thoroughly awaked hereby, but sleeps on still: thus, notwithstanding Christ's passionate expostulation with his disciples in the garden, saying, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' I say, notwithstanding this, they fall asleep again. Christ's word, without his power, will neither quicken dead sinners, nor awake sleepy saints; neither of these will be affected by it, unless he puts in the finger of his powerful and efficacious grace, 'by the hole of the door,' as he does in verse 4. Well, Christ calling her by his ministers, and not awaking her, he takes another method: and therefore,

2dly, Knocks, and calls again, saying, Open to me, etc. There is,

1. A knocking at sinners hearts at first conversion. The heart of an unconverted sinner is bolted and barred against Christ, with the strong

bolts and bars of sin and unbelief: elect sinners, whilst in a state of nature, are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; they are unwilling to submit to Christ and his righteousness, nor to open the doors of their hearts, and let the king of glory in: he stands and knocks there, by the preaching of the gospel; and, having the key of David in his hands, 'he openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth;' with this key of almighty and efficacious grace, he openeth their hearts, as he did Lydia's; and, with the hammer of his word, breaks them in pieces, and causes all bolts and bars to fly before him; plucks down the strong holds which Satan had made; dispossesses the strong man of his armor, wherein he trusted, to keep his palace in peace and safety; and reduces all in obedience to himself; where entering with his glorious train of graces, and having dethroned sin, sets up grace to reign in his stead; and takes possession of the heart as his palace, from whence sin and Satan will never be able to eject him. Now in this mighty work of grace, in thus conquering and subduing a sinner's heart, we are not to suppose that here is a force upon the will; for though before they were unwilling, as well as unable to open and let him in, yet are now made willing in the day of his power, to submit unto him; they become voluntary subjects to him; and Christ meets with a kind reception and hearty welcome from them; so that they are as desirous of having him there, as he is of entering in, when this day of his power has passed upon them. But,

2. There is a knocking at churches, or at the hearts of particular believers; and of this we read in ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Revelation 3:20. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' etc. the church of Laodicea there appears to be in much the same case and condition as the church is here: the church here was asleep, though her heart was awake; and the church of Laodicea there was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold; which being highly displeasing to Christ, in order to bring her to a sense of her present condition, he comes and stands at the door, and knocks, as he does here. Now we are not to suppose that Christ is ever turned out of doors; that the key is turned upon him; or that he has not always a dwelling in his churches, or in the hearts of particular believers; for he is Christ in us, and in all believers, the hope of glory; he is there, and will continue there, till he has brought them to that glory which they are hoping for; though sometimes they are so shut up in their frames, that they can neither come forth themselves, in the enlargement of their desires and affections, and in the exercise of grace, nor let in Christ unto them; there is but very little communion between Christ and them; and

though there is no distance or separation with respect to union, yet there is with regard to communion; there stands as it were a door, a wall, a middle wall of partition, between Christ and their souls; and oftentimes, which is still worse, they are secure, careless and unconcerned about it; therefore Christ, in order to bring them to a sense of themselves, and their present condition; that they may see their need of, and that desires may be stirred up in them, after communion with himself, comes and stands at the door, and knocks: which knocking I take to be, not by the ministry of the word, as before: but in a providential way, in a way of chastisement, by taking in his hand the rod of affliction or scourge of persecution, and lashing his children with them; with such severe raps and blows of persecution did he knock at the door of the church, in the times of Constantius, Valens and Julian, emperors of Rome, after she was fallen asleep, through the peace and prosperity which she enjoyed in the times of Constantine: the two former of which persecuted the orthodox ministers and others, in favor of the Arians; and the latter entirely apostatized from the Christian religion, and became a bitter enemy and cruel persecutor of it: and this is thought by some interpreters ^{f73}, to be particularly intended here: and in this sense we are to understand knocking, in that parallel text, ~~(f73)~~ Revelation 3:20, as is manifest by comparing it with verse 19, ‘as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent; behold, I stand at the door and knock,’ etc. His knocking there, is no other than his rebukes and chastisements in a way of love, which were designed to bring her to a sense of herself, as appears from that exhortation, ‘be zealous therefore, and repent;’ and that she might see her need of, and have her desires enlarged after communion with him, as is manifest from these words; ‘if any man open to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;’ which also is his end and design in knocking after this manner here; ‘it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me.’ There is an emphasis upon the word me! open to me, who am thy Lord, thy head, thy husband, and thy friend: and by opening to him; he means an enlarging of their affections and desires to him, which were now very cold and chill; and an exercise of their faith upon him, which was very weak; which they of themselves were no more capable to do, than a sinner is to open his heart to Christ at first conversion; this can only be done by him, who has the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth, etc. and therefore we find this knocking was also ineffectual, until he exerted his mighty grace, as in verse 4, his saying to her, ‘open to me,’ is designed to convince her of her

present condition, and what need she stood in of his presence and assistance.

3dly, Christ not only calls by the ministry of the word, and knocks in a providential way, by his rebukes and chastisements; but he also gives her good words, kind and endearing titles and characters: he calls to her, saying, ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled.’ The three first of these titles and characters have been already considered and explained: the first title, my sister, is expressive of the near relation the church stands in to Christ, being ‘flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone,’ and has been spoken to on chapter ~~2109~~4:9, the second, ‘my love,’ shews the strong affection Christ had for her, she being the alone object of it, and has been opened on chapter ~~2109~~1:9, the third, ‘my dove,’ declares the church’s harmlessness and simplicity, her cleanness, purity and chastity, as has been shewn on chapter ~~2124~~2:14, and the fourth, ‘my undefiled, or my perfect one’ ^{f74}, as it is in the Hebrew text, is what we have not yet met with, and therefore will deserve a little more consideration. And here it must be observed, that all the descendants of Adam, by ordinary generation, are polluted and defiled, both in their nature and actions; all the parts of their bodies, and powers and faculties of their souls are so; their will and affections, understanding and judgment, mind and conscience, are all defiled; and indeed how can it otherwise be, for ‘who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one:’ nay, believers themselves are not free from pollution; but complain of the uncleanness of their hearts and lips; and frankly acknowledge that they are all as an unclean thing, and that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags: it may then seem strange, that Christ should call his church, and that in her present circumstances, his undefiled one; and so she is, not in herself; but as considered in him, believers are full of spots in themselves, but having in his spotless righteousness, he looks upon them as all fair, and as having no spot in them; they are the undefiled in the way, even whilst in the way to glory: and on this side the heavenly inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens far from them. Or else, this character may regard her chastity to Christ; who, though she was guilty of many failings and infirmities, yet she had kept his bed undefiled; had not committed spiritual adultery, which is idolatry, but kept close to his ways and ordinances, as those we read of in ~~6644~~ Revelation 14:4, who, because they did not join with the whore of Rome in her abominations, are said not to be ‘defiled with women, for they are virgins; these are they which follow the lamb

whithersoever he goeth.’ Now Christ calls his church by all those loving and endearing titles,

1. To shew that she stood in the same relation to him she ever did, and was loved by him with the same love she ever was; though sleepy and lazy, careless and negligent of her duty, and regardless of him, yet she is his sister, his love, his dove, his undefiled: notwithstanding all this, there was a change in the frame of her soul, and in her carriage and behavior towards him; but no alteration in her relation to him, nor in his love to her, which shews him indeed, ‘Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.’

2. That all these knocks, raps, and chastisements, were all in love; he meant it for her good, and would have her take it so: we are too apt to think, when chastised and under God’s afflicting hand, that it is in a way of wrath, and that he deals not with us as children; but when he knocks, and gives such endearing characters as these, it plainly shews that it is all in love.

3. To manifest how desirous he was of communion with her, and therefore takes all ways to obtain it; he calls and knocks, and calls again, and that in the most tender, moving language that can be. And this is not all, but,

4thly, He expostulates with her, and uses very pressing instances and powerful arguments to persuade her to open and let him in; ‘for my head,’ says he, ‘is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night:’ here, because of the great love and affection which he has for his church, and the desire he has of enjoying communion with her; here, he is represented as coming in the night, season to pay her a visit, and standing knocking at her door, and waiting so long there for an answer, until his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night: which may be understood, either,

1. Of the doctrines and blessings of grace, which Christ came full fraught with; these being compared to dew in scripture, see ^{<631D>}Deuteronomy 32:2, ^{<3416>}Hosea 14:6, and then the sense is, ‘Behold, my love, I starts at thy door knocking, and waiting to be admitted in; I pray thee, rise and open to me, for I am come filled with the comfortable and refreshing doctrines of the gospel, and wire all the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant of grace, which I know are needful and proper for thee.’ So R. Sol. Jarchi, by dew, understands God’s blessings for those who turn by repentance; though by drops of the night, he thinks are meant punishments tot those who forsake and despise him. Or else,

2. These words may intend the sufferings of Christ, which I rather incline to: Thus Nebuchadnezzar's body being wet with the dew of heaven, is expressive of the forlorn and miserable condition he was in, when being driven from men, he eat grass as oxen, and was exposed to all the inclemency of the heavens; so when Christ's head is here said to be filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, it may mean his sufferings in his state of humiliation, who had no where to lay his head; whose constant practice it was some time before his death, in the day time, to teach in the temple, and in the night continued praying in the mount of Olives; and that night in which he was taken, appears to be a very cold one, from Peter's warming himself: so that there seems to be an agreement between those outward sufferings of his, and these represented in these words; though no doubt far greater than those intended here, which he underwent in his own person, on the account of his church; which may be compared to dew and drops of the night,

(1.) Because of the multitude of them, the dew and drops of the night being many: Christ's sufferings were many and various; there are the sufferings of his body and of his soul, and many of both sorts; what tongue can express, what heart can conceive what he underwent, when he bore our sins and his Father's wrath? and because of the multitude of them, they are compared, not only to dew and drops of the night, but to floods, ^{<3901>}Psalm 69:1,2.

(2.) As the dew and drops of the night are uncomfortable and prejudicial to health, especially in those hot countries; so Christ's sufferings were uncomfortable to the human nature, as is manifest from what he said to his Father in the garden, and when upon the cross; and they would have been intolerable to any but himself.

(3.) As the dew and drops of the night, though prejudicial to the health of persons, yet are very useful and fructifying to the truth; so the sufferings of Christ, though uncomfortable to the human nature, yet have produced many blessings of grace, and are the means of bringing many sons to glory; see ^{<3124>}John 12:24. Now the sum of the argument then is this; seeing I have suffered so much and so largely on this account, how canst thou be so cruel so hard-hearted, so base and disingenuous, as not to arise and let me in? so lovers sometimes represent their case in such circumstances as hardly dealt with ¹⁷⁵; and know not which to call most hard and cruel, the door shut against

them, or the lover within: and yet, notwithstanding such a moving and melting argument, what idle excuses does the church make to put Christ off, in the following words?

VERSE 3.

*I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?*

THE sleepy and lazy frame which the church had fallen into, together with Christ's carriage and behavior towards her in that condition, has been considered in the preceding verse; and in this we have the effect which Christ calls and knocks, his melting language, and moving expostulations had upon her: all the answer he obtains from her, are only some idle excuses and frivolous shifts to put him off. Some interpreters^{f76} indeed have attempted to vindicate the church from slothfulness and rudeness, and would have this ascribed to her modesty, which would not admit her to appear before so great a person in such a disagreeable dress: but if this had been the case, he would never have resented her behavior to him, as he did by withdrawing from her; he would never have suffered her to wander about the city in quest of him, as she did; nor would he have permitted the watchmen to abuse her, as they did, by smiting, wounding, and unveiling her; nor should she have gone so long, until she was sick of love, before she found him, had not all this been to chastise her for her former slothfulness and rudeness. Nor are we to consider these words as of one asking for information sake, how she should do this and the other thing, as Being willing to comply with the request made to her, if she knew but how; for she had no desire to do it; her chief design being to keep her bed, her ease and rest, if possible; therefore, though she is not so rude as to say, that she would not arise and let him in; yet her words and actions manifestly shew that she had no design to do it, and therefore makes the excuses she does; which are to be looked upon as an absolute denial, and were so interpreted by Christ; and may be paralleled with that answer which the man gave to his friend, who came at midnight to borrow loaves of him, which, in ^{<2107>}Luke 11:7, you will find to be this, 'Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.' Having given you this general view of the words, I will now consider the parts of them, or the particular excuses that she makes.

First, She says, ‘I have put off my coat,’ and from thence argues, ‘how shall I put it on?’ It will be proper to consider what is meant by her putting off her coat; and also what the argument she forms upon it, or the conclusion she draws from it, intends,

1. The believer’s coat is Christ and his righteousness: his clothing is the garments of salvation, and his covering the robe of righteousness; all which he has from Christ, who is Jehovah, our righteousness; whose righteousness is the saints wedding-garment; which being made of fine linen, clean and white, and put upon them, they are clothed as with the sun; their own garments, whether of sin or righteousness, are filthy ones; in the room of which, is given to them change of raiment. Now this coat or garment of justifying righteousness, being wrought out by Christ, and brought to the soul by the Spirit of God, faith puts on, according to ⁴⁵¹³⁴Romans 13:14. ‘Put on the Lord Jesus Christ,’ that is, the righteousness of Christ; which faith puts on, as a man does his clothes: and for this reason we are said to be justified by faith; not that faith, by virtue of its own, has an influence in our justification, or is a part of it; for we are no otherwise justified by it, than as it apprehends, lays hold, and puts on Christ for righteousness. Now this coat or garment being once put on, the believer can never be disrobed of it; it as an everlasting righteousness; it will never wear out, nor can it be lost, nor will it ever be taken away from him: Adam lost the righteousness in which he was created, but the believer’s can never be lost; for it is not the righteousness of a creature, but of God; those who once have on Christ’s righteousness, always have; for being once justified by it, they will always be so; nor must it be imagined, that ever a true believer will be left to despise and reject this righteousness: there is nothing dearer to him, and more valued by him than this is; he often thinks of it in himself, and frequently speaks of it to others; he desires to be always found in it, living and dying; but yet sometimes his faith may be remiss about it; may lie dormant, and be very little exercised on this glorious object: sometimes a believer is got into such a carnal, secure, and lazy frame of spirit, as the church here was, that he contents himself with the bare performance of external duties, without having his soul affected with, or his faith concerned about Christ, as the Lord his righteousness; nay, sometimes when he is not in such a frame, he is too apt to dwell upon his own heart, his graces, his frames, his duties; there is a great deal of legality sometimes in believers, and their practice runs contrary to their light and judgment. Now so far as we rest in ourselves in our duties and

performances, or dwell in our graces and our frames; so far we may be said to have put off our coat, or to have laid aside and neglected the righteousness of Christ; tho' it is certain, believers cannot be really disrobed of it; and perhaps this may be the sense of these words ¹⁷⁷. Or else,

2. They may intend her leaving her first love; as her faith in Christ's righteousness was very low, so her love to Christ, his people, ways and ordinances, was very cold; there is such a thing as leaving, though not losing our first love, for which the church at Ephesus was blamed, ^{<1014>}Revelation 2:4, now when saints are in the exercise of this grace of love to Christ or his people, they may be said to put it on, as the apostle exhorts, in ^{<1014>}Colossians 3:14. 'And above all these things, put on charity, or love, which is the bond of perfectness,' and when they grow remiss and cold in it, they may be said to put it off.

3. These words may also represent her neglect of her duty; for she had not only dropped in a great measure the exercise of grace, but likewise the performance of duty; she was grown slothful and inactive; she had put off her clothes, as having done working, and therefore takes to her bed, and composes herself to rest: thus, as a performance of duties may be called a putting of them on; see ^{<1012>}Colossians 3:12, so a neglect of them may be called a putting of them off; which Eliphaz, in ^{<1015>}Job 15:4. calls a casting off fear before God; for he intends thereby a disregard to religious exercises, which he supposed Job chargeable with.

4. These words manifestly shew, that she was in a sleepy, drowsy frame; had put off her clothes, and was gone to bed; that she was now off her guard, and had dropped her spiritual watchfulness: thus, as putting and keeping on of clothes is a sign of watchfulness; see ^{<1013>}Nehemiah 4:23, ^{<1015>}Revelation 16:15, so putting them off is an indication of the contrary; and she having done so, is not only exposed to danger, but to shame, disgrace, and scandal.

5. Being now free from troubles, afflictions and persecutions, she puts off her coat, and betakes herself to a bed of ease; and though Christ calls, yet she is unwilling to arise and go along with him, lest she should meet with the same trials and sufferings as before, for the sake of him and his gospel; so much does the love of worldly ease prevail over God's own children, that they are sometimes loth to arise and follow Christ in his own ways.

Now from hence she argues, and thus she concludes, that seeing she had put off her coat, how should she put it on? Which discovers,

(1.) That she was apprehensive of difficulty in doing it, ‘How shall I etc. that is, how difficult will it be for me to do it?’ and indeed it is easier dropping, the exercise of a grace, or the performance of a duty, than it is to take it up again after we have so done; and when grace is called to exert itself, or a duty is presented to be performed, carnal reason raises a thousand difficulties as insuperable, which faith only gets over.

(2.) This way of arguing shews her sluggishness, and her love of ease; a sluggard thinks there is danger if he arises and goes into the streets, saying, ‘There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets;’ and he is so wretchedly slothful, that having ‘hid his hand in his bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth:’ so she, having put off her coat, was so exceeding slothful and sluggish, that she was loth, it grieved her, it went to her very heart, she did not know how to bring herself to it, to put it on again.

(3.) Nay there was not only a lothness, but an aversion to it; the carnal and fleshly part in the believer is entirely averse, either to the exercise of grace, or to the discharge of duty; it lusteth against the spirit; though there is a willingness in the regenerate part thereunto, for he delights in the law of God, after the inward man: but the former seems to have the ascendant in the church here, which makes her say, ‘How shall I, etc.’ I am averse unto it.

(4.) It intimates as though she thought it unreasonable in him to desire it, seeing her clothes were off, and she was now in bed; for him to desire her to arise and open, and let him in, was, what she thought, an unreasonable request, and therefore says, ‘How shall I put it on?’ that is, How canst thou desire it of me? though this which Christ called her to, and indeed, had it been much more difficult than it was, but her reasonable service.

(5.) It supposes that she was apprehensive of danger by doing it; that it would be incommodious and detrimental to her, break her rest, disturb her ease, and be prejudicial to her health; there being danger of it, as she imagined, by rising out of her bed, and putting on her clothes to let him in. Now arguments taken from, and formed upon such selfish

principles, are much made use of by carnal reason, and are pleaded with a great deal of force and vehemence by it, against the observance of an ordinance or performance of a duty: it was upon this foot that those who were bidden to the wedding, excused themselves; it was against their worldly profit and pleasure to comply with the invitation; one had bought a piece of ground, another, five yoke of oxen, and a third had married a wife, and therefore they could not come; and in so doing, declared that they valued their worldly interest before the blessings of grace in Christ; as the church here in saying, ‘How shall I put it on?’ shews, that she preferred her worldly ease to Christ’s company, and that she sought more her ‘own things, than the things which are Jesus Christ’s.’

(6.) It may also signify that she knew not how to do it, because of that shame and confusion which attended her on the account of her sins and transgressions against him; being conscious to herself of these things she blushed and was ashamed, not knowing how to shew her face, and appear before him with any confidence, and therefore puts him off with these excuses; and so it oftentimes with believers, who, when they have fallen into sin neglect their duty through shame, and so add sin to sin, as the church did here: and this sense the Targum gives of this part of the words after this manner: ‘The congregation of Israel answered and said before the prophets, Lo, now I have removed from me the yoke of his precepts, and have served the idols of the people; and how can I have the face to return unto him?’ though it makes the latter part of the text to be, not the words of the church, but of the Lord; who makes answer to her, and lets her know, that as he had removed his divine presence from her, because of her sins, how should he return to her again? Which other part of the words come now to be considered.

Secondly, She urges that she had washed her feet; and therefore how could she ‘defile them.’ Washing of feet was a custom much used in the eastern countries, where they wore not shoes, but sandals, and therefore contracted a great deal of soil, especially in travelling, after which it was usual to wash them; which not only removed the filth from them, but much comforted and refreshed them: instances of this we have in Abraham and Lot, who desired that water might be brought to wash the feet of the angels, whom they thought to be men, also in Abraham’s servant, in Joseph’s brethren, and in Christ’s washing the feet of his disciples a little before his death: washing of feet was also used before going to bed ^{f78},

which is what is here referred to. Now this is to be understood, not of the washing of regeneration, with which no doubt she was washed, being Christ's spouse and bride, as well as washed in his blood; for that is the work of the spirit of God, in his mighty operations of his grace upon her; but this appears to be something of her own doing, 'I have washed my feet, etc.' nor is it meant of the purity of her outward conversation; though feet and walking, when applied to the saints, do in a spiritual sense, intend this oftentimes, but it does not intend it here; for her outward conversation does not appear to be so clean and pure, and so becoming the gospel, and her profession of it, as it should be. But,

1. It may be observed, that she had plucked off her shoes or sandals, which are the gospel, and a conversation agreeable to it, according to ⁴⁰⁶⁵Ephesians 6:15. 'And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' Now when the believer's feet are shod thus, that is, when he holds 'the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,' then may it be said of him, as in chapter ²¹⁰⁰7:1. 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O princes daughter!' but now the church here had plucked off hers, in order to wash her feet; that is, she was grown very careless about the doctrines of the gospel, and very negligent in keeping up a conversation answerable to them.

2. This phrase shows that she was grown weary of spiritual exercises, so persons when they are weary of work or travelling, used to wash their feet, and go to rest. She was grown weary of well-doing, and was much like those in ³⁰¹³Malachi 1:13, who said, in regard to the performance of religious exercises, 'Behold, what a weariness is it!' and therefore washes her feet, lays aside an observance of ordinances and duties, and betakes herself to her carnal ease and rest; and being called from thence, she argues, 'I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them;' which intimates as before, a loathsomeness, an aversion to it; and as though she thought it unreasonable in him to desire it, and criminal in her to comply with it. Where observe her wretched mistake, in imagining that hearkening to, and obeying Christ's commands, would be a defiling her; and it also shews us what poor, little trifling excuses, persons in such a condition will make, to keep themselves in their carnal ease and peace, in a state of slothfulness and inactivity; nay, these excuses of hers were not only idle and frivolous, as the putting on of her coat, and defiling her feet, but likewise vile and sinful, as will appear from the following considerations.

(1.) She had slighted the means which Christ had made use of to awake her; she had made them null and void, and of no effect; he had called to her by the ministry of the word, and had knocked in a providential way, and yet to no purpose; she withstands both his knocks and calls, which must needs be an aggravation of her sin.

(2.) She sinned against light and knowledge; she knew that it was the voice of her beloved that called unto her, and acknowledges it to be so; and yet she sleeps on, and makes these idle excuses as she does, which must needs increase her guilt.

(3.) She had invited him to come but a little before, as in chapter ~~2416~~ 4:16. ‘Let my beloved come into his garden;’ accordingly he did come; and as soon as he was come, she falls asleep, and treats him after this base and disingenuous manner.

(4.) She had purposely composed herself to sleep; it does not seem to have fallen upon her at an unawares; but she as it were sought it, and for this reason put off her coat, and washed her feet, that she might be the more fit for rest, and take it more easily.

(5.) Yet she endeavors to shift the blame from off herself, as if she was no ways in the fault, but that the thing was either difficult and unreasonable, or else unlawful to be done; and therefore she says, ‘How shall I, etc.’

(6.) She appears in all this to be guilty of the greatest ingratitude; she fell into this sleepy and lazy frame after this and a noble entertainment and sumptuous feast that Christ had made for her; she continues herein, notwithstanding the most affectionate characters he gives her, and the most powerful arguments he uses with her; she sleeps on, though he lets her know that his ‘head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night:’ though he had suffered and undergone so much on her account, yet, O vile ingratitude! she is unwilling to be at the trouble of putting on a coat on his account, or to run the risk of defiling her feet for his sake.

(7.) She also discovers the highest folly, in that she prefers her present ease to Christ’s company. Well, but how does Christ take this? how can he bear to be affronted after this rate? Does he not highly resent it?

Yes; but this will farther appear in the consideration of the following verses.

VERSE 4.

*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,
and my bowels were moved for him.*

THE church proceeds here to give an account of some farther steps which Christ took in order to awake her, and cause her to arise and open to him; which, though they are instants of his grace unto her, yet manifestly shew how much he resented her unkindness and ingratitude to him! and she also takes notice what influence this carriage of his towards her had upon her. In these words we have,

I. The method which Christ took in order to have entrance; he ‘put in his hand by the hole of the door.’

II. The effect it had upon her; her ‘bowels were moved for him.’

I. The method which Christ took to let himself in. Seeing she was so loth and so unwilling to arise and open to him, he attempts it himself; not by breaking open the door, but by putting in his hand by the hole thereof, in order to remove the bolt or bar which kept him from entering in. Some read the words, ‘My beloved put down his hand from the hole of the door, or lock;’ ^{f79} that is, withdrew or removed his hand from thence: he put it in there for the aforesaid reason; but hearing such language from within, as in the preceding verse, ‘I have put off my coat,’ etc. he desisted from his attempt, and went his way; resolving to chastise her for her base usage of him, by a departure from her; which, when she understood, it threw her into that concern of mind, which appears in this verse; and also put her upon taking those methods to find him, which the following verses shew she did. But I shall consider the words according to our version or them, ‘My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door;’ and then, not to take any notice of the character which she gives him, ‘My beloved,’ which has been often considered and explained; I shall inquire,

1st, What is meant by the door.

2dly, What by the hole of the door.

3dly, What the hand of Christ signifies.

4thly, What the putting of it in is expressive of.

1st, It will be proper to inquire what is meant by the door. There are several things in scripture which bear this name, in a figurative and metaphorical sense; as Christ, the church, an occasion or opportunity of preaching the gospel, ^{<430>}John 10:9-^{<270>}Song of Solomon 8:9, ^{<610>}1 Corinthians 16:9, etc. none of which can be intended here. A Jewish writer ^{f80} thinks, that the firmament is here meant, and that God put forth his hand from thence; perhaps either in a threatening way, or by inflicting some chastisement on the people of Israel, for their slothfulness and neglect of building the second temple: but by the door here, I apprehend we are to understand, either the door of faith, of which we read in ^{<447>}Acts 14:27. ‘And when they were come,’ that is, ‘Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles;’ which must be understood, either of the preaching of the doctrine of faith among them, or of the implantation of faith in them, and perhaps both are intended: all by nature, whether elect or non-elect, are shut and locked up fast in the prison of unbelief; and when God comes to convert a sinner, he opens the door of faith, and sets them at liberty; though sometimes this door of faith, even afterwards, is so closely shut up, as that there is only a little crevice, a small hole, through which a little love breaks forth from the soul to Christ, and a little light breaks in from Christ unto the soul; which seems to be the case of the church here, and is what Heman the Ezrahite complains of, in ^{<488>}Psalms 88:8, when he says, ‘I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.’ Or else, by the door, may be meant the door of her heart, which was in a great measure shut against Christ, through weakness, and the prevailings of corruptions in her: thus Lydia’s heart is compared to a door, which was opened by the hand of powerful and efficacious grace; by the means of which, Christ, with his large train of grace, were let in, of whom it is said, ^{<427>}Psalms 24:7-10, ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;’ which are not to be understood of the doors and gates of the temple, though perhaps there may be an allusion to them, but of souls which are of an everlasting make; and the king of glory shall come in: Who is this king of glory? the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory; even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who is glorious in his person, in his offices, and in his saints; and who demands an entrance into, takes possession of, and dwells by faith in the hearts of his people. The door then is either the door of faith, or the

door of her heart; or if we put them both together, and say, it is faith in her heart here meant, I cannot see that it will be amiss, ut,

2dly, What is meant by the hole of the door, is our next enquiry. The word door is not in the Hebrew text; therefore some interpret it the hole of the window or casement, others of the lock; but it seems rather to be of the door: this hole was either in the door, or hard by it, so R. Solomon Jarchi thinks; or else was between the two leaves or foldings of the door, according to R. Aben Ezra; but however, it is the mystical and spiritual sense which we are chiefly concerned about. And having interpreted the door, of her heart, or of faith in her heart; and there being but a small hole in this door, through which Christ put his hand, it lets us know that her heart was much narrowed and straitened; her faith was very low in its exercise on Christ, which sometimes is an open door to receive him; but now was but as an hole, through which but little light was let in from Christ, and but little love returned to him; her affections were chilly and cold, which used to be enlarged with fervency unto him; her obedience to him was but very small, not attended with that cheerfulness and spirit of liberty, as heretofore; which seems to be the case of David, when he says, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 119:32, 'I will run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart;' his heart was then narrowed, and he was shut up in his own soul; there were not that cheerfulness and liberty, that warmth and zeal, that liveliness and sprightliness, which he had sometimes experienced, in his obedience to the divine commands: and this no doubt was the church's case here; but there being a hole open, though perhaps but a small one, yet it shows, that her heart was not entirely closed and shut up; it cannot be said of her, that there were in her no faith in Christ, no love to him, no fear of him; for grace, once implanted, can never be lost; though it is not always in exercise, an motion, yet it is always in being: and herein lies the difference between a regenerate and an unregenerate man; the one has his heart entirely closed and shut up against Christ; there is not a crevice, a cranny open to Christ; but the other, though his heart may be much closed and shut up, yet there is always an entrance, though sometimes but a small one, for him: but you will say, Why then does Christ say, in verse 2, 'Open to me, my sister, my love?' etc. I answer, Because he found the entrance into her heart was not so wide, so open and so free, as it had heretofore been; and though he knew she was no more able to widen and enlarge her heart, and open it to him, than she was at first conversion; yet, to bring her under a conviction of her present state, he thus calls to

her: no, this work is his alone; he alone can enlarge the heart, and make it wide enough for himself to enter in at; he has a key that can open this door, when he pleases, even the key of David, with which he openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth, But I proceed,

3dly, To shew what is meant by the hand of Christ, which he puts in by the hole of this door: and this I take to be his mighty, powerful, and efficacious grace; and so the word is used in ^{<4112>}Acts 11:21. ‘And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.’ The reason why the ministry of the apostles was so much owned for the conversion of souls, was, because it was attended with the mighty and efficacious grace of Christ; it was the want of this Isaiah complained of, when he said, ^{<2511>}Isaiah 53:1.

‘Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?’ If the ministry of any is made useful for the good of souls, it is because this arm is revealed, and this hand is put forth; and the ministers of Christ are willing to ascribe it to that, and not to themselves; and can freely join with the apostle Paul, in saying, ‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me;’ and without this hand, all the means of orate are ineffectual; but this can turn the key and open the door of any heart, though never so closely shut, and strongly barred and bolted against Christ: now the same mighty and efficacious grace is equally exerted and put forth in the awaking of a drowsy same, reclaiming a backsliding professor, and quickening him to his duty, as in the conversion of a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins. Which brings me to consider,

4thly, What is meant by Christ’s putting in his hand of mighty and efficacious grace, by the hole of the door. Now this intends the exertion and application of grace to the hearts of believers, which influence and quicken, support and maintain grace in them; this is an internal work, and differs from all the other methods which Christ took with her, and appears To be more powerful than any of them; he had called in the external ministry of the word, and knocked in a providential war, by inflicting some chastisement upon her; he had given her good words, expostulated with her, and used persuasive arguments, and yet to no purpose: but now he puts in his hand of mighty grace, and the work is done; which hand moves secretly and invisibly, and yet powerfully and irresistibly; for ‘none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?’ though it uses no force or compulsion, but works sweetly and kindly upon the heart; for how

unwilling and doth soever the church was before to arise and open to Christ, now she is entirely willing to do it; and that not through force or feat', but out of a real affection for him, and love to him. Christ now, in putting in his hand, and thus powerfully and sweetly working upon her heart, shows,

1. The exceeding greatness of his love and grace unto her: that though she had treated him in so rude a manner, and discovered so much dis-ingenuity and ingratitude to him, which made him take up a resolution to depart from her; yet he would not leave her without giving some evidences of his love to her, without putting in his hand, and leaving some myrrh upon the lock, and sweet-smelling myrrh on the handles thereof.

2. His faithfulness to her: Christ never wholly and entirely leaves his people; he has promised that he will not, and he is faithful to this promise; Christ may so withdraw himself from them, as that they may not have sensible communion with him; but their union to him remains firm and indissoluble; they may think that he has totally and finally left them, when he has not, nor never will: he departs here from the church, but it was not a total departure; for he put in his hand by the hole of the door, and left something there, which stirred up her affections to him, and put her upon a diligent search and inquiry after him.

3. His power: What is it that the hand of Christ cannot do? what the external calls of the ministry, the knocks and raps of persecution, what good words and moving arguments could not do, that is done in a moment by Christ's putting in his hand; she lay still before, and put him off with idle excuses, but now she arises and opens to him. Which leads me to consider,

II. The effect of this, or what influence this had upon her heart; her bowels, she says, were moved for him: which is expressive, either,

First, Of that sorrow and grief which then possessed her heart. The word is used in ²⁰⁴⁹Jeremiah 4:19, ²⁰¹⁰Lamentations 1:20, to express grief and sorrow; and indeed, it is no wonder that it should be so with her, when she began to be capable of revolving things in her mind, and comparing her carriage and his together; observing the baseness and dis-ingenuity there were in the one, and the exceeding greatness of love and tenderness in the other. The words have a double reading in the Hebrew text: some copies read, 'my bowels were moved **yl x** in me, or for me;' and this reading the Jewish commentators follow, particularly R. Solomon Jarchi, and so do

Junius rand Tremellius, the Tigurine version, and that of Pagnine's: other copies read, 'my bowels were moved **wl** x for him;' which, by Mercer, is esteemed the best and most correct reading, and is followed by our and other translators. If we read the words in the first way, they will afford us these two observations:

1. That her grief and sorrow was inward, and so real and sincere; her bowels moved within her; and such a sorrow as this is what is required, regarded and approved of by God; 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know wisdom,' says David, ^{<3506>}Psalm 51:6, for it is not a shedding of tears, nor rending of garments, but a heart broken under a sense of sin, and melted down with the discoveries of boundless love, that is an acceptable sacrifice with God through Christ.

2. That her own sin and unkindness to Christ was the cause of all this; my bowels were moved for me, or concerning myself: for what I had done, and had been guilty of, I have none to blame but myself; I am the sole author of all this trouble to myself; my own sin and wickedness has brought all this upon me; O! it pains me, it cuts me to the very heart, to think that I should use the best of husbands so unkindly, and treat him after so base a rate as I have done!

But then if we follow the second reading, it will lead us to make the remarks following:

(1.) That *sin*, as committed against Christ, was the chief and principle cause of her trouble and sorrow; 'my bowels were moved for him,' because I had sinned against him; had it been another, it would not have grieved me so much; but against thee, thee only have I sinned; which shows her repentance to be right, and her sorrow to be true and genuine.

(2.) That the sufferings of Christ, occasioned by her sins and transgressions, influenced her sorrow; my bowels were moved for him; it grieves me, I am pained at the very heart, to think that my beloved's head should be wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, through me; that he should suffer so much upon my account, and for my sake: now when repentance springs from faith's viewing a crucified and suffering Christ, it appears to be evangelical; see ^{<3020>}Zechariah 12:10.

(3.) That her frustrating the means which Christ made use of, added to her grief: Did my beloved call and knock, and call again? and did I know that it was the voice of my beloved? Did he give me good words, expostulate and argue with me in the most moving and tender manner? and yet, vile and ungrateful wretch that I am, did I lie still, and not move to open and let him in? could he get nothing from me but mere shifts and evasions? O! how does the consideration of all this overwhelm me with grief and sorrow?

(4.) That the loss of his company was also an ingredient herein; for, as Christ's company and presence fill the believer with the greatest joy, so his absence and departure from him give him the greatest uneasiness: 'Thou didst hide thy face,' says David, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 30:7, and I was troubled; so here, her bowels moved, her soul was grieved, not only for what she had done unto him; but also for the loss of him. Or else, these words, 'my bowels were moved for him,' are expressive,

Secondly, Of the moving and stirring of her affections to him, in which sense the word is used in ~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 63:15, Philemon 12, for though her affections had been chill, and her love to Christ cold, yet they were not lost; Christ's putting in his hand, stirred up the coals of love, which 'many waters cannot quench;' so that they began to kindle and appear in flames: for not only the grace was in her heart, but in exercise, in motion there, 'my bowels moved,' etc. so that she could say, after all her sleepiness, slothfulness, negligence in duty, and base carriage towards Christ, as Peter, after his backslidings, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee :' this love of hers was real, hearty and sincere; it was not the moving of her lips or tongue, but of her bowels within her; she loved 'not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth;' and this her actions testify, which are recorded in the following verses.

VERSE 5.

I rose up to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet, smelling, myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

IN these words the church gives an account of a second and a third effect of Christ's 'putting in his hand by the hole of the door.'

I. She 'rose to open to him'.

II. Having done so, she laid hold on the ‘handles of the lock,’ in order to draw it back; and before she proceeds to take notice of any other steps she took, with the success thereof, she stops to give an account of a sweet piece of experience she met with, when she put her hands ‘upon the handles of the lock; My hands, says she, dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-swelling myrrh.’

I. She says, that she ‘rose to open to her beloved.’ This is opposed to her former slothfulness and sleepiness; before she lay still and slept on, notwithstanding Christ’s calls and knocks, his melting words and moving language; but now being touched by his hand of mighty and powerful grace, she shakes off her sluggishness, and arises to open to him, which is more than a mere resolution to do it; such an one as she made in chapter 3:2, and the prodigal in ~~4:15~~ Luke 15:18. Now these resolutions were made in the strength of grace; and being assisted by divine grace to perform them, were quickly put in execution; though otherwise, resolutions made in our own strength, are seldom or never made good: but this was more than a mere resolution, it was an actual performance of it; not but that she resolved no doubt in her mind, to do it before she did it; but the dispatch was so quick, and there being so little time between the making and the execution of it, she had neither leisure nor room to regard it; ‘I rose to open to my beloved;’ which act of hers shows,

1. That her design and intention to open to Christ, was real and hearty: had she lain upon her bed, and made ever such fair promises, that she would arise and open to him, and yet have kept her bed and slept on; there would have been but very little proof that she really and heartily designed it; but her rising in order to it, is a full indication of it; even as Abraham’s rising up early, saddling his asses taking his own and only son Isaac with him, and going to the place which the Lord directed him to; his putting the wood in order, binding his son, and laying him upon it; his taking the knife, and stretching out his hand to slay his son, manifestly showed that he really intended to obey the divine command, though so disagreeable to flesh and blood.

2. That her concern at her base and unbecoming carriage to him was sincere and unfeigned; the effects show that her sorrow was of a godly sort; seeing it wrought in her carefulness to obey his will, zeal for his honor and glory, fear and reverence of his person, a vehement desire after the enjoyment of his presence and company, and an indignation at her own sin

and folly; see ~~4070~~ 2 Corinthians 7:10,11. The repentance appears to be true and genuine, because it brought forth ‘fruits meet for it.’

3. That she did not stay to confer with flesh and blood, but immediately arose, as soon as touched by the hand of mighty grace; had she done so, she would have argued thus with herself, ‘yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,’ and then I will arise and open to him; no, for though she put him off before with idle excuses, having consulted her own carnal ease; yet now, being under the influence of powerful grace, she cannot defer it any longer, but without delay, uses to open to him.

4. That when a soul, in such a case as hers, is made sensible of it, it cannot rest easy upon a bed of carnal security; it may, with David, for a time be senseless, stupid, and unconcerned; and with Jonah, lie fast asleep in the sides of the ship, careless, thoughtless, and unconcerned; yet when awaked from hence, anguish and distress seize it; and it cannot be easy without some returning visits of love, some views of Christ’s person, and some enjoy, merit of his presence; and therefore will arise and go out in quest of him: and now no difficulties discourage such a soul, as none did the church; when, she was upon her bed of ease, every little thing was difficult to her; her language was that of the sluggard’s, ‘There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets;’ it was then a trouble to her to put on her coat, and an intolerable hardship to defile her feet; but now neither the one nor the other hinder her; but she rises, opens, and ventures herself alone in the streets, runs among the watchmen of the city, and keepers of the walls. and from thence to the daughters of Jerusalem, to inquire of her beloved.

5. It also supposes that she thought Christ still at the door; though no sooner had he put in his hand, but he was gone, being willing to let her know, though he loved her, yet he resented her carriage to him, and here we may observe, that God’s children may be mistaken sometimes about the presence of Christ; sometimes he is present with them and they know it not, as, Jacob said, ~~012816~~ Genesis 28:16, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not;’ and at other times, when they are got into such careless, secure, and unconcerned frames of soul, like Samson, the Lord is departed from them, and they wist not, that is, know not that the Lord is departed from them.

6. This shows the power of mighty and efficacious grace, and that she was under the influence of it; though perhaps the spirit was willing before, yet the flesh was weak; though she might have a will to open to Christ, yet

how to perform it she knew not; though indeed her will seemed to be very indifferent about it; there appeared a lothness in her, and a kind of unwillingness to it; but now she is made both able and ‘willing in the day of his power,’ to arise and open to him.

II. Having rose to open to Christ, she puts her hand ‘upon the handles of the lock,’ to draw it back, and let him in; which, in order, is the third effect of Christ’s ‘putting in his hand by the hole of the door.’ Now though this is not in so many words expressed in the text, yet it is manifestly implied; for if her ‘hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock;’ it then supposes, that her hands and fingers must first lay hold upon the lock-handles, which was also absolutely necessary to do, in order to open the door. It will be proper here to consider,

1st, What we are to understand by the lock, and the handles of it.

2dly, What by her hands and fingers, which laid hold on these handles to draw back the lock, and in what sense they might do it.

1st, It is needful to inquire what may be meant by the lock, and the handles of it: and as by the door, I suppose is meant the heart of a believer, so by the lock, which fastens and keeps this door shut, may be meant unbelief; by which, as all by nature are locked and shut up in the state they are; so believers sometimes by it are so straitened, confined, and shut up in their souls, that they cannot come forth in the free exercise of faith, in which they are at other times found: and the handles of this lock may be lukewarmness and indifference of soul with regard to duty, a sluggishness and lothness to come to it, which oftentimes bring the soul at last to a neglect of it; for, first, persons grow indifferent about the performance of duties, or attendance on ordinances; do not care whether they perform them, or attend on them, or no; then they begin to be ‘slothful in business, not serving the Lord’ with that fervency of Spirit which they have heretofore done; and at last wholly neglect them; which brings them into a carnal, secure and unconcerned frame of spirit; and all this strengthens unbelief, and keeps the door the closer shut against Christ; which seems to have been the case of the church here, and of that of Laodicea, in Revelation 3, when Christ stood at her door and knocked.

2dly, By her hands and fingers may be meant her faith in its exercise and operation, attended with the fruits thereof. Faith is usually represented in

scripture as the hand of the soul by which it receives Christ, as the Father's free gift; embraces him as the only Savior; lays hold upon and retains him, as he stands in all the endearing characters and relations which he appears in to his own people, Now this faith is not idle and inactive, but 'works by love' to Christ and his people, to his ways and ordinances; it has its fruits, and is attended with the performance of good works,, and will put the person that is possessed of it, on the discharge of his duty; it put the church here upon attempting to draw back the lock of unbelief; faith laid its hands and fingers upon the handles of it, and used all its might, power and diligence to do it: but it may be asked, How could the church be able, with all her faith, industry and diligence, to draw back this lock? I answer, Faith cannot do this of itself; unbelief is a 'sin which easily besets us,' but it is not so easily got rid of; it is a weight, that the hand of faith of itself, cannot lift and lay aside; the believer must say, even in the exercise of faith, with the poor man in the gospel, ~~40024~~ Mark 9:24. 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;' this lock. grows too hard for faith to draw it back of itself; but yet faith's looking to, and dealing with Christ's person, blood, and righteousness, much weakens unbelief. When an unbelieving Thomas was indulged with a sight of Christ's pierced hands and feet, and was enabled to thrust his hand into his side; his unbelief immediately vanished and disappeared, and he could say, 'My Lord, and my God:' it is certain, that the stronger faith grows, lukewarmness, indolence, and carnal security decay; and the soul is quickened, stirred up, and put upon the performance of duty: and what is it that a soul is not enabled, to do in the exercise of faith? difficulties which are insuperable to carnal sense and reason, are got over by faith; read ever the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and you will see what heroic acts have been performed by faith though the strength in which these things have been performed, did not arise from the grace itself, but from Christ, the object of it, whose 'strength is made in faith's weakness;' for without him we can do nothing, but his 'grace is sufficient to enable us to do all things.'

Now before she proceeds to tell how she succeeded in this attempt: she gives an account of a piece of sweet experience she met with, whilst she was trying to draw back the lock; 'my hands,' says she, 'dropped with myrrh, and my fingers, with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock.' By myrrh, is meant grace, in its aboundings and overflowings: but it may be inquired, From whence this myrrh came, and by whom it was brought? If we understand it of the church's myrrh or grace, as brought

here by herself, as some think ^{f81}; who may be represented as taking up a pot of myrrh, intending with it to anoint and refresh his head which was wet with dew; which she either unawares or else designedly broke; or else, being in a panic fear, her hand shook, and the myrrh ran over her hands and fingers; or rather, not having time to perfume her garments with it, as was usual, see ^{f81} Psalm 45:8, she dipped her fingers in a pot of myrrh, to ingratiate and render herself acceptable to her beloved; supposing that he might be full of resentment on the account of her carriage and behavior towards him: and then taking it in this sense, it will teach us these things following;

1. That her grace was now in exercise, it was flowing; this oil of myrrh before was as it were congealed; but now it is become liquid; it is upon the flow, and flows in such abundance, that it ran off her hands and lingers upon the handles of the lock.
2. Her hands and fingers, dropping with it, show that these actions and good works of hers, intended by her hands and fingers, being performed in faith, were odorous and grateful to Christ: so the prayers of the saints are called odors, in ^{f81} Revelation 5:8, and some mean and small services of the Philippians, are called an odor of a sweet smell, ^{f81} Philippians 4:18.
3. That When grace is in exercise, duty is both easy and pleasant: Christ's commands then are not grievous, but his 'ways are ways of pleasantness, and his paths, paths of peace:' before, nothing more unpleasant than to arise and open to him; but now, nothing more easy and delightful; her 'hands drop with myrrh;' etc. But I rather think, that the myrrh or grace of Christ is here meant, which was brought and left here by him; when he 'put in his hand by the hole of the door,' he then put in this myrrh he had gathered, verse 1, and left it in the lock-hole; which she found in such abundance when she came to open, that her hands and fingers dropped with it: the allusion seems to be to lovers shut out, who used to cover the threshold of the door with flowers, and anoint the door-posts with sweet-smelling ointment. ^{f82} Taking the words in this sense, we may observe that grace is called so,

(1.) For the preciousness of it; myrrh is a precious spice, and one of the principal spices; and this in the text is the best of myrrh, there was a sort of myrrh called *odoraria*, sweet-smelling ^{f83}: the word translated 'sweet-smelling myrrh,' signifies 'passing or current myrrh;' ^{f84} it being vendible or saleable, not in the least damaged, but what will pass; and

so is in the same sense current, as money is said to be, ^{<012316>}Genesis 23:16, or else, it is called ‘passing myrrh,’ because it diffuses its odor on every side; so R. Solomon Jarchi thinks: or, rather because it is that myrrh which bleeds or weeps, or drops from the tree of itself, which is always esteemed the best myrrh: and this sets forth the exceeding preciousness of Christ’s grace, which is more valuable than all things else.

(2.) It sets forth the abundance of it: if there was such an abundance of it brought by Christ, and left in the lock-hole, so that it ran in such plenty over her hands and fingers, as to drop from thence; What an abundance? what an overflow of it must there be in himself, who is ‘full of grace and truth?’ if there is a super-abounding of grace in those in whom sin has abounded; What an overflowing fullness of it must there be in him, in whom is no sin, and who is the fountain from whence all grace flows, and is communicated to his people?

(3.) It is expressive of the odorousness of it: there is such a sweet savor in the grace of Christ, as it is in himself, that the love of the virgins is drawn forth to him by it; and it emits so fragrant an odor, as it is in believers, that Christ himself is delighted with it; see ^{<2100B>}Song of Solomon 1:3, and 4:10.

Moreover, seeing it appears that this myrrh was brought unto, and left in the lock-hole by Christ; it may be asked, for what purpose it was brought and left there? which was,

(1.) To draw and allure her heart unto him: the same grace that draws a soul to Christ at first conversion, draws it to him when it has declined and back-slidden from him; Christ uses the same methods, and puts forth the same grace at one time as at the other; he draws ‘with the cords of love, and bands of a man.’

(2.) To supple and soften her hard heart, and make this rusty lock go easy: this oil of myrrh being left there, removed the hardness of her heart, the stiffness of her will, and the rustiness of her affections; this melted her hard heart, made her stubborn will pliable, set her affections on the flow, her faith in exercise, and made the lock of unbelief draw back more easy.

(3.) To exercise and stir up her grace; it is Christ's grace, manifested and applied unto us, that excites ours; it is his love 'shed abroad in our hearts by his Spirit,' that raises ours; for 'we love him, because he first loved us.' Now all these ends were answered hereby; it was this grace, this myrrh, left in the handles of the lock, that fetched her off her bed, that softened the hardness of her heart and affections to him, that removed the bars and bolts that kept him out, and drew forth her grace into exercise.

Again, the church's hands and fingers being said to drop with myrrh, which Christ had put into the lock-hole, shows,

- 1.** That all the grace, all the myrrh, that a believer has, comes from Christ; it is from 'his fullness we receive grace for grace,' that is, all sorts of grace.
- 2.** That a believer has most reason to expect a larger measure of grace from Christ, when he is in the way of his duty; whilst the church was sluggish and slothful, negligent of her duty, and taking her ease upon a bed of security, there is no mention of the flowings of this myrrh into her or upon her; but now she is up, and in the way of her duty, her hands drop with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh: not that our duties are deserving of any thing at Christ's hands, much less such large measures and over-flowings of grace as these; yet Christ has been graciously pleased, for an encouragement, to grant the promise of his presence, and the communications of his grace to us, when found in the way of our duty, though not for the performance of it. How the church succeeded in this attempt of hers, in opening the door, may be seen in the following words.

VERSE 6.

I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself,
and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I
could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

IN these words are,

- I.** A fourth and last effect of Christ's 'putting in his hand by the hole of the door;' she opened to him.
- II.** The wretched disappointment she had met with; he 'had withdrawn himself, and was gone.'

III. What effect this disappointment had upon her; her soul failed when he spake.

IV. Her endeavors to find her lost spouse.

I. Here is a fourth and last effect of Christ's 'putting in his hand by the hole of the door,' which is the exertion of his mighty and efficacious grace, 'I opened to my beloved.' This was what her beloved desired of her, and called for, in verse 2, and which was his principal end in exerting the power of his grace. Now this opening to him, is to be understood of the exercise of her faith, by which her heart was enlarged and dilated to receive Christ: faith is the eye, the ear, the mouth and hand of the soul; faith's eye being opened, sees the beauties and glories of Christ's person, and spies wondrous things in his gospel; its ear being open to discipline, listens to what Christ says in his promises and commands, and takes in the comfort of the one, and carefully observes the other; its mouth being opened, speaks of the promises of Christ, the glory of his person, office and undertakings; and its hand being opened, receives and embraces him, opens the door, and lets him in. From this act of the church, in opening to her beloved, may be observed,

1. That Christ had not only wrought in her a will, but had also given her a power to open to him; once she seemed to have but little inclination; her will did not seem so very free, being overpowered with sleep and sloth; and if her spirit was willing, yet it appears manifest that the flesh was weak; if she had a will to open, how to do it she knew not; but now, as by her rising off her bed, coming to the door, and putting her hands and fingers upon the handles of the lock, in order to draw it back, she showed that Christ had wrought in her to will; so by her actual opening to him, she made it appear that he had also wrought in her 'to do of his good pleasure.'

2. That she being assisted in this act by the mighty grace of Christ, is said to do that which is sometimes ascribed to God himself; thus in ~~4164~~ Acts 16:14, the Lord is said to open the heart of Lydia: it is true, there is a great difference between the opening of a sinner's heart at conversion, which is entirely shut against Christ; and the opening of a believer's, which is in part only shut and closed through unbelief, negligence, and carnal security: in the one, there were no principles of grace, previous to the opening of it; but in the other there are, though they lie dormant, and are not in exercise; but yet a believer, without the grace and power of Christ, can no more

open his heart to him, when in such a case, than he could at first conversion: this work is attended with difficulties insuperable without the strength of Christ; therefore, whilst on her bed, she thought it impossible for her to do it, and unreasonable in him to desire it; till he put in his hand, and left such an abundance of the sweet-smelling myrrh of his grace, by which being assisted, she is said to do it.

3. That the heart of a believer is only patent and open to the Lord Jesus Christ, 'I opened to my beloved;' though it is sometimes, an a great measure, dosed and shut unto him; yet when it is opened, it is only opened to him; he is the only object of a believer's faith and love: the church here did not open to strangers, only to her beloved, being espoused as a chaste virgin' to him; therefore, in chapter ^{<2142>}4:12, she is said to be 'a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.'

4. Her opening to Christ, supposes that she thought Christ still at the door; so she did when she got off her bed to open to him; and so she did when she put her hands upon the handles of the lock; and perhaps was more confirmed in her thoughts, that he was still there, when she found such an abundance of his sweet-swelling myrrh in the lock, and upon the handles of it; but she was very much mistaken, as she afterwards found. For,

II. Her 'beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone;' a very great disappointment indeed! she expected, that as soon as ever the door was open, she should have seen him, and that he would have received her in his arms, and embraced her in his bosom; but instead of that, he was gone, and she could neither have any sight, nor hear any tidings of him. Here it may be inquired,

1st, What is meant by Christ's withdrawing himself from his church and people?

2dly, Why he did now withdraw himself from the church? And,

3dly, Why she makes use of two words to express his departure from her, and what they import?

1st, It may be inquired what is meant by Christ's withdrawing himself from his church and people? And,

1. It is not to be understood of him as the omnipresent God, who is every where, and fills heaven and earth with his presence; for as there is no

fleeing from it, so there is no withdrawing of it, as David says, ~~<B107>~~ Psalm 139:7, ‘Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy presence?’ there is no place exempted from it, nor can be; he does not move from place to place, nor from person to person; nor is he sometimes with a person, and sometimes not; for if so, he would not be the omnipresent God. Nor,

2. Is it to be understood of the dissolution of a believer’s covenant-interest in Christ, and union to him: a believer may lose sight of Christ for a time, but he can never lose his interest in him: the relation between them can never cease; the marriage-knot can never be untied, nor the union-bonds be, ever broken; for Christ has said, ~~<B129>~~ Hosea 2:19. ‘I will betroth thee unto me for ever:’ the union between Christ and believers is in some measure like to that between the Father and the Son; and I will venture to say, that the one may as soon be dissolved as the other; see ~~<B172>~~ John 17:22,23. Nor,

3. Is it to be understood of a withdrawing of his love and affection from them; for though they may sometimes think he has, yet he never does, nor never will withdraw it; his love to them is as unchangeable as himself; it is the ‘ same yesterday, today, and for ever;’ for ‘having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end;’ he has given his word, that though he, ‘for a small moment forsakes them, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them;’ and as if this was not enough, he joins his oath to it, and swears, that he ‘would not be wroth with them, nor rebuke them;’ and declares, that his kindness and his covenant are as immoveable as, nay, more than mountains and hills; which, one would think, is enough to banish all doubts and fears from believers, and fill them with as firm a persuasion as the apostle Paul was possessed of, when he says, ‘I am persuaded that neither life nor death,’ etc. ‘shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ But,

4. It is to be understood of the withdrawing of the sensible manifestations of his presence and love: and this is what the church has experienced in all ages; for he is a God that ‘hideth his face from the house of Jacob;’ and what particular believers have met with, as is manifest from David, Heman, and others. And this was what the church wanted, even some sensible enjoyments of Christ’s presence and grace; she had his strengthening and supporting presence, which enabled her to rise and open; but she wanted his comforting and soul-rejoicing presence, and sensible communion with

him; Christ's love is always the same, but the sense of it in believers is variable; the one is sometimes withdrawn, the other never.

2dly, It may seem a little strange, and almost unaccountable, that Christ at this instant should withdraw himself from his church; seeing he had so importunately desired her to arise and open to him; had used all methods to win upon her, find by his grace had enabled her to do it; and yet now it is done, he withdraws himself and is gone: and therefore it is proper to inquire why he should do so; which was perhaps,

- 1.** To chastise her for her former carriage to him: had he, as soon as she had opened the door, shown himself to her, and received her with all tokens of love and joy; she would not have thought the offense so great, nor that he was so much provoked by it, and did so highly resent it as he did; therefore to bring her to a sense of it, and to correct her for it, by suffering the loss of his company, he withdraws himself.
- 2.** To try the truth and strength of her grace: her grace was now in exercise, as appears by her rising and opening; and now, the more to exercise it, and prove the strength of it, he withdraws himself: thus all our afflictions, temptations and desertions, are for the trial of our faith, and other graces; which being tried, appear 'much more precious than of gold that perisheth.'
- 3.** To enflame her love, and sharpen her desires the more after him; which effect his withdrawing from her, in ~~<2181>~~ Song of Solomon 3:1-3, had upon her; and so it had here: many such instances we have in Job, David, and others; who, being without the presence of God, have the more earnestly wished for, vehemently thirsted, panted and breathed after a re-enjoyment of it; see ~~<823D>~~ Job 23:2; ~~<1941B>~~ Psalm 43:1,2; and ~~<1971B>~~ 63:1, and it is usually so, that the want of a blessing, not only brings us under a conviction of the worth of it, and so draws out our affections to it, but also enlarges and increases our desires after it.
- 4.** To endear his presence the more, when she came to enjoy it: when a soul has been destitute of Christ's presence for a time, and come to enjoy it again, O how sweet, ravishing and delightful is it to him! and how much it is valued by him! the disciples were without Christ's bodily presence but a few days; and when he appeared to them, we are told, ~~<811B>~~ John 20:20, that 'then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord;' and what expressions of joy, and intimations of esteem for Christ's presence, does

the church give, in ²¹⁷⁰⁴Song of Solomon 3:4, when she had found her lost spouse?

5. To keep her humble: had she immediately enjoyed his presence upon her rising and opening to him, she might dare thought that she had, by those actions of hers, deserved such a favor at his hands; therefore, to hide pride from her, and to let her know the nothingness of all her doings, and that they fell abundantly short of meriting such a blessing, he withdraws himself: our enjoyment of Christ's presence, and the communications of his love and grace to us, as much depend on his free and sovereign will, as the first display of his grace to us; he gives these favors at pleasure, and that to whom, when, and where he pleases.

6. To show her the odious nature of sin, which was the cause of this.; and that she might, through grace, be more upon her guard against it, and be more cautious of provoking him to it again: it was sin that was the cause of the angel's being turned out of heaven, the place of the divine abode; and of Adam's being drove out of Eden, from the presence of the Lord God; and though sin cannot dissolve the union that is between Christ and a believer, nor destroy his covenant-interest in him; yet it is often the cause of God's hiding his face, and Christ's withdrawing his presence from him; 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you,' says the prophet ²³⁹¹²Isaiah 59:2, to the people of Israel; and it was the church's unbecoming carriage to Christ, which was the cause of his withdrawing from her now; and therefore to bring here to a sense of it, and to see the odious nature thereof, he withdraws himself; that when she enjoyed it again, she might be more careful not to provoke him again by such steps as these: and such an effect it had upon her, in ²¹⁷⁰⁴Song of Solomon 3:4,5, where she not only held him fast herself, and would not let him go; but also charges the daughters of Jerusalem to give him no molestation or disturbance.

3dly, The church makes use of two words here to express Christ's departure from her, 'My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone,' which signify and import,

1. That this was done suddenly and secretly, unseen, at an unawares to her, and unexpected by her; so the word translated, 'had withdrawn himself,' ^{f85}, signifies a doing it secretly; he 'turned himself about, and was gone' ^{f86} in a moment; he withdrew himself privately from the door, and passed by

the window, and was gone; so that she could not set eyes upon him, nor hear any tidings of him.

2. That he was gone at a very great distance in her apprehensions: so believers think sometimes, when Christ has withdrawn himself from them, that he is gone a great way off, is not within call, and will never return more; see ^{<900>}Psalm 10:1, and this is thought by some ^{f87}, to be the import of the first word; and the other, being added to it, heightens the sense.

3. That he was really gone: it was not a mere imagination of hers, but it was certainly so; which she found to her great grief and sorrow.

4. The doubling of the words, or her using those two words without a copulative, he 'had withdrawn himself, was gone,' which she seems to speak in the utmost haste and confusion, represent the strength of her passion, the greatness of her sorrow, what a wretched disappointment she met with; and as if she was wringing her hands, and crying out 'He is gone, he is gone, he is gone.' Which brings us to consider,

III. What effect this disappointment had upon her; 'my soul,' says she, 'failed when he spoke,' or went out ^{f88}; I was as one dead, I immediately fell into a swoon, and was as one whose life and soul departed. Some ^{f89} think that the church in these words excuses herself from the blame of not rising and opening to him sooner; as if she should say, I am not so much to be blamed, nor has my beloved so much reason to be provoked at, nor so highly to resent my not rising and opening sooner; for as soon as ever I heard his voice, saying, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove,' etc., it overcame my heart, my soul failed at these words of his; I immediately fell into a swoon, and lay as one lifeless and helpless, and was not able to rise and open to him; but as soon as ever I came to my senses, and was recovered a little out of this fit, I arose and opened to him: but it does not appear from the context, that she did fall into such a fit at his calling to her, or was rendered *non compos mentis*; for she was capable all the while of observing all his words and ways; how he carried himself to her, and proceeded with her; what steps he took, and methods he used, till he had brought her to arise and open, Therefore the words seem rather to be expressive of that confusion of mind she was thrown into, when she found he was gone; even as it is said of the queen of Sheba, that 'there was no more spirit in her;' occasioned through wonder and surprise in beholding Solomon's wisdom, and the order and management of his house and

servants, that she knew not what to think or what to say: so the church here being surprised at Christ's absence, her soul fails her, no spirit is left in her; she knew not what to think, say, or do: or else they are expressive of the exceeding grief and sorrow that she was overwhelmed with; 'my soul failed when he spoke,' or 'at his word' ^{f90}; that is, at the remembrance of it: O! now I call to mind how lovingly, kindly, and tenderly he spoke to me, when he said, 'Open to me, my sister, my love,' etc., yet, vile, ungrateful wretch, as I am, I took no notice of it; I put him off with idle excuses, I kept my bed and indulged myself in sloth and ease; but now it cuts me to the heart, it grieves me, I cannot bear up under it; when I remember his love, and my unkindness, I sink, I faint, I die; I cannot live without his presence; his absence is death unto me; my soul fails at his words of love and grace which he spoke to me, and at his word of command which he enjoined me; to which, being disobedient, I have now lost his company, which is intolerable to me. She seems to be much in the same case that the Psalmist was, when he said, ~~REV~~ Psalm 143:7, 'Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.'

IV. Being somewhat recovered out of her fainting fit, she rallied together all the spirit and strength she had, and out she goes in search of her lost spouse; the methods she took, and how she succeeded therein, are as follow:

1st, She sought him, namely, in the public ordinances, 'in the streets and broad ways of the city,' as she had done before, in ~~2ND~~ Song of Solomon 3:2, and that with the same success; 'she sought him, but found him not.' The nature of seeking a lost Christ, and how to be performed, as also why the church succeeded no better, have been there shown; which will equally serve to explain and illustrate this.

2dly, She called him, to wit, by name, as she went along the streets and broad ways; that is, she prayed unto him, that he would manifest himself to her in his own ordinances; and no doubt but the method she took was right, and may serve to instruct us, that we should not only before we attended upon an ordinance, pray for the presence of Christ in it; but also, when we are attending, our souls should be breathing after, and secretly begging for it. But how did she succeed herein? she 'called him, but he gave her no answer;' resolving still to chastise her for her former

ingratitude; to try her faith, and exercise her patience; to enflame her love to him, and increase her desires after communion with him. But,

1. This seems contrary to those kind promises; ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, etc. call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee,’ etc. but she asked, and it was not given to her what she asked for; she sought, but found not; she called, but no answer is returned: to which it may be replied, that God does, and certainly will make good his own promises, and fulfill the petitions of his people; yet he does not always answer immediately, nor just in that way which they are desirous of the church had his upholding presence, though not sensible communion with him; she was so far answered, as to be ‘strengthened with strength in her soul,’ to continue in her search and inquiries after him; though she had not those manifestations of his grace and love, which she was desirous of.

2. It is a very great affliction to a believer, when he labors under such apprehensions, that his prayers are not heard and answered; the church mentions this among her sore afflictions, in ~~2088~~ Lamentations 3:8,44, that God had ‘shut out her prayer,’ and had ‘covered himself with a cloud, that her prayer should not pass through:’ unconverted men, hypocrites and carnal professors, are not concerned about the answer of their prayers; it is enough to them to perform these duties; but believers are concerned about the returns of prayer, and, are grieved to the heart, as the church here was, when they cannot observe any.

3. Christ here treats her just in the same way in which she had treated him; she is paid in her own coin; he had called to her, but she disregarded him, and turned a deaf ear to him, and returned him no answer, that deserved the name of one; she now calls to him, but he disregards her, turns a deaf ear to her, and gives her no answer; he treats her here, not in a way of vindictive wrath and punishment, as he will do the wicked at the last day; see ~~2024~~ Proverbs 1:24-28, but in a way of chastisement and correction. What success she afterwards met with, will be seen in the following verses.

VERSE 7.

The watchmen, that went about the city, found me; they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

THE church in the former verse gives an account of the wretched disappointment she met with, when she opened the door to her beloved, who had withdrawn himself, and was gone; at which she fell into a fainting fit, out of which, when she was a little recovered, she resolved not to stay at the door, lamenting the loss of her spouse, but to go out in search of him, which she did, but with no success; and she does in these words give an account of what she met with in the adventure; how she was taken up by the watch, and evilly treated by them. Where we have to consider,

I. Her being found by ‘the watchmen that went about the city, and ‘keepers of the walls.’

II. Their treatment of her, and carriage to her.

I. In this search of her beloved, she falls into the hands of the watchmen that went about the city, and the keepers of the walls thereof; who were officers of the church, set for the defense of it, and for the administration of those ordinances, in which she sought her beloved; and the description of them, or these titles and characters which they bear, may lead us to observe,

1st, That the church is a city: and no doubt is called so, in allusion to the city of Jerusalem, which was builded as a city that is compact together; it was the metropolis of the land of Judea, where Solomon kept his court, was well fortified, and delightfully situated; and therefore the church militant, as well as the church triumphant, is called by the same name; which is the city of God; of which the psalmist says, ^{457B}Psalm 87:3. Glorious things are spoken; it is the place of the residence of the King of kings; where his honor dwells, where he keeps his court, and has his palace; and therefore is called the city of the great King, in whose palaces God is known for a refuge; here he shows himself, here he maybe seen; therefore she was in the right of it to seek him here: in this city are all needful and delightful accommodations; it is beautiful for situation, a river of boundless love and grace runs through it, whose streams supply, refresh, and make glad the inhabitants of it; here are the best provisions to be had, which are called the goodness and fatness of God’s house; here are the most delightful company, and agreeable conversation; here souls have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; those who are brought unto, and are made inhabitants of this city of the living God, have communion with an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men

made perfect by Christ's righteousness: in this city are many special and peculiar privileges and immunities, which the inhabitants of it enjoy; for being Christ's freemen, and freemen of this city, they have a right to all the ordinances of the gospel, and share in all the promises which concern the grace and presence of Christ; they are under no obligation to any other laws but those of Christ's, and are freed from the curses and condemnation of the law of works; so that to be a citizen of this city, and a fellow-citizen of the saints, is no, small privilege; see ^{<402>}Ephesians 2:19; ^{<682>}Revelation 3:12; But of the church's being compared to a city, see mote on chapter 3:2.

2dly, Mention being made of the keepers of the walls of this city, shews us, that this city of God is a walled one; it is a fortified place, even as Jerusalem was, to which the allusion is made, when the church of God is spoken of; as in ^{<518>}Psalm 51:18, and ^{<927>}122:7, and it may be proper to inquire what are the walls of the church, which render it strong and impregnable. And,

1. God himself is the wall of it, according to what he himself says, ^{<305>}Zechariah 2:5, 'For I, saith the Lord, will be a wall of fire round about it, and will be the glory in the midst of her;' he is not only a wall that keeps the enemy from entrance into the city, but a wall of fire that consumes and destroys all that make near approaches to it; all the divine perfections are as so many walls, which encompass and defend the church; especially that of Almighty power, by which saints are kept as in a garrison ^{f91}, through faith unto salvation: Jerusalem was fortified, not only by art, but also by nature, not only with walls, but with mountains; and 'as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever,' ^{<932>}Psalm 125:2.

2. Salvation by Christ is the church's wall, which render it strong and impregnable: hence we read, in ^{<330>}Isaiah 26:1. In that day, that is, in the gospel day, when salvation is accomplished by Christ, 'shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city; 'But what is it which makes it so? salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks: and, this song will be sung more clearly in the latter day, when the church shall call her walls, salvation, and her gates, praise: salvation wrought out by Christ, is the church's protection from all enemies; hereby believers are screened and secured from sin and Satan, law, hell, and wrath to come; no enemy'

can destroy them, no condemnation reach them, nor any wrath fall on them; but they shall be ‘saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.’

3. Ministers may be called so, who are set for the defense of the gospel: so the Lord told Jeremiah, chapter ~~23~~1:18, that he had made him a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land; though they seem not to be intended here, because they are called the keepers of the walls, and not the walls themselves. Now the city of God being thus walled and fortified, shows,

(1.) That it would otherwise be in danger from enemies: for the church of Christ has many enemies, who are lively and strong, crafty and cunning, vigilant and active, seeking all opportunities to get within, and there make disturbance, and do mischief: but this city is so well walled and firmly built, that let Satan, with all his emissaries, use all their power and cunning, and lay the closest seige unto it, the gates of hell will never be able to prevail against it.

(2.) The great care which God takes of his church and people; for as birds flying or fluttering over and about their nest, in order to preserve their young, when they are in danger of being taken away from them; ‘so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also, he will deliver it; and passing over, he will preserve it,’ as it is said in ~~23~~Isaiah 31:5, which care for their preservation, is manifestly seen in his placing such walls about it.

3dly, In this city are proper officers appointed and set to watch over and guard it; and these go under two titles or characters in the text.

1. They are called ‘watchmen that went about the city:’ these are the ministers of the church, who are called so both in the Old and New Testament; because they ought to watch over themselves, their doctrine and conversation, and to watch over others, who are made their care and charge: the business of watchmen is also to give the time of night, to give notice of present or approaching danger, either by fire or by thieves and robbers, and to take up disorderly persons, and bring them to correction: so the ministers of the gospel give notice what time of clay or night it is with the churches of Christ; they give notice to sinners of the danger which they are in, whilst in a state of nature; and also what danger churches may be in, through contentious persons and heretics, who endeavor to sow the seeds of discord, error and heresy among them; likewise their business is to

awake and arouse sleepy professors, who are indulging themselves in carnal ease and security in the streets of Zion; and to admonish, reprove, and rebuke all that stand in need thereof, and so bring them under the notice and censure of the church. These are said to go about the city,

(1.) To distinguish them from those upon the walls: those that went about the city, were to take care of the peace and safety of the city within; the keepers of the walls were to descry an enemy without, observe his motions, repel him, if able, and to give notice to those within of danger from him; the one was a running watch, the other a standing one.

(2.) To show the nature of their work, and their diligence in it: it was the business of the keepers of the walls, to keep their stands, and not stir from their places; but the work of these was to go from place to place, to see that all was in peace and safety; but of these watchmen, see more in chapter ^{צריב}3:3.

2. These officers are called ‘keepers of the walls;’ by ‘which some ^{f92} understand angels, who encamp about, and protect the people of God; others ^{f93}, civil magistrates, who, the apostle says, ^{צריב}Romans 13:3,4 are not ‘terrors to good works, but to the evil;’ and that ‘he is the minister of God for good, and beareth not the sword in vain:’ but if these were civil magistrates, they terrified the church in the way of her duty, and discouraged her in it; nay, turned the point of their swords against her, as often the princes of this world do, being ignorant of Christ and his church: but I rather think church-officers are here intended, and that they are the same with the watch-men who went about the city; only they may be expressive of different branches in the ministry, or of different talents which ministers have, and are to use in the discharge of their work: some, their work chiefly lies in comforting and establishing the church, in answering cases of conscience, and keeping peace and order within; and they have gifts suitable thereunto; and these may be called watchmen that go about the city: others, their work lies chiefly in defending the gospel against the avowed enemies of it; these keep the outworks good, and repel the enemy, whenever he makes an attack upon any doctrine of the gospel; and these may be called ‘the keepers or watchmen of the walls;’ and so ministers are called in ^{צריב}Isaiah 62:6. The Jews in Shirhashirim Rabba, and in Yalkut on the place, understand by these keepers, the tribe of Levi, the keepers of the walls of the law.

But it may now be inquired, whether these were the true ministers of Christ, or no: some ^{f94} think that they were; they are called watchmen, and watchmen in the city, the church, though it is true, false teachers may bear the same name as true ones, and be in office in the church as well as they; but what seems most to strengthen this opinion, is, that they Mere about their work, and in the discharge of their office; the watchmen were going about the city, as they should do, and the keepers of the walls were upon their stands, as they ought to be: others ^{f95} think that they were not the true and faithful ministers of the gospel; but such who are called ‘blind watchmen, etc.’ in ^{<2560>}Isaiah 56:10,11, and that,

(1.) Because the church makes no inquiry of them, nor any application to them, which she did in a like case to the watchmen, in ^{<2188>}Song of Solomon 3:3, and therefore it seems to intimate, that she, not looking upon them as ministers of Christ, had nothing to say to them, but would have shunned them if she could.

(2.) Because of their cruelty to her: they are not so pitiful, compassionate and tender, as becomes the ministers of Christ to be to souls in such cases; they seem rather to be ravenous wolves, than faithful shepherds or watchmen, and are most like those in ^{<2612>}Ezekiel 34:2-21. Plato ^{f96} says, keepers of cities should be mild and gentle towards their own, but to enemies rough and severe.

Now these found the church seeking and inquiring for her beloved; which shows, that she was in the city, in the streets and broad ways of it: she searched all over the city, where the watchmen that went about it, found her; and, escaping from them with blows and wounds, finding that her beloved was not there, she makes to the outparts of the city, perhaps designing to go without the city in search of him, where she fell into the hands of the keepers of the walls. This finding of her, also appears to be accidental and at an unawares; they were not seeking her, nor was she inquiring after them; it was on a sudden that they found her; and as soon as they did find her, they fell upon her, and took her up for a stroller or night-walker; and by their treatment of her, manifestly showed that they found her, not as a friend, but as an enemy; and therefore did not let her go safe, but with blows, wounds, and the loss of her veil. Which brings us to consider,

II. Their treatment of her, and carriage to her. And,

1st, ‘The watchmen, that went about the city, smote and wounded her;’ which, if we understand of the true ministers of the gospel (though I rather think that others are intended) must be meant, either of their upbraiding and reproaching her for her former unkindness to Christ, and negligence of her duty; when they told her, and hit her in the teeth of her former sins and miscarriages, they smote and cut her to the heart, opened the wound, and made it bleed afresh; and so, like Job’s friends, proved miserable comforters, who broke him in pieces with words, with words both of reproof and reproach they laid open her sins to her, and sharply reprov’d her for them, when they should have comforted her with the doctrines of justification by Christ’s righteousness, and pardon by his blood; for Christ’s own ministers may sometimes be mistaken in timing reproofs and corrections; or else, she being under the ministry of the word, and hearing some sweet discourses concerning Christ’s person and grace, her heart was smitten and wounded therewith, which made her charge the daughters of Jerusalem, in the following verse, that when they found her beloved, they would tell him, that she was sick of, or wounded with love. But if we understand it of false teachers, which seems most agreeable; then by those smitings and woundings, are meant, the scandalous lives of such persons, the rents and divisions they make, the false doctrines which they preach; and those human traditions, which with force, they impose upon the consciences of men, being assisted by civil magistrates, whom they stir up to make penal laws, and put them in execution against the saints; by all which means they make the hearts of the righteous sad, and wound the consciences of God’s children. One of the Greek versions is, ‘they scourged me,’ ^{f97} whipped her till she was black and blue; as the Jews did the first Christians in their synagogues.

2dly, ‘The keepers of the walls took away her veil from her:’ veils were used by women in those countries: sometimes for ornament, ^{<3123>}Isaiah 3:23, sometimes as a token of modesty; thus Rebekah, when she found that Isaac was coming to meet her, covered herself with a veil, ^{<1216>}Genesis 24:65, and sometimes as a token of subjection to the husband; for which the apostle argues, that women ought to be covered, ^{<6116>}1 Corinthians 11:6-10, at marriage, it was customary with the Grecians ^{f98}, to give a veil to the new-married bride; the bridegroom, with the Romans, used to give the bride a veil, called *flammeum* ^{f99}, from its being of a flame-color, either yellow or red, expressive of the blushing and modesty of the new bride ^{f100}; and the like custom might obtain with the Jews. Now for the keepers to

take away her veil from her, was to strip her of her ornaments, and expose her frailties and infirmities, which ought to be covered; it was to disown her as the spouse of Christ, and to represent her as a whorish and impudent woman; and, whereas she professed herself to be Christ's, to serve him in the way of his appointments; they endeavored to 'corrupt her from the simplicity that is in Christ,' and to draw her aside to a reception of false doctrines, and to a compliance with human traditions: and then more especially, may they be said to take away her veil, when they oppose and endeavor to subvert or remove the doctrine of imputed righteousness by Christ; Christ's righteousness is the believer's veil or covering; this is 'the wedding garment, περιζωλαιον νυμφικον, the nuptial robe, as Gregory Nyssen ^{f101} calls the veil here; and when persons attempt to take away this doctrine, they do as much as in them lies to take away the church's veil. And now all this cruelty was exercised by persons professing religion, under a mask of godliness; by those who were officers in the church, from whom she might have expected a quite different treatment; and indeed, who were more bitter enemies to Christ and his apostles, than the priests and Pharisees were? and who have more cruelly persecuted in after-ages, than those who have professed Christianity! The church thus escaping from the watchmen and keepers, with blows, wounds, and the loss of her veil, meets with the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she speaks in the following manner.

VERSE 8.

*I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

THE church having met with a disappointment, as has been observed in verse 6 by her beloved's withdrawing-himself from her; but resolving to find him, if possible, she seeks for him in the public ordinances; where she is taken notice of by the officers of the church, 'the watchmen of the city, and and keepers of the walls;' who very much abuse her; 'smite and wound' her, and take away her veil from her; by reason of which, she making a hideous outcry in the streets, the 'daughters of Jerusalem,' the wise virgins, who were then sleeping and slumbering on their beds, were awakened and alarmed, and rose up to know what was the matter; who being observed by the church, had the charge in the text given unto them by her. In which we have,

I. The persons whom she addresses, and in this solemn manner adjures; ‘the daughters of Jerusalem.’

II. The charge itself, which she gives them; which is, to tell her beloved, when found by’ them, that she was ‘sick of love.’

III. The condition of this charge; ‘if ye find my beloved.’

IV. The manner in which this charge is given, which is very solemn and serious.

I. The persons to whom she gives this charge; ‘the daughters of Jerusalem:’ by whom we are not to understand the prophets, as the Targum does; though these were proper persons for the church to make application to in her present condition; but having been so evilly treated by the watchmen and keepers of the walls, she had but little encouragement to go to them: nor are angels here meant, as some ^{f102} think though they are ‘ministering, spirits, sent to the heirs of salvation,’ and are often useful to the saints on many accounts; yet it does not seem to be their business, nor are they capable of assisting and relieving souls in such a case as this of the church’s: nor are ‘saints departed’ meant, as some popish interpreters ^{f103} imagine: as if the church desired their prayers for her, who are incapable, of giving her any assistance: but by them we are to understand saints here on earth, the friends and companions of the church, which belong to that Jerusalem, which ‘is free, and is the mother of us all;’ these were fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;’ perhaps were young converts, as has been observed in other places of this Song; and it is certain, that they were believers of the weaker sort; their knowledge of Christ was but small, though they had a great respect for the church, and a desire of sucking Christ with her, verse 9 and ~~2701~~ Song of Solomon 6:1. The church now making application to these persons in her disconsolate condition, shows,

1. Her humility: that she is willing to be assisted by mean Christians or weak believers, who were much inferior to her in faith and knowledge; it is the nature of grace, and the tendency of such trying dispensations as these, in which the church was, to make and keep souls humble; the more grace they have, the more humble they will be; the greatest believer reckoned himself the ‘least of saints, and the chief of sinners,’ and is willing to be

instructed and admonished by the meanest saint; see ^{<HEB>}Psalm 141:5, and is glad of the prayers and assistance of weak believers, when in distress.

2. Her resolution to use all means to find her beloved, as Job did, ^{<JOB>}Job 23:8,9, she will leave no stone unturned, nor let slip any opportunity, where there was any probability or possibility of finding him; she had sought him in public ordinances, but with no success; nay, had met with ill treatment from church-officers; yet she is not discouraged, but is resolved to persist in her search of him; she had spread her case before Christ in prayer, and could get no answer; and now she betakes herself to the company of private Christians, that by conference with them, and through their prayers for her, she might be brought to the enjoyment of what she was seeking after.

3. That communion and conversation with saints is a very proper method to be taken by believers in such cases; conversing together about the things of God, is very acceptable and well-pleasing to him: it is said, ^{<MAL>}Malachi 3:16, of the saints, who ‘spake often one to another, that the Lord hearkened and heard, listened as it were unto it, and took such notice of it, that ‘a book of remembrance was written before him’ for them; he did, as it were, take notes and minutes of what they said and thought, and laid them up: as we should spread our cases before God; so it is very proper, and often very useful, to spread our case before one another; and therefore there should not be a ‘forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but so much the more should’ we assemble together, as our various wants and cases require.

4. That when souls are in distress, it is their duty and interest to make application to others; they should not only pray for themselves, which should be done in the first place, but they should also desire the prayers of others for them; for ‘the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:’ and it is no disgrace nor dishonor for a person superior in office, gifts, and graces to others, to desire their assistance by their prayers for him at the throne of grace; instances of this we have, not only in the church here, but in that great man of God, and instance of grace, the apostle Paul, who frequently desired the prayers of meaner saints for him; see ^{<EPI>}Ephesians 6:19; Thessalonians 3:1,2.

5. That it is the duty of saints to be assisting to each other in their distresses, as much as in them lies; by singing the praises of God together, by praying one with and for another, and by conferring with each other

about divine things, and so building up one another on their most holy faith: there ought to be a sympathizing spirit in the saints; they should 'bear one another's burdens, and should mutually help each other; they should weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice.' But,

II. Let us consider the charge itself, which is given to them by her; and that is to tell her beloved, when they found him, that she was sick of love. This does not suppose that he was ignorant or unmindful of her present state; he heard her, though he would not answer; he knew that she was inquiring after him, and what hardships she underwent in doing it; and also, how much her soul was filled with love to him, and longed for the enjoyment of him; though he would not immediately show himself, intending a little longer to chastise her for her former carriage to him: but the words shew the ardency of her love to Christ, and that she would have them declare this to him, in their prayers for her, which she thought might be a means to induce him to manifest himself to her; as also they show what familiarity souls may use at the throne of grace what freedom they may take with Christ, when they come into his presence, 'tell him that I am sick of love.' They may tell him their own cases, and the cases of others, as one friend may tell another, or as a child may tell its father; they may go with boldness to him, and spread their own and others cases before him, without fear of being chided or upbraided by him; and indeed it is their duty to bear upon their minds, at the throne of grace, not only their own cases, and the cases of the churches in general, as the apostle Paul frequently did; but also the cases of particular persons, whom they know to be in distress; therefore Christ taught his disciples to pray after this manner, 'Our Father, etc. and forgive us our debts, etc.' to show that they should be concerned for others in prayer, as well as for themselves. The words in the Hebrew text may be rendered thus, 'What shall ye, or should ye tell him?' ^{f104} as if she should say, Do not tell him the blows and wounds that I have received from the watchmen; nor desire him to revenge the injuries and affronts they have given me, I freely forgive them; nor am I so much concerned at the sufferings that I undergo, as I am for the loss of him: 'What shall ye tell him?' Tell him that which lies most upon my heart, under which I shall sink and die, if he does not relieve me; 'tell him that I am sick of love.' Again, What shall ye tell him? Tell him that which will be the most acceptable and agreeable to him; tell him I love him so, that I cannot live without him: she knew that he valued her love, and that his heart would be ravished with it, from what he had said, ~~204~~ Song of

Solomon 4:9,10, and therefore would have this told him. Again, ‘What shall ye tell him?’ What shall I say to you to tell him? I have a great many things to tell him of; but I will not overburden your memories, but I will give you my mind in a few words, in the most concise manner, ‘tell him that I am sick of love;’ and when I meet with him myself, I will tell him all my mind; but for the present, only tell him this. But let us a little more particularly consider the matter of this charge, or what the church would have the daughters of Jerusalem tell Christ, when they found him; which is, that she was ‘sick of love.’ And it will be proper to inquire,

1st, The causes of this sickness; which sometimes are,

1. A want of the views of pardoning grace, under a sense of sin, which perhaps was the case of the church here; she had sinned against Christ, in neglecting to arise and open to him; and she was now sensible of it, but wanted the manifestations of pardon; and was therefore in a languishing and fainting condition on the account of it; and it is only this which will cure this sickness:

‘The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick;’ Why so? ‘the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity;’ that is, they shall have the manifestations of pardoning grace to their souls, which shall cure them of their sicknesses and maladies; which was what the church here wanted.

2. The absence of Christ is sometimes the cause of this sickness; and this also was the church’s case: Christ had ‘withdrawn himself from her, and was gone, as in ²¹⁸⁶Song of Solomon 5:6, and though she had diligently sought him, yet she could not find him, nor hear any thing of him; and this brought this sickness upon her.

3. An eager longing after Christ’s presence, and the discoveries of his love, is another cause of it: when a soul has sought Christ a long time in ordinances, and cannot find him; has lived in the hope and expectation of enjoying his presence time after time, and yet is still at a loss for him, then comes this sickness upon it; for, as Solomon says, ²¹⁸²Proverbs 13:12, ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick.’

4. Sometimes the large discoveries of love which believers have, cause a sickness, which may be called a love-sickness; and this is what the church speaks of, in ²¹⁸⁵Song of Solomon 2:5, ‘stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love:’ she had been with Christ in his wine-

cellar or banqueting-house, and had as much of his love let into her soul, as sloe could hold, nay, more; she was overpowered with it; 'his banner over' her had been love. But this was not the church's case here; her sickness here arises rather from the aforesaid causes, and chiefly from a want of that love which she had such large discoveries of there.

2dly, It may not be amiss to consider the nature and properties of this sickness. And,

- 1.** It is not a sickness unto death; none ever died of this sickness; Christ will never suffer any to die with love for him; for he 'loves them that love him,' and will cause them 'to inherit substance;' to enjoy himself, the substance of all felicity; and to inherit eternal glory, which is the better and the 'more enduring substance;' where they shall have sweet and uninterrupted communion with him. Yet,
- 2.** It is a very sore and painful sickness; like Hezekiah's, it is a pining one; and oftentimes wastes the body, as well as affects the mind: The Septuagint render it, 'for I am wounded with love;' which gave her a great deal of pain and uneasiness; for 'love is as strong as death.'
- 3.** It is an immedicable sickness without the enjoyment of Christ, the object loved; bodily physicians cannot cure it; these are in this case, like Job's physicians, of no value; merry companions are of no service to remove it; the enjoyment of another beloved will not do; the language of a soul in such a case, is, None but Christ, none but Christ; give me Christ, or I die; I cannot live without him: this sickness can only be cured by the object loved, and this infallibly cures; for, 'as hope deferred maketh the heart sick, so when the desire cometh it is a tree of life.'

We may now consider the evidences of this love-sickness, or how it manifests itself: and,

- 1.** There is in souls that labor under it, a violent pulsation and punting of the heart after Christ, even 'as the heart panteth after the water-brooks;' they are restless and uneasy without him; their thoughts are continually running upon him; the desire of their souls, night and day, 'is to his name, and to the remembrance of him.'
- 2.** They are prodigious jealous of him and his love; and this is exceeding afflicting to them; for 'jealousy is as cruel as the grave:' they are

exceedingly afraid that he does not love them or that he loves others better than them; for, as the poet ^{f105} says, *Res est solliciti plena timoris amor.*

3. They are very active and diligent, careful and industrious to gain his love; they use all the methods and stratagems they can devise; are bold and resolute, are not discouraged at any difficulties, but are willing to run all risks for the enjoyment of him.

4. They love to hear his name mentioned, and especially to be spoken well of; his name to them is ‘as ointment poured forth,’ exceeding grateful; it attracts their love, ‘therefore do the virgins love’ him; they love his ways, his ordinances and his doctrines, and cannot bear to hear them spoken against; they love to look upon and converse with his people, because they are like him, and bear a resemblance to him.

III. The condition of this charge is, ‘if ye find him;’ which shews,

1. That at present these daughters of Jerusalem had not any sight of Christ, nor communion with him; and this appears also manifestly from the following verse, where they inquire of her concerning him.

2. That it was possible that they might find him before she did; for Christ is sometimes ‘found of them that sought him not,’ and is ‘made manifest unto them that asked not after’ him; she was inquiring after Christ but found him not; and yet it was possible that they might find him before her, who had not been seeking after him: also Christ may manifest himself to poor, mean, and weak believers, when he does not to some that are superior to them in faith, light, and knowledge; he showed himself after his resurrection to a poor woman, to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he cast seven devils, before he did to his disciples.

3. That when they did find Christ, and had liberty of access to his presence, that they would then spread her sorrowful case before him, and use their interest with him, to take pity and compassion on her; who was ‘sick of love’ for him; she entreats them to do such a favor for her, as Joseph requested of the chief butler, when he should be restored to his place; says he, ⁻⁰⁴⁰²⁻Genesis 40:12. ‘But think on me, when it shall be well with thee; and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house.’ So the church would have these virgins, when it was well with them when they enjoyed the presence of

Christ, to think on her and her sorrowful case, and make mention of it to him.

IV. This charge is delivered in a very solemn manner; ‘I adjure you ^{f106},’ or ‘I put you to your oath, I make you swear,’ as the word signifies, that when you find him, you will tell him what I have said to you; I have given you your oath to do it: and now as you will answer it before God, in whose name and presence you have taken it, that you will carefully observe what I say to you, and faithfully deliver the message; if you have any regard to this solemn oath you have taken, or any love to me, I beg you will tell him that I am sick of love. She delivers herself in this solemn manner, not only to show the strength of her love to him, and that she was hearty and sincere in her search and inquiries after him: but also that she was serious in what she said to them, and would have them be serious, diligent, and faithful in telling her case to Christ. The answer returned by them, is as follows.

VERSE 9.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

THE church having solemnly adjured the daughters of Jerusalem, that when they found her beloved, they would tell him that she was sick of love. In these words we have their reply to her, which show what an opinion they had of her, and what effect her words had upon them: in which may be observed,

I. The title and character they give her; ‘O thou fairest among women.’

II. A question they propose to her; ‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved?’

III. This question repeated; where the reason of it must be considered.

IV. What the occasion was of their putting this question to her; which was her solemn charge, ‘that thou dost so charge us?’

I. The title or character which they give her, the ‘fairest among women;’ which is expressive of the exceeding greatness of her beauty: she was not only fair, but the fairest, and that among women, whose beauty is excelling;

she was the fairest of any of her sex; not as she was in herself, but as she is in Christ, justified by his righteousness, washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit; and being considered thus, she appeared to these daughters, as indeed she really is, a perfection of beauty; and they were not mistaken herein, to Christ, who knew her perfectly well, and from whom she received her comeliness, gives her the same character in the very same words, in chapter ~~2108~~ 1:8, but then this opinion, which they entertained of her, though it entirely corresponds with that which Christ has entertained of her, yet is extremely different from that which the world has embraced; which shows, that these persons were not of this world, but called by grace out of it, seeing they had different sentiments of the church; the saints are by the world esteemed the filth thereof, and the off-scouring of all things; they are accounted by them the foolish, base, weak, and contemptible things of the world; nay, even things that are not, as if they were mere non-entities, and did not deserve the name of men or beings; and indeed, as they see no beauty nor comeliness in Christ, it is no wonder that they can see none in the church; but these daughters of Jerusalem could, for they judged not according to the outward appearance; the world only sees the outside of the people of God, which is generally poor, mean, and abject; but these could penetrate into the inside of the church, and viewed her, who is the king's daughter, as all glorious within, and therefore call her the fairest among women; for outwardly she was now black with sins, infirmities, reproaches and persecutions; yet notwithstanding she is highly esteemed of by them; for they had made Moses' choice, having thought it more eligible to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Young converts, as I suppose these daughters were, have generally a great respect for old professors, for such that were in Christ before them; these are the excellent in the earth, in whom is all their delight; they love to see them, and take pleasure in their company and conversation; and indeed, as love to the brethren is made an evidence of passing from death to life, by the apostle John, ~~2114~~ 1 John 3:14, so it shows itself in young converts, as soon as any thing else; for oftentimes, where there is but a small knowledge of Christ, and acquaintance with him, there is a great deal of love to Christ's people; which was the case of these daughters here: also it may be supposed, that they give her this title to assure her of the high esteem which they had for her, and that opinion which they had of her, that she might not think that they designed her any hurt by asking the following question; but rather, seeing they had such a

value for her, that their design was to do her all the service, and, be as assisting to her in her search of her beloved as they were able; and no doubt also, but this opinion which they had of her, made them listen to, and regard the more what she afterwards says of her beloved; for they concluded, that he must be some great and extraordinary person, that she, who was the fairest among women, had made the object of her choice and love: they took it for granted, that one so fair, so wise and prudent as she was, would not take notice of any person, nor lavish and throw away her love upon every object; and this made them the more forward and eager to put the question, which is now to be considered.

II. The question which they propose to her, is, ‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved?’ which is not put in a scornful, disdainful or profane way, as Pharaoh said to Moses, when he demanded the dismissal of the people of Israel, ‘who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?’ or as Rabshakeh to the men of Judah, in that railing, profane speech of his, in ~~2Kings~~ 2 Kings 18:33-35, the design and sense of which was, What is the God of Israel more than the gods of the nations? but such was not this question here; these persons were not the profane people of the world; they had a great esteem for the church, and therefore it cannot be supposed that they would insinuate, my thing in a scornful and reproachful way of her beloved: nor did they propose this question with a design to ensnare her, as the Scribes and Pharisees frequently did to Christ; nor with a design to shift off any trouble from themselves, which they might suppose would arise from an observance of her solemn charge, but rather are willing to be assisting to her all they could; and therefore desire to have some distinguishing characters of him, that they might not lose their labor in seeking, and, when they found him, might perfectly know him; which when she had given, to their entire satisfaction, they then desired to know whither he was gone, which way he took when he left her, that they might seek him with her, as is manifest from chapter ~~2Kings~~ 6:1, nor does this question suppose that they were altogether ignorant of her beloved; for though their knowledge of Christ was small, yet they were not entirely destitute of it; and therefore, as one ^{f107} well observes, they do not say, who, but what is thy beloved, etc. and indeed it cannot ‘be reasonably thought, that of him for she had, in chap. they should be entirely ignorant of him; for she had, in chapter ~~2Kings~~ 1:5, given some account of herself to them; that though she was black in herself, yet comely in another; which is the reason why they here call her the fairest among women; and there is no

doubt but she also gave them some account of him, from whom she received all her comeliness; and in chapter ~~2~~2:7, and ~~3~~3:5, she charges them very strictly, to give him, her love, no molestation or disturbance; which could not very well be, without informing them who he was; and in chapter ~~3~~3:11, she invites them to come forth and see this glorious person, who was her Lord and husband, in all his glory, on his coronation and espousal-clay; to which invitation, they no doubt complied, and therefore must have some knowledge of him. The design then of this question is, that they might know him more and better; which also is the desire of every gracious soul, even of those who have made the greatest proficiency in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; the apostle Paul perhaps knew as much of Christ as ever any mere man on earth did, and yet he desired to know more of him, and the power of his resurrection; for he valued the knowledge of him above all things else: these daughters of Jerusalem, though they knew but little, were willing to know more of Christ; as they had begun to know, they desired to follow on to know him, and make a greater improvement in this kind of learning; and being sensible of the church's abilities, desire her assistance, and are willing to, be instructed by her: also those who knew the most of Christ, are frequently desirous of having his praises and excellencies set forth by others; for they can never hear him enough extolled; his name to them is as ointment poured forth; therefore they love him, as did the virgins here; who excited the church hereunto, by putting this question, and so had their ends answered: and perhaps likewise they might have in view the trial of her faith in Christ, her knowledge of him, and love to him in her present state; she was now under his resentments; he had withdrawn himself from her, and she was exposed to the scandal, reproach, and persecutions of her enemies; and they were willing to know how her faith stood now, whether she loved him now as well as ever, and whether by his absence she had not lost all just ideas of him; and in this she gives them full satisfaction in her answer to them; where she gives an exact account of him, describes him from head to foot, and shows the strength of her faith in him, and affections for him, particularly in the close of it, verse 16, also in this question they seem principally desirous of knowing what those excellencies were which were in him, that distinguished him from other beloveds, and made him preferable to them: Christ was the chiefest among ten thousands in her esteem; to all that believe he is precious; not only precious upon an equal foot with others, but far more precious than all other things or persons besides; for there is none in heaven, nor any upon earth, that saints

desire besides him: there are indeed a great many other beloveds, but Christ is preferable to them all; and in what he is so, the daughters of Jerusalem were willing to know.

1st, The world, with the riches and grandeur of it, is the beloved of some persons. There are too many, both in the world and in the church, that have their affections too much set on earthly things; who neglect their own souls, and the cause and interest of Christ Jesus; having, Demas-like, loved this present world: but, alas! What is this world, or any thing in it, to be compared to Christ, the believer's beloved? everything, even the best that is in the world, is fading, perishing and transitory; many temptations and snares, foolish and hurtful lusts, does an immoderate care for, and sinful love of this world, run persons into; therefore, says the apostle John, ^{<A125>}1 John 2:15, 'love not the world, neither the things that are in the world;' for they are not to be mentioned with Christ he is infinitely preferable to them; see ^{<A113>}Proverbs 3:13-15.

2dly, The sinful lusts and pleasures of this life are the beloveds of others. Every natural man has his beloved lust or lusts; and these he idolizes and adores, falls down to and worships; he makes gods of them, as the apostle says, ^{<A119>}Philippians 3:19, of some, 'whose god is their belly:' and it may be said of all by nature, that they are 'serving divers lusts and pleasures,' being lovers of them; who are never better pleased and more satisfied, than when they are 'fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;' but these pleasures are but short-lived; they afford no real satisfaction now; and, if grace prevent not, will end in bitterness and death: wherefore the worst of a believer, even his afflictions, are better than these; and therefore he thinks it more eligible to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; and if so, much more preferable must Christ, an interest in him, union to him, and communion with him, be to all such beloveds as these.

3dly, The praise and applause of men is another beloved of some persons. This was the beloved of the hypocritical Pharisees, who, in all the parts of their religion and devotion, sought the honor of men, and not of God: as also of those, who, though they were convinced in their consciences that Christ was the Messiah, and believed him to be so, yet 'did not confess him, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God;' they were afraid that their good names, characters and reputations should be blasted, as too many are now: and therefore drop the doctrines of the

gospel, and desert the cause and interest of Christ Jesus: but though ‘a good name is better than precious ointment,’ it is not better than a precious Jesus, whose ‘name is as ointment poured forth;’ nor better than the precious doctrines of the gospel; it is much preferable to be nick-named, reproached, and vilified with Christ and his gospel, than to have the best name, character, and reputation in this world without them; for what will it avail a man, ‘though he hath gained all this, when God taketh away his soul?’

4thly, Near and dear relations are the only beloveds of others, as parents, children, etc. They set their affections so much on these, that Christ has little or no share in them: now, says Christ, ~~CHRIST~~ Matthew 10:37, ‘he that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.’ Christ is preferable to all such beloveds, and indeed to any creature-enjoyment whatever.

5thly, and lastly, Self is the beloved of many; nay, may not I say, too much the dearly-beloved of us all? Self lies close to us, is near and dear unto us; and we too much deserve that character, ‘lovers of ourselves, more than lovers of God;’ and yet Christ requires of us, that we should deny this beloved self, sinful self, and part with it for him; nay, even righteous self, our beloved righteousness, which we are naturally so fond of, and which is so hard and difficult a work to do; and yet souls are enabled by divine grace to do this, seeing a superexcellency in Christ and his righteousness, as the apostle Paul did; who, though he had been so much in love with his own righteousness; it had been his darling, he valued himself much upon it, and thought to have gained much by it; yet threw it all away as ‘loss and dung,’ and desired to be found in Christ, and ‘in his righteousness only; that being far preferable to his former beloved. Thus Christ excels all other beloveds; and he must needs do so, for,

1. He is fairer than all others; there is no such beauty to be found in any beloved whatever as is in him; he is the ‘brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.’

2. He is wiser than all others; he is a perfection of wisdom, as well as beauty; ‘in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’

3. He is richer than all others; he is possessed of ‘unsearchable riches;’ riches which can never be told over, in time, nor to all eternity; he has

riches of grace and riches of glory; 'yea, durable riches and righteousness.' Now one, in whom all beauty, wisdom and riches meet, must needs be an excellent person, and appear preferable to all beloveds: Christ is such an one; he has all the accomplishments and perfections of the divine and human nature to make him so. Again, the daughters of Jerusalem putting such a question as this to the church, shows,

(1.) Their regard unto her, and compassion for her: the watchmen and keepers of the walls, as soon as ever they found her, without asking any question, who she was, where she came from, whither she was going, or whom she was seeking; I say, as soon as ever they found her, they fall upon her, smite her, wound her, and take away her veil from her; but these persons showed more regard and compassion; for, being willing to assist her in her present case, if possible, they stand conferring with her.

(2.) It appears from hence, that these were inquiring souls, which discover a work of grace begun in them; for no sooner are souls awakened to see their lost state by nature, but they are inquiring the way of salvation; and having got some glimmering knowledge of Christ, and salvation by him, they inquire still more after him, concerning his person, office, and grace; and having some impressions of his love on their souls, inquire the nature of a church, and the ordinances of Christ therein; they ask their way to Zion with their faces thitherward.'

(3.) It is evident, from the question they proposed, that they were docible and teachable: they were willing to be instructed; they were not haughty, scornful, and above instruction; they did not think that they knew enough of Christ and needed to know no more, nor be instructed better; but being conscious of their own ignorance, and extremely desirous of being informed better, they put this question to her.

III. This question is repeated by them; which shows the surprise that they were in at her solemn charge, and the stir she made about her beloved; and concluded from thence, that there must be some peculiar excellencies in him, which they had not been made acquainted with yet, and therefore repeat the question; as also to manifest their seriousness in it, and that they were in good earnest desirous of knowing Christ more and better; and

likewise it is expressive of their importunateness to have a speedy answer from her.

IV. Here is also that which gave occasion to them to put this question to her; and that was her strict and solemn charge in the former verse, ‘that thou dost so charge us;’ that is, so awfully and solemnly, so seriously and strictly, with so much warmth and vehemence: they were eye and ear-witnesses to her sufferings at the hands of the watchmen, and to her courage, constancy and undauntedness therein; they saw that she was no ways discouraged by what she met with from seeking her beloved; but seemed rather by her solemn charge to them to be more warm and zealous, serious, diligent, and resolved to go on in search of him; and seeing all this, it put them upon inquiring what he was, what peculiar excellencies were in him, and what distinguished characters he might be known by. Thus the warmth, zeal, and liveliness of some Christians have been the means of stirring up and quickening, others to their duty; nay, the sufferings of the saints, and their courage and boldness therein,, have not only filled beholders with wonder, but have put their very enemies upon making inquiry into the religion they had suffered for; and to ask, who and what that Christ was, for whom they had underwent such severe tortures and punishments; and this has been the means of the conversion of thousands; which gave rise to that saying, ‘The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church:’ and this is the gloss of R. Solomon Jarchi on this text, namely: ‘Thus the nations asked the Israelites, What is your God more than all gods, that ye are burnt and hanged for him after this manner?’ Next follows a glorious description of Christ, the church’s beloved, in answer to this question of the daughters of Jerusalem.

VERSE 10.

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

THE church having, in verse 8 given the daughters of Jerusalem a strict and solemn charge, that when they found her beloved, they would tell him that she was sick of love, made them, in verse 9 very inquisitive after him; being as it were uneasy till they knew what he was, and wherein he excelled others; and therefore put this question to her, ‘What is thy beloved more than another beloved?’ to which an answer is returned by her, in this and the following verses; in which she first gives a more general description of him, and then descends to particulars. The general

description of him is in the words now under consideration; in which she describes him,

I. Positively, in regard to what he was in himself, as to his favor and complexion; ‘my beloved is white and ruddy.’

II. Comparatively, as he may be considered with regard to others; ‘the chiefest among ten thousand.’

I. She describes him by his favor and complexion, ‘white and ruddy.’ Which some ^{f108} understand of his two natures, human and divine; who may be said to be white, as to his divine nature; ‘the ancient of days,’ the everlasting God, is represented in ^{<200>}Daniel 7:9 as being clothed with ‘a garment white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool:’ the description which John, ^{<606>}1 John 1:5, gives of the Divine Being, is, that he ‘is light, and in him is no darkness at all;’ which is thought ^{f109} to be best represented by this color, which is simple, and has no mixture and composition in it. Christ is ‘the light of the world;’ he was known by this character to the Old Testament saints; he was prophesied of as the great light which should lighten the Gentile world; this was owned by old Simeon, witnessed by John, and asserted by himself: and then it is thought by these interpreters, that he may be said to be red or ruddy, as to his human nature. The first man, who was a type of Christ, and ‘a figure of him that was to come,’ was called Adam, which signifies red; and perhaps he had his name from the Hebrew word **hmda** *adamah*, which signifies red earth ^{f110}, out of which he was formed, ^{<000>}Genesis 2:7, so Christ is called ‘the last Adam?’ ^{<656>}1 Corinthians 15:45, because he ‘took part of the same flesh and blood the children’ whom he loved, ‘are partakers of.’ Now, according to this sense of the words, her answer is this; Would you know who and what my beloved is, and wherein he excels others? I will tell you, and be it known unto you, that he is no mean, common and ordinary person; no, he is a glorious and an extraordinary one; his name is **al p** *pele*, wonderful, a wonder, a miracle; and so is his person; two natures meet in him; he is God and man in one person; he is ‘the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;’ and when you hear this, you will cease to wonder why I so charge you, and why I love, value, and esteem him above all others.

Again others ^{f111} understand these words of Christ’s human nature only; and that he may be said to be *white*, because of the innocence, purity and

holiness of his human nature; which was not tainted with original sin, as ours is, he not descending from Adam by ordinary generation; but was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost, and therefore it is called ‘that holy thing:’ neither was there any sinful action committed by him in all his life; but both in nature and practice he was ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;’ he never sinned in thought, word or deed, though he ‘was made sin for us.’ Also they suppose, he may be said to be *red* or *ruddy*, on the account of his sufferings in this nature; by reason of which he may be represented, in ~~2301~~ Isaiah 63:1,2, as being ‘red in his apparel,’ and as being clothed with ‘dyed garments;’ for what with the buffetings and scourgings of his body, the crowning his head with thorns, and piercing his hands, feet and side, with the nails and spear, the garment of the human nature was like ‘a vesture dipped in blood:’ to this purpose is Alcuin’s note on the text, which is not to be despised; he is *white*, says he, because without sin; *red*, with the blood of his sufferings; ‘chosen out of ten thousand,’ because he is the only mediator of God and men. Now there cannot appear a more beautiful and delightful sight, to those who desire ‘to know nothing but Christ and him crucified,’ than to see the just Jesus suffering for unjust ones; him that ‘knew no sin, made sin for them;’ and the holy, harmless, innocent, and unspotted lamb of God, shedding his blood for the vilest of sinners: according to this sense, the church’s answer is; Would you know what my beloved is, and wherein he excels others? I will tell you, he is not black with original and actual sin, as you and I are; for though you see him *red* with sufferings; yet he was ‘not cut off for himself, but was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;’ for in his nature and actions he is *white*, pure and spotless; and such a mixture of white and red, of innocence and sufferings, render him extremely amiable and lovely to me. Or else, As others ^{f112} have observed, these words may be understood of the different administrations of mercy and justice: Thus when Christ pardons sinners, ‘though their sins be as scarlet,’ he makes them ‘as white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, they become as wool;’ and when he justifies persons, he is said to clothe them in ‘fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints;’ and when he promises glorification to them, it is in such words as these, ‘they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;’ and so glorified saints are represented, ‘clothed with white robes, palms in their hands, and hallelujahs in their mouths;’ for all which see ~~2308~~ Isaiah 1:18; ~~2309~~ Revelation 3:4,5; and 7:9,13,14 and 19:8, and then when he is represented as taking vengeance

on his enemies, and executing wrath upon his foes, he is said to be ‘red in his apparel,’ and to be ‘clothed with a vesture dipped in blood;’ for so they understand ^{<2601>}Isaiah 63:1,2; ^{<6693>}Revelation 19:13, and it may be farther observed, that the wrath which the Lord poureth forth upon the ‘wicked of the earth,’ is represented by a cup of red wine, expressing the fierceness and fury of it; ‘for in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and, the wine is red,’ etc. ^{<4978>}Psalm 75:8. And this agrees with the common notion of the Cabalistic doctors, that when God appears in mercy and kindness, then he may be said to be *white*; but when in wrath and anger, *red*: of this frequent mention is made in Zohar, and in other Cabalistic books: ^{f113} according to this sense, it is as if she should say, My beloved has mercy and grace for his people, which he bestows in a sovereign manner upon them; and he has vengeance for his adversaries, which he executes upon them according to the strictest rules of justice; and this mixture of mercy and justice, of white and red, renders him an extraordinary person; it makes some to love him, and others to fear him. Or else, These words may be interpreted of Christ’s battles and victories, and may represent him as a mighty warrior, and a triumphant conqueror: Thus in ^{<6004>}Revelation 6:4. the warrior, who had ‘power given him to take peace from the earth,’ is introduced as riding upon ‘a red horse;’ and in verse 2, he that ‘went forth conquering and to conquer,’ as riding upon a ‘white horse;’ thus Christ, who is ‘the Lord of hosts, the man of war,’ considered as fighting the Lord’s battles, may be said to be red or ruddy; and as returning from the field of battle, as a mighty conqueror, having ‘spoiled principalities and powers,’ and got an entire victory over all his and our enemies, may be said to be *white*. And now this great person, as if she should *say*, has done all this for me, and ‘made me also more than a conqueror;’ and this person is my beloved.

But passing these several senses, which perhaps may be thought too nice and curious, though agreeable to the analogy of faith, yet it may be, will not bear so well here; though I choose rather to understand them of the beauty, glory and excellency of Christ, as mediator, without applying particularly these colors of ‘white and ruddy,’ to either nature, or to any particular actions performed in either: and I cannot but think that the church, in this description of Christ, has some reference to the account that is given of David, ^{<4962>}1 Samuel 16:12. which is, that ‘he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at.’ David was an eminent type of Christ; of his line the Messiah came, who is sometimes called David in scripture; and is both his ‘root and offspring, the bright and

the morning star;’ and as described by David, is ‘fairer than the children of men,’ being ‘white and ruddy, which discovers the best temperature, the most healthful constitution, and the completest beauty: as mediator, he is a perfection of beauty; all divine perfections are in him; the glory of them all shine resplendently in his face or person; and they are all glorified in him and by him, who is ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.’ There is also a mediatorial glory that he is possessed of, which is the result and consequence of his work; and which renders him exceeding fair and beautiful in the eyes of believers now, and is what they will, with wonder and pleasure, everlastingly gaze upon in another world: likewise as mediator, all fullness of grace dwells in him; and as ‘full of grace and truth, his glory appears as the glory of the only begotten of the Father.’

Again, Christ, as mediator, is ‘white and ruddy,’ a perfection of beauty in the eyes of believers, as considered in all his offices of prophet, priest and king; and in all his relations, as husband, father, brother and friend, which he bears and stands in to his people: moreover, he is exceeding beautiful in their esteem, in all that he has done and suffered for them; but of this beauty and fairness of Christ, see more on chapter 1:15.

II. Christ is here described by the church comparatively, as he may be considered with regard to others; ‘the chiefest among ten thousand.’

The Septuagint render the words thus, ‘chosen out of, or from ten thousand:’ ^{f114} so Christ is both by God and men; he is chosen of God from among ten thousand, as man and mediator: when that large number of all the individuals of human nature, which he resolved to create in time, came up in his vast and eternal mind; a certain number of them he for himself whom he meant to make instances of singled out his mighty grace and mercy, and therefore ordained them to life and salvation; and out of this select company, which he had in his eternal view, he chose the man Christ Jesus, and singled out that single *individuum* of human nature only, to be united to the eternal *λογος*, *logos*, the second person in the glorious Trinity; and therefore he is said to ‘exalt one chosen out of the people:’ he chose this glorious person to be the Savior. head, and mediator of his elect ones, that living stone, which is disallowed and rejected by some men, who would be accounted builders, is ‘chosen of God, and precious;’ he has laid him as the foundation, and ‘made him as the head of the corner;’ he knew that he was furnished with suitable abilities to be the sinner, savior,

therefore he ‘laid help upon one that is mighty;’ he called him to the work, invested him with the office of a mediator, and appointed him his ‘salvation to the ends of the earth:’ and now, had all human beings been summoned together to have chosen a savior for themselves, they could never have made a better choice than God has made for them; with this choice every sensible sinner is well satisfied, and rejoices in it; and was it to be done again, would say, as the Psalmist did, ‘He shall choose our inheritance for us,’ ^{<970H>}Psalm 47:4.

He is also chosen of men from among ten thousand: there is none among all the angels in heaven, the large number of inhabitants that fill the upper world; nor any among the vast crowds of the sons of men, so desirable to sensible sinners as he is: they make choice of Him only for their Savior i far being sensible that in vain is salvation hoped for any where else, they say of all the works of their hands, even of the best their hands ever wrought, ‘ye shall not save us;’ neither will we any more give you such honor, nor have such a dependence on you as to say, ‘ye are our gods,’ but Christ, and he only, shall be our salvation; and though he slay us, yet will we trust in him: they choose him for their ruler and governor, their Lord and King; and though they have formerly been under, and have submitted to the government of others; yet they now desire to be his subjects and servants only, and to be obedient to his laws and commands: they likewise fix on him as the alone object of their love, whom they have the strongest affection for, and desirous to keep the most inviolable chastity to; for though he is out of sight, he is not out of mind, ‘whom having not seen they love;’ nor can he be out-rivaled by any, being preferable in their esteem to all others.

Moreover the Hebrew word may be rendered, a ‘standard-bearer ^{f115}, or one standard among ten thousand.’ The church of Christ here below is in a militant state; she has many enemies to grapple with, which cause fightings without, and fears within; and though these enemies are mighty and powerful, crafty and cunning, yet in the name and strength of her Lord, she sets up her banners, and appears as terrible to them, and as majestic to others, ‘as an army with banners;’ and this banner, or standard, which is both her covering and her comfort in the day of battle, is love, according to chapter ^{<211H>}2:4. It is the love of Christ, as a banner displayed, an ensign set up, and standard erected, which invites and engages so many to enlist themselves in Christ’s service; and, when enlisted, animates them to fight the Lord’s battles so courageously as they do; Christ, he is the standard-

bearer, and the great ‘captain of our salvation,’ being by God the Father given as a ‘leader and commander’ to the people. Now Christ being said to be ‘the standard-bearer among ten thousands’ may be understood of the multitude, either of ministering angels ^{f116}, who are under him and at his command; or of saints, who are enlisted in his service, and ready to do his pleasure; he having set up his standard, and being himself ‘an ensign to the people,’ multitudes flock unto him, and fulfill the prophecy of him, as the great Shiloh, to whom ‘the gathering of the people should be:’ herein lies the glory and excellency of Christ that he has ten thousand, that is, a large number of choice and select ones under his standard, such as there are not the like in all the world besides; and how stately and majestic does Christ look, and what a noble sight is it to see him bearing the standard before such a company! such a sight as this John had of him, at the head of a vast multitude of those shining ones, who were ‘clothed with white robes,’ and had ‘palms in their hands,’ having just obtained a glorious victory over their enemies, [Ⓜ]Revelation 7:9,13,14. Or else, the intent of the word is, that Christ is a more excellent standard-bearer than all others ^{f117}: there may be ten thousand persons who carry a flag, but none of them all are to be compared with him, either for comeliness, strength or courage; none have such a choice and select company under them as he has; neither do any carry such a banner as he does, whose motto is love; and herein was he, who is ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah,’ represented by that tribe, which of all the tribes of Israel pitched their standard first, and had the greatest number under it; see [Ⓜ]Numbers 2:3,4.

But these words by our translators are rendered, ‘the chiefest among ten thousand;’ and the sense of them is no ways opposed by the former versions; for if he is ‘chosen out of,’ and is ‘the standard-bearer among ten thousand,’ then he must be the chiefest among them; he is the chiefest among all the angels in heaven; for to ‘which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son,’ etc. He is the Son of God in a higher sense than angels and men are; angels are the sons of God by creation, saints by adoption, but Christ is the Son of God by an ineffable generation; as he is God, he is the creator of angels, and to him they pay homage and adoration; they are his servants, and are at his command, whom he sends forth as ministering spirits, to do his pleasure; and though as man, in the state of his humiliation and abasement here on earth in the days of his flesh, he was ‘made a little lower than the angels;’ yet now in the very same nature in which he was abased below them, he is now exalted above them

at the Father's right hand; for 'to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand,' etc. as mediator, he has 'obtained a more excellent name than they;' for the name of a savior or mediator is given to none of them; and as such they are beholden to him, though not to make peace and reconciliation for them, they having never sinned and incurred the divine displeasure; yet they are obliged unto him for confirming grace, to secure them in that state in which they stand. He is also the chiefest of all on earth, as well as of all in heaven; in all things, and over all persons, he has the preeminence; he is the head of saints, their 'everlasting father,' and tender husband; he is the great master of the family, and 'the first-born among many brethren;' he is the King of saints, and Lord of the creation; and should be the chiefest, and have the chiefest place in the desires of our hearts, in the contemplations of our minds, the affections of our souls, and in our aspirations of glory; for 'he is the chiefest among ten thousand.'

VERSE 11.

*His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy,
and black as a raven:*

THE church, having given a general description of her beloved in the former verse, pursuant to the request of the daughters of Jerusalem, does in this enter into a more particular commendation of him, and continues unto the end of the chapter: which commendation consists of ten particulars, two of which are in these words;

I. She describes him by his head; which, she says, 'is as the most fine gold.'

II. By his locks; which 'are bushy, and black as a raven.'

I. She describes 'his head as the most fine gold.' Some think, that some ornament of the head is meant, as a diadem or crown of gold: or else, the hair of the head; which though afterwards is said to be black, yet, being powdered with gold dust, looked of the color of gold, especially with the rays of the sun upon it; as did the hair of Solomon's youths that attended him, being thus decorated, as Josephus^{f118} relates; and which custom of powdering the hair with gold, was used by some of the Roman emperor.

^{f119} By Christ's head may be meant, either,

1st. God the Father, who is in scripture called so: Thus the apostle says, in ~~<611B>~~1 Corinthians 11:3. ‘The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God,’ that is, God the Father; which is to be understood of Christ as man and mediator; for as he is Gods the Father is not his head; he is not above him, nor superior to him in nature, power or glory; for ‘being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with him.’ It is true, the Father is the first person in the Trinity; but he is not first in order of time, dignity, nor causality; some of the fathers and schoolmen have indeed said, that the Father, with respect to the other two persons, is *fons deitatis, principium, causa, the fountain of the deity, beginning, and cause thereof*; these phrases are better let alone than used: but he may very properly be said to be the head of Christ, as man and mediator; for as he is man, he is God’s creature, the work of his hands, ‘a body hast thou prepared me;’ and so subject to him, and under his power and government; and in this sense ,re those words of Christ to be understood, where he says, ~~<614B>~~John 14:28. ‘My Father is greater than I;’ being his Creator, Lord, and head. And,

1. Christ as man and mediator, has his life from his Father; as he is God, his life is original and underived; it is not communicated to him from another; but his life, as man and mediator, is given him; he asked life of his Father, in the everlasting covenant, both for himself and for his people, and it was granted to him; and in this sense is that text to be understood, ~~<615B>~~John 5:26. ‘As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself:’ as we derive our life from Christ, and have it maintained and supported by him; so Christ, as man and mediator, has his life from his Father, by whom also it is supported, he lives by him; ‘as the living Father hath sent me,’ says Christ, ~~<616B>~~John 6:57, ‘and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me;’ and in this sense is God the head of Christ; he communicates life unto him, as man and mediator, and continues it in him.

2. Christ, as man and mediator, is subject to his Father, as the members of the body are to the head: thus, as God’s ‘righteous servant,’ he was sent by him about the great work of man’s redemption, was obedient to him, and carefully observed all the commands which he enjoined him; he still is, and will be to all eternity subject to his Father, as man and mediator; for when all things shall be put under the feet of Christ, as King of saints, then he, ‘the Son shall be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all,’ ~~<615B>~~1 Corinthians 15:28.

3. Christ, as man and mediator, was guided and directed, taught and instructed by his Father, what he should speak and what he should do, as the great prophet in Israel, and Savior of the world; and this gives light to those scriptures, ^{<B151>}John 5:20 and ^{<B183>}8:28 and ^{<B124>}12:49,50 and proves the Father to be the head of Christ.

4. Christ, as man and mediator, was strengthened and supported in his work by his Father, as his head; this was promised him in the everlasting covenant; and was made good to him 'in an acceptable,' suitable and seasonable 'time, in the day of salvation;' in the day he wrought out the salvation of sinners; which animated and encouraged him in the view of all that he was to go through; see ^{<B108>}Isaiah 1:8 — to and proved him to be the 'Son of man,' whom God made strong for himself. Now this head of Christ 'is as the most fine gold;' here are two words used in the Hebrew text, which both signify gold; ^{f120} the one signifies pure, fine and shining; the other, strong and solid gold; and may also be rendered. *the gold of Fez;* ^{f121} from whence either the city of Fez had its name; ^{f122} or else, this gold had its name from the land where it was in abundance; and perhaps is the same with the gold of Uphaz, mentioned in ^{<B105>}Daniel 10:5; ^{<B109>}Jeremiah 10:9; and this being the best and finest gold, the church uses it to set off the glory and excellency of Christ's head: not that we are to suppose, as the apostle observes, ^{<B173>}Acts 17:29, that 'the Godhead is like to gold and silver,' etc. for no likeness and similitude can be formed of the Divine Being; and indeed the church seems to be almost at a loss what to compare this head to; but gold being the richest, most excellent, and durable metal, and the gold of Fez the best of any, she uses this to set forth the glory of it by: and yet, as not being satisfied, she says, it is as 'the most fine gold;' if there is any better, it is like that; or, as the words may also be rendered, 'his head is as the gold of gold;' ^{f123} and it is as if she should say, I would compare it to gold, because I can think of nothing better, richer, and more glorious; but I cannot find gold good enough to compare to it; this is 'the gold of gold;' there is none such elsewhere; the whole universe cannot furnish us with the like; he that is my beloved's head, is 'more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;' yea, than all the golden mountains of Peru. Or else,

2dly, By Christ's head may be meant, the divine nature in him, ^{f124} which is the head, the chief and principal nature in Christ; in which his highest characters are wrote, and which puts a glory and efficacy in all that he has done and suffered as mediator; and it is this which supported him, and

enabled him to go through the great work of man's salvation: all divine perfections are in Christ, and these all shine resplendently in him, who is 'the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;' this head is an head of pure, fine and shining gold; 'all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him;' and the glory of it is very manifest and conspicuous, Or,

3dly, By Christ's head may be meant, his headship over his church, or his regal power and government, which I rather incline to; thus he is represented, in ^{<321B>}Psalm 21:3 as having 'a crown of pure gold' upon his head, denoting his royal dignity and authority: so Nebuchadnezzar, or the large and flourishing monarchy which he was ruler of, is set forth by an head of gold, in ^{<212>}Daniel 2:32-37,38. And now Christ, as Lord of the church, and King of saints, may be compared to 'the most fine gold,' because his kingdom and government is the most excellent and glorious; it is managed with the utmost wisdom and prudence, and according to the strictest rules of justice and equity; his head is a golden one, and fit for the work he is called to, for in it 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;' and therefore he is the only wise and just, as well as the only rich and powerful potentate in the universe; he is 'King of kings, and Lord of lords;' all others receive their crowns and kingdoms from him, and are set up and put down by him at pleasure; and therefore it is by him that 'kings reign, and princes decree justice;' all the wisdom and prudence, justice and equity, which appear in any of the governments of this world, are but faint resemblances of what of this nature appear in Christ's government; he is the 'head of gold,' all the rest are but like 'brass, iron and clay.'

2. He is compared to fine gold, because his kingdom is pure and spiritual; at is 'not of this world;' it consists in nothing that is worldly, earthly and carnal; it is 'not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

3. Because, like gold, it is solid and substantial; it does not consist in external pomp and gaudy shows, as the kingdoms of this world, which yet are tiding, transitory, and perishing; but this, though it does not come with observation, but looks mean and abject in its outward appearance; yet is all of pure and solid gold, and will appear bright and glorious, when the gild of others is worn off and gone.

4. It is compared to the most fine gold for the richness of it: Christ is the richest prince in the world; his riches are lasting and durable; they are unsearchable and incomprehensible; his kingdom is the richest on earth, and the meanest subject in it is a prince, nay, a king; that may be much more truly said of Christ's subjects, what the proud Assyrian monarch said boastingly of his princes, 'Are not my princes altogether kings?' Christ's meanest subjects are so; for he has made them 'kings and priests unto God?' ^{f106} Revelation 1:6.

5. Christ's kingdom may be compared to gold, because it is lasting and durable: Christ's 'throne is for ever and ever?' there will never be any end of his government; nor of the increase of it, and of the peace and prosperity thereof; when all other kingdoms are destroyed, and all other rule, power and authority put down, Christ's kingdom will stand; it will be more visibly set up, and appear more glorious, and so continue for ever. Thus Christ, as head of the church, and king of saints, may be compared to the most fine gold; which is the first particular she instances in, by which he may be known from others. The Jewish writers, ^{f125} by this head of fine gold, understand the law, which is more to be desired than gold; as they do by the locks in the following clause, the several letters, sections, doctrines and senses of it.

II. She describes him by his *locks*, which, she says, 'are bushy and black as a raven.' By his *locks* may be meant, either,

1st, The thoughts, ^{f126} counsels and purposes of God, who is the head of Christi which,

1. Like the hairs of a man's head are innumerable: the purposes of his heart concerning man's salvation; his thoughts of love, grace, and mercy towards sinners, 'cannot be reckoned up in order to him; they are more than can be numbered; the sum of them is so great,' that they exceed the sand upon the sea-shore.

2. Like bushy and black locks, are intricate, dark and obscure, unsearchable and incomprehensible; God's thoughts and purposes of distinguishing grace are out of our reach, and beyond our comprehension; and therefore are said to be 'higher than our thoughts, even as the heavens are higher than the earth:' when we seriously consider that the great and infinite Being should pitch his thoughts of love from all eternity upon poor, sinful creatures; and upon some, and not all; and resolve on their everlasting

salvation, and not on others; it obliges us to say, with the apostle, ‘O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!’ ^{<613>}Romans 11:33.

3. Yet these thoughts and purposes of God’s heart, so Jar as they are made known to us, are like bushy and black locks of hair, very beautiful and delightful: How glorious and beautiful is the draught, the model and scheme of salvation, which was drawn in the eternal mind? with what exactness is it managed? what wisdom and grace appear in that ‘fellowship of the mystery,’ which the gospel leads us into an acquaintance with? ‘How precious are those thoughts of love which run through all, as well as ‘ how great is the sum of them?’ Or,

2dly, By these *locks* may be meant, the multitude of believers, ^{f127} which grow upon Christ, as the head of the church and these may be compared to hair for their number, their dependence on Christ, and their reception of life and nourishment from him, as has been observed on chapter 4:1 and these being called locks of hair, may intend their being congregated in gospel-order, their being united in faith and love, and their walking together in all the ordinances of Christ; ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.’ Now saints being thus joined together in holy fellowship, having strict regard to Christ’s truths and commands, do much adorn the head, Christ Jesus; and are a lovely and delightful sight to spectators; see ^{<515>}Colossians 2:5. And these locks are said to be,

1. Bushy; the word may signify heaps; ^{f128} and so denotes the multitude of believers that spring from, and have their dependence on Christ, the head: or it may be rendered, thick, ^{f129} being well-set; or pendulous, ^{f130} hanging down in a beautiful order: and this may intend the ornament that believers are to Christ; ‘childrens’ children are the crown of old men;’ believers are ‘a crown of glory to Christ;’ they are ‘a royal diadem in his hand,’ and upon his head: or it may be translated, crisp or curled; ^{f131} and so be expressive of the hardness and strength of believers; curled hair ^{f132} being the strongest and hardest: believers though weak in themselves, yet are strong in Christ; not only to perform duty, but to withstand enemies, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ Jesus; they are ‘strengthened with all might in the inner man,’ to fight the Lord’s battles, are undaunted in their spirits, and immoveable as a rock.

2. They are said to be ‘black as a raven;’ saints are black with original and actual sin, as they are also with infirmities, reproaches, scandal and persecution; they have mean thoughts of themselves; and though exalted on the head, Christ, yet look upon themselves as the least of saints, and chief of sinners: though I rather think, this does not intend their blackness by sins, infirmities, etc. nor their humble thoughts of themselves; but rather, their real beauty, which they have from Christ, and that ornament and glory which they are unto him. Or else,

3dly, By these locks may be meant, Christ’s administrations in the discharge of his kingly office: and this seems to me to be the best sense; for, as by his head, is intended his regal power and government; so by his locks, the administrations of it; which though sometimes dark, intricate and obscure, being attended with severity to his enemies, and so may be said to be bushy and black; yet being managed with the utmost wisdom and prudence, and according to the strictest rules of justice and equity, look very beautiful and comely, and are admired and; wondered at by all the saints; see [Revelation 15:3,4](#).

Moreover in general these bushy and black locks of Christ may denote,

1. The fullness of wisdom which is in Christ; curled hair is a sign of an hot and dry brain, ^{f133} which produces acuteness and sharpness of wit: all wisdom is in Christ; he is the wisdom of God; who has not only fullness of it for himself, which is requisite to qualify him for, and carry him through the work he is engaged in; but has also a fullness of it: for the saints, to whom ‘he is made of God wisdom as well as righteousness.’

2. His youthful strength, vigor and courage, of which his black hair is accounted a sign: in [Revelation 1:14](#). Christ’s hair is said to be ‘as white as wool, as white as snow,’ to denote his senile gravity; that he is ‘the ancient of days; who exists from everlasting to everlasting:’ but here his locks are said to be black, to set forth his juvenile vigor and strength, which is always in its bloom, without any change or alteration: he is the mighty God in his highest nature, and ‘mighty to save,’ as mediator; he gave the fullest proofs of his strength and courage in fulfilling all the law required, in bearing all that justice inflicted, and in conquering all his and our enemies.

3. These black locks set forth the beauty of Christ: black hair was accounted the most beautiful, not only by the Jews but by the Romans; as

is manifest from what is said by many of the poets, ^{f134} concerning both men and women: it was very desirable to them; insomuch that these, whose hair was not naturally black, used various ways and methods to make it so, and among other things, both Pliny ^{f135} and AELianus ^{f136} tell us, they used the eggs, brains, and blood of ravens for that purpose. Now when Christ's locks are said to be black as a raven, the meaning is, that he looks exceeding beautiful, being 'fairer than Absalom,' or any of the children of men; his black shining locks, hanging down in a beautiful order from his head of gold, make him look very stately and majestic; and as the blackness of the raven is a very fine black, and what is natural to it, and not made by art; so the beauty of Christ is exceeding great, it is natural to him; it is not derived from another, as ours is from him, but what is original, underived and essential to him; and this proves him to be the most excellent beloved, and 'the chiefest among ten thousand.'

VERSE 12.

*His eyes are as the eyes of doves, by the rivers of water,
washed with milk, and fitly set.*

THIS is the third instance of Christ's beauty, or distinguishing character of him, which the church gives to the daughters of Jerusalem, whereby they might know him from others; having described him by his head and hair, she here describes him by his eyes; the order and method in which she proceeds is very just and natural. By his eyes may be meant, either,

First, The gifts and graces of the Spirit which are in Christ. as man and mediator; ^{f137} who is represented, in ~~(1116)~~ Revelation 5:6 as a lamb that had been slain for the sins of men, with even eyes, which are said to be 'the seven spirits of God;' not that there are seven-personal, distinct, divine subsistencies, which are called so; but the phrase intends that variety, fullness and perfection of the gifts and grace of that one Spirit of God, who is the third person in the blessed Trinity; which gifts and grace of his, being bestowed on Christ, as man and mediator, furnished and qualified him for his work; of which seven spirits or various gifts of the Spirit, which he received for this purpose, you may read in ~~(2310)~~ Isaiah 11:2-4. Now these may be said to be 'as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water;' because the Spirit of God did in an eminent and public manner descend upon him, as a dove, at the time of his baptism in the river of Jordan: and they may also be said to be as doves, or as the eyes of doves 'washed with milk, to express

the purity and holiness of his nature, sanctified thereby; for, as man and mediator, he was holy harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: likewise they may be said to be as the eyes of doves fitly set, or set in fullness, because the Spirit was not given to him by measure, but in fullness; the whole fullness of the gifts and grace of the Spirit is given to him; and therefore he appears 'full of grace and truth,' and from hence they are communicated unto men. Or else,

Secondly, By his eyes may be meant the church's teachers, ^{f138} or ministers of the gospel; who, as they are the mouth by whom Christ speaks, so they are his eyes, by whom he sees, provides for, and watches over his church and people; and therefore are called *watchmen*, whose business is to watch for, and over the souls of men: these are the eyes which give light unto, guide and direct the members of Christ's body; who-point out unto them the way of salvation, and guide their feet into the way of peace. Now these may be said to be as the eyes of doves, on the account of those dove-like gifts of the Spirit, by which they are fitted for their work, and made able ministers of the New Testament; also for their honesty, faithfulness, and simplicity in preaching the everlasting gospel; and likewise for that harmless and innocence, which do and ought to appear in their lives and conversations. These may also be said to be as doves, or as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, which may intend the scriptures of truth; ^{f139} for as doves delight to sit by rivers of water, so do the ministers of the gospel delight to be reading of, and meditating upon the scriptures, which is their work and business: and from hence they fetch the doctrines they preach to others; they speak according to the oracles of God; and that 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual,' ~~<4123>~~ 1 Corinthians 2:13. Likewise they may be said to be as doves, or as the eyes of doves washed with milk, because of their light and knowledge in the gospel, which is the sincere milk of the word; whereby they are made capable of feeding others with the plain and wholesome truths of the gospel: or else this phrase may intend that pure and spotless conversation, which they ought to lead as examples to others in faith and purity. They may also be said to be tidy set; 'for God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly' teachers,' etc., ~~<4128>~~ 1 Corinthians 12:28, this was the fit and beautiful order in which the first ministers of the gospel were placed by God himself; and indeed all the ministers of it are fitly set in the more eminent part of the body, the church, to overlook, direct, and be useful to

the several members of it. But these seem rather to be the eyes of the church, than the eyes of Christ, which also are compared to dove's eyes in chapter 1:15.

Thirdly, To understand by these eyes, the omniscience of Christ: R. Aben Ezra seems to understand them of God's omniscience; for his comment is that text in ~~1013~~ Proverbs 16:3. The eyes of the Lord are in every place. Christ is the omniscient God; every creature is made manifest in his sight; all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do; who is the living word, and a critical discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart: in the days of his flesh here on earth, he needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man; and gave convincing proofs to the Scribes and Pharisees, that he was well acquainted with the secret thoughts of their hearts: Peter bore a noble testimony to Christ's omniscience, when he appealed to him, saying, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' And indeed was he not the omniscient God, how could he be capable of acting as the head of his church, or as the mediator between God and man, or of judging the world at the last day? but then he will give an incontestible proof of this divine perfection's being in him; he will let all the churches, and all the world know, that he it is which searcheth the reins and hearts. Now when these eyes of Christ's omniscience are fixed on persons in a way of wrath and anger, they are said to be as flames of fire; especially when fixed upon heretics, idolators, false worshippers, or any of his and his church's enemies; see ~~6014~~ Revelation 1:14 and ~~6028~~ 2:18,20-23, and ~~6091~~ 19:11,12,15, but when they are fixed in a way of special love and grace upon his own people, they may be said to be,

1st, As the eye of doves, which are loving, lovely, clear and chaste,

1. Christ's eyes may be said to be as doves, because of the lovingness of them; the eyes of doves are not fierce and furious, as the eyes of some creatures are; there are no fury in Christ's eyes, as fixed upon his people: 'The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;' that is, his eye is upon poor trembling sinners, who come to the throne of grace, and prostrate themselves at his feet, humbly imploring his grace and mercy, and venturing on him as sinners ready to perish; his eye is upon them all the while; not to destroy them, and cut them off from his sight; but to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine: his eyes are upon all his righteous ones; not to cut off the remembrance of

them from the earth, which he threatens to the wicked, but to deliver them out of all their troubles: his eyes are upon all creatures, and all things, for they run to and fro throughout the whole earth; but then it is to show himself strong in the behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him: his eye of love is always upon his people, to succor, relieve, protect, and defend them: his eye is upon them under all their trials, temptations, desertions, sorrows and afflictions: his eye is upon them when in the furnace, to observe the exercise of their grace upon him, their carriage to him; and when tried, to deliver out of it; for his *eyes* behold, and his eyelids try the children of men,

2. They may be compared to dove's eyes, because they are lovely, as well as loving; and it is for this reason he compares the church's eyes to doves, in chapter [2MI5](#):1:15 and [2MI6](#):4:1. Every part of this description serves to set off the beauty and loveliness of Christ's eyes; they are said to be 'as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water,' because doves delight to sit there; where being pleased with the pure and purling streams, their eyes look more quick and lively, and so more beautiful and lovely. Also they are said to be as doves washed with milk; either as milk-white doves, which look very pleasant and delightful; or as doves washing themselves in streams of water, look as clean as if they had been washed in milk: likewise they are said to be as the eyes of doves fitly set; that is, neither too much staring out, ^{f140} nor too much sunk within; neither hollow-eyed nor goggle-eyed, which are both extreme deformities in the eye.

3. They may be compared to doves eyes, because of their clearness and perspicuity; Christ's eyes are so clear, he is so sharp-sighted, that he can see all persons, and things in all places, at one view; for 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:' more especially his eyes behold, and he takes cognizance of his own people; these he knows by name, and distinguishes them in his care and affections from all others; he sees and knows all their wants perfectly well, is able to supply them, and has an heart to do it; and seeing that 'all things are naked and open unto him, with whom they have to do at the throne of grace,' they are encouraged to come thither with the greater Boldness; he sees and knows all the contrivances and designs of wicked men against his people, though formed in the dark; for the darkness and the light are both alike to him; his eyes are so clear, sharp and penetrating, that there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: and

this makes much for the comfort of his people, as well as serves to command and set off the loveliness and excellency of him.

4. They may be compared to doves eyes for their faithfulness and chastity: Christ is faithful to God, who appointed him to be the mediator and savior of his people; and to that covenant of grace which he made with him; in which he promised many things, which are fully performed by him; and he received many blessings of grace for his people, which he is faithful to distribute unto them and bestow upon them he hath given meat to them that fear him, as an indication that his eye is upon, and that he will ever be mindful of his covenant; he has a respect unto it, and therefore calls those by his grace, and brings them to glory, who are interested in it: also as the eye of the dove is only upon its own mate, is faithful and chaste unto it, and has no regard to another; so Christ's eye of love is only upon his church; as she is his dove, so she is his only one: hence he says, 'my dove, my undefiled is but one;' and as he loves her above all others, so he loves none but her with his special and peculiar love, in Which he always rests and continues.

2dly, Christ's eyes of love, as fixed on his own people, are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water. Now this sets forth the loveliness and beauty of Christ's eyes, as has been already observed; the eyes of doves being more brisk, quick and lively, when sitting by rivers of water, where they are delighted in and pleased with the clear and running streams thereof: and may also lead us to observe these two things;

1. The fixedness and constancy of Christ's eye of love being set upon his own people: doves sitting by a river side, keep their eyes fixed upon the purling streams; and in drinking, as Pliny ^{f141} observes, do not *resupinare colla*, erect their necks, and lift up their heads, but keeping their eyes fixed upon the water, drink a large draught of it in the manner of beasts: Christ, being sweetly delighted with his own people, has fixed his eye upon them. and never removes it from them; he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous; his eye was upon them before time, continues so in time, and will be so to all eternity; for having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end,

2. It may intend the object of Christ's love: some of the Jewish writers, ^{f142} by the rivers of water, would have their schools and synagogues intended; where the waters of the law flow, the difficulties of it are explained, and its proper senses given: but they may be much better understood of gospel-

churches, made up of righteous persons; who are justified by Christ's righteousness; sanctified by his grace; sprinkled with the clean water of the everlasting covenant; and who have low, mean, and humble thoughts of themselves; on such as these Christ's eye is fixed, and to these he looks; see ^{<346>}Isaiah 66:2, here the ordinances of the gospel are administered in their purity, the waters of the sanctuary flow, the doctrines of grace are powerfully preached, and souls hereby much delighted and refreshed.

3dly, These eyes of Christ are said to be as the eyes of doves washed with milk; and this is expressive both of the beauty and clearness of them, as has been already observed: eyes, when washed, are clearest, and so most lovely; like milk-white doves, which look the most beautiful, especially when they have just washed themselves: respect may be had to the color of doves; white doves were had in esteem in Palestine and Syria.

^{f143} And this may also intend the purity of Christ's eyes, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, with any pleasure or approbation; and likewise the meekness and mildness of them: his eyes are not red and furious, but look as if they had been washed with milk, being full of mercy, pity and compassion to poor sinners; his heart is full of it, and his actions, as God-man and mediator, give the strongest proofs of his being a merciful as well as a faithful high priest,

4thly, These eyes are said to be fitly set, or fitting by fulness; ^{f144} that is, by full channels of water. Christ himself is as rivers of waters, which denote the fullness and abundance of grace that is in him; and by these full fountains of grace, life and salvation, he sits, dwells and abides; and thither he, the lamb in the midst of the throne, leads his people. Or the words may be rendered, 'sitting in fullness;' ^{f145} and so it expresses the loveliness and beauty of Christ's eyes, as has been already observed: his eyes were neither sunk too low within, nor stood too much out, but exactly filled their holes; they were fitly set as diamonds in a ring, or as precious stones in the breast-plate of the high-priest, which exactly filled the cavities which were made for them, and therefore were called stones of fullness; see ^{<237>}Exodus 25:7 and ^{<237>}28:17,20, so R. Solomon Jarchi and R. Aben Ezra understand the words; tho' they may be better translated, 'sitting upon fullness'. ^{f146} Christ's eyes are set or sitting,

1. Upon the fullness of this world; 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness of it;' as he has a right unto it, so his eyes are upon it; for 'his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth;' they are an every place at one and the

same time, beholding at one view the evil and the good, all their persons, and all their actions; his eye is upon that vast number of persons and things that fill the whole universe, and upon the large variety of actions performed there: now this sets forth the extensiveness of Christ's omniscience, and that general and universal knowledge he is possessed of; which sense is much favored by R. Sol. Jarchi's note on the words.

2. Christ's eyes were set, or sitting upon the fullness of time in which he was to come into the world, and perform the great work of redemption; for as he was appointed to be the author of this work, and the persons were pitched upon whom he was to redeem, so the time was also fixed when he was to do it; and this is called 'the fullness of time,' in ^{<4010>}Ephesians 1:10; ^{<4014>}Galatians 4:4; and now, from the first making of the everlasting covenant, down throughout the whole Old Testament dispensation, Christ's eye was fixed on this fullness; waiting, watching, as it were longing till the time was come, when he should appear in human nature, and do the work which his heart was so much set upon; witness his many appearances in an human form before his incarnation, and the frequent notices he gave of his near approach.

3. Christ's eyes are set, or sitting upon his fullness, the church, whom in the fullness of time he came into this world to redeem: the church is called so, in ^{<4013>}Ephesians 1:23, which 'is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all;' and then is she, and will she appear to be so, when all his elect ones are called by grace; and these all filled with those gifts and graces of the Spirit designed, for them, by him who is ascended to fill all things; and more especially when they are all grown up in proportion, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: now Christ's eye is upon his church, and upon every member of it, until all this is done; and will be so when time shall be no more.

4. His eyes were, and still are set, or sitting upon the fullness of the Gentiles, until that is brought in: his eye was upon them in the everlasting covenant; therefore both he and his Father thought fit that he should be not only the redeemer of Israel, but a light to the Gentiles also, and be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth: his eye was upon them during the Old Testament dispensation; and therefore gave out many promises and prophecies concerning their calling: his eye was upon them when he died and suffered; and therefore he became a propitiation, not for the Jews only, but also for the Gentile world: his eye was upon them when he gave the

commission to his disciples to preach the gospel; and therefore bid them ‘go into all the world, and preach it to every creature;’ which he owned for the conversion of thousands: and his eye is still upon them, and will be so, until all those other sheep are brought in which are not of the Jewish fold.

5. His eyes are set, or sitting on his own personal fullness as God; for ‘in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily:’ his eye was upon this when he undertook the work of redemption, and so it was when he was actually concerned in it; therefore he failed not, neither was he discouraged; this supported him under it, and comfortably carried him through it.

6. His eyes are set, or sitting upon his fullness as mediator; which is a dispensative, communicative fullness put into his hands, to be distributed to his people; and his eye is continually upon it, to supply the wants of his people out of it, under all their straits, difficulties, temptations, sorrows, and afflictions: and where Christ’s eyes are fixed, there should ours be also; we should be continually looking to, and be strong, not in ourselves, but in ‘the grace which is in Christ Jesus.’

VERSE 13.

*His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:
his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*

IN these words are the fourth and fifth particular instances of Christ’s beauty; for having described him by his head, locks, and eyes, she here describes him by his cheeks and lips; still keeping in a beautiful and regular order in her description of him. And,

First, She describes him by his *cheeks*; which, she says, ‘are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:’ by which we are to understand, not the smooth and naked cheeks, but with hair growing upon them, which best suits with the metaphor of a bed of spices; for as aromatic plants and sweet-smelling flowers bud out, and spring up from a bed of spices, and make it look very beautiful; so the hair of a man’s beard puts itself forth, and grows upon his cheeks, or jaws, ^{f147} as the word may be rendered, and makes him look very graceful and majestic: R. Aben Ezra understands by his cheeks, his beard; as also do many Christian Interpreters. ^{f148} And this was literally true of Christ; who was not ‘an infant of days,’ but a man grown up, when he suffered in the room and stead of sinners; as is manifest from his ‘giving his

back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair.’ The cheeks rising, and being a little elevated, are fitly described by beds in a garden; or fragrant flowers, or fruit trees, reared up in the form of towers, as some render the word, or pyramids; or by a dish of sweetmeats placed in such a figure: and the hair of the cheeks or beard, are aptly represented by spices, rising up from a bed of them; and all denote the beauty, savor and majesty of Christ: or, as the Vulgate Latin version, ‘as beds of spices set by confectioners;’^{f149} not as aromatic plants, set in rows by the gardener; but as the spices themselves, set in rows by the confectioner in vessels, or placed in such a manner in his shop to be sold,^{f150} which being of various colors, especially red and white, the cheeks, for color and eminence, are compared to them. And being taken in a mystical and spiritual sense, may intend, either,

1st, Believers, who are the hair of Christ’s cheeks, as well as of his head: these grow upon him, receive their life and nourishment from him, and are ornamental to him: these are as ‘a bed of spices and sweet flowers;’ for, being ‘perfumed with the myrrh and frankincense’ of his grace, they ascend upwards in the exercise of faith, hope and love, as ‘towers of perfumes,’^{f151} as the words translated *sweet flowers* may be rendered; they are fruitful in themselves, like a spicy bed, odoriferous to Christ, and delightful to each other. Or else,

2dly, The graces of the Spirit which are in Christ as man and mediator: these, like the hair of a man’s beard which grow upon his cheeks, adorn the man Christ Jesus, and render him very lovely and graceful; these grow in large numbers on him; he is ‘full of grace and truth;’ and though there is a large communication of grace made daily to believers from this fulness which is in Christ; yet it is no way lessened thereby, even as the hair of a man’s beard, which the oftener cut, the thicker and faster it grows. Now these lovely cheeks thus adorned, may be said to be ‘as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,’ because of their beauty and loveliness; no spicy bed, set and filled with aromatic plants and sweet-smelling flowers, can be more lovely and delightful to the eye of sense, than Christ, with all his grace, is to the eye of faith; the reason why he appears to a believer ‘fairer than the children of men,’ is, because grace, in all its fullness, ‘is poured into his lips:’ also they may be compared to these, because of the sweet odor of them; the effluvia of the sweet flowers and most fragrant spices growing in large numbers, in beds of them, cannot be more grateful to the smell, than the graces of Christ are to believers; and therefore they are compared

to ointments, the savor of which cheats the minds, and attracts the hearts of his people to him: this oil of gladness being powered plentifully on his head, runs clown his beard, and so to every part of his garments; which makes them all 'smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia;' and renders him, and all that belong, to him, sweet, savory, and delightful to his saints. Likewise they may be compared to 'a bed of spices and sweet flowers,' because of the variety of them: as in an aromatic garden there are various beds, and in those beds various spices, plants and flowers; so there is in Christ a variety of the gifts and graces of the Spirit; there are diversities of gifts, and all sorts of grace, which make up that fullness, from whence believers receive grace for grace, Or else,

3dly, This may be expressive of the manliness and courage, prudence, gravity and majesty of Christ; when the beard appears in men like 'a bed of spices,' thick and well-grown; it is a manifest indication that they are grown up to the estate of men, and are at years of discretion. Now Christ's manliness and courage appeared in his boldly refuting the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees; and in preaching the everlasting gospel, though he often ran the risk of his life in doing it; and to the very last he bore a noble testimony to it, and 'witnessed a good confession' of it before many witnesses: as alto he gave a manifest discovery of it at the time of his being 'taken by his enemies; as well as in Pilate's hall, where he was smitten, buffeted, scourged, mocked, and spit on; and yet in the midst of all, discovered the greatest undauntedness and composure of mind; but never more than while he was bearing his Father's wrath, and the strokes of divine justice, grappling with his and our enemies, and undergoing a painful and ignominious death; for under all this he failed not, neither was he discouraged. His 'cheeks being as a bed of spices,' shew him to be endued with manliness and courage, which he thus discovered; as they also show his prudence and gravity, which he manifested in all his discourses, 'questions and answers; for ' in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;' for at twelve years of age, when the lovely down scarce appeared upon his cheeks, he discoursed with so much wisdom and gravity, put such questions to the doctors, and returned such answers to theirs, as filled them with wonder and surprise: and much more did he so, when his 'cheeks were as a bed of spices;' when he was grown up to man's estate, and was entered upon his public ministry; he spake with so much wisdom and authority, that his audience was amazed at him; he dealt so prudently, according to the prophecy of him, that the subtle Scribes and

Pharisees did not care to meddle with him; for as they could not answer his questions, so they dare not put any to him; his enemies themselves being witnesses, 'never man spake like him.' And this prudence and gravity of his appeared throughout the whole conduct of his life; his words were with power and authority; his deportment was grave and serious; and his walk and conversation, as it was in all holiness and righteousness towards God, so it was in all wisdom and prudence towards men.

But if by cheeks, we understand that part of the face as smooth and naked, without the additional consideration of hair upon them; then by them may be meant, either,

1st, The scriptures of truth. ^{f152} The Targum understands them of the two tables of stone, which were written in ten lines, like the rows or beds of an aromatic garden, productive of acute and delightful senses; much to the same purpose does R. Solomon Jarchi give the sense of them: but it seems better to understand them of the whole word of God, the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. These are as it were the cheeks or face of Christ, which represent and set forth the glory of his person, the virtue of his blood, the excellency of his righteousness, and the riches of his grace: these may be said to be 'as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,' being in several distinct plots or beds: for this garden of the scriptures was not thrown up at once, and formed in that beautiful order in which now it is; but first one spicy bed was made, and then another; for 'God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets:' these beds are set with a variety of 'exceeding great and precious promises,' and excellent doctrines; which the meditating soul, like the industrious bee, sucks much sweetness from: all those excellent spices, and sweet-smelling flowers which grow here, have their different usefulness; for 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,' ^{<5186>2} Timothy 3:16. And as aromatic plants and fragrant flowers are delightful to the eye, sweet to the smell, and refreshing to the senses, so are these truths and promises; they are like 'apples of gold in pictures of silver' to the eye of faith; diffuse a delightful odor to the smell, give a savor of Christ's knowledge, when and wherever explained; and being held in the hand of faith, refresh all the spiritual senses, and are 'the joy and rejoicing of the heart.' Or else,

2dly, By Christ's cheeks, may be meant his presence with his people, and the manifestation of himself unto them in his word and ordinances. Thus the presence of God is frequently called his face in scripture; as when saints are said to seek his face, or he is said to hide his face from them; which are to be understood of God's withdrawing his presence from them, and their desire of enjoying it: thus Christ's presence with his people may be set forth by his cheeks or face; which when they enjoy, they see him in his beauty, behold him in his glory, and are ravished with his love: and this may be said to be 'as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers;' for nothing is so desirable and delightful to believers as this; walking in the light of Christ's countenance, is far preferable to walking among beds of spices, where the most fragrant plants and odoriferous flowers grow; nothing that is earthly and sensual, with all its affluence and pleasure, can so strike the carnal senses, as the presence of Christ does the spiritual ones. Or else,

3dly, The cheeks being the seat of modesty, bashfulness and blushing, may intend the humility of Christ; which appeared in his assumption of our nature, and throughout the whole course of his life, and more especially at his death: and this is a very great ornament to him, and renders him very delightful to his people. How lovely does the meek and lowly Jesus look! how beautiful are those blushing cheeks of his, who, though he was 'equal with God, yet was found in fashion as a man!' and though possessed of all divine perfections, and transcendent excellencies, yet always spoke modestly of himself; and did not seek his own, but his Father's glory, and the good of his people.

Secondly, Which is indeed the fifth particular instance of his beauty, she describes him by his lips; which, she says, are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh: lips being the instruments of speech, and those compared to lilies, may be expressive of florid language and eloquence; so Lucian^{f153} describes the Trojan orators as having a lilian voice, that is, a florid and eloquent one. And by lips, may be meant the words of Christ; which are like lilies,

1. For purity; 'the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times:' Christ's words are free from all pollution and defilement, from all scurrility and raillery, from all deceit and hypocrisy, and from all human mixtures whatever; and therefore his word is called 'the sincere milk of the word.'

2. His lips are compared to lilies for the beauty of them: and I suppose that not white lilies are here meant, but purple or red lilies; of which Pliny ^{f154} speaks, the flower of which, he says, some call the rose-lily; so Maimonides ^{f155} speaks of red lilies, by which he interprets **drwz** the rose; which, he says, have a good smell, and of them it is said, his lips, like lilies, ~~2163~~ Song of Solomon 5:13 and also R. Alshech on the text: the best of these grew in Syria, in Antioch, and Loadicea; ^{f156} and these best suit with lips; for not white, but red lips, ^{f157} are accounted the most beautiful; and therefore Christ compares the church's lips to 'a thread of scarlet,' in chapter 4:3. There is a beauty and loveliness in all Christ's words; they are pleasant ones; they are gracious words, or words of grace, which drop from his lips; and indeed how can his lips drop any other? his speech cannot be but always with grace, and with gracefulness, when grace itself is poured into his lips.

3. They may be compared to lilies for the fineness, thinness, softness and delicateness of them: thinness, as well as redness, adds a beauty to the lips: Christ's voice was not heard, his lips did not move in setting forth his own praises; for he sought not his own, but his Father's glory; he did not speak for himself, but his words and actions spoke for him; he did as Solomon advised, ~~2170~~ Proverbs 27:2. 'Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.'

4. They may be compared to lilies for the sweet odor of them: Christ's lips drop 'sweet-smelling myrrh; his words, his gospel, and the doctrines of it, diffuse an agreeable savor; to some they are 'the savor of life unto life;' and though they are 'the savor of death unto death' to others, yet that does not arise from Christ's words in themselves, but is owing to their being rejected, slighted, and contemned by men.

5. They may be compared to lilies for the glory and majesty of them: Christ says, that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field;' Christ's words come with authority, and are clothed with power; 'the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty,' ~~2184~~ Psalm 29:4.

Again, these lips of Christ are said to drop 'sweet-smelling myrrh;' for the construction is not with lilies, but with lips; for myrrh does not drop from lilies, but may be said to do so from Christ's lips: though some ^{f158} think, the allusion is to crowns, made of red or purple lilies, wore at nuptial

feasts, on which were poured oil of myrrh, and so dropped from them; but it is from the lips, and not lilies, the myrrh is said to drop. And here we may consider,

1st, The matter of those words which drop from Christ's lips, which is said to be as 'sweet-smelling myrrh.'

2dly, The manner of the delivery of them, which is dropping.

1st, The matter of Christ's words is like 'sweet-smelling myrrh.'

1. Grateful and acceptable as such; Christ's lips drop the 'sweet-smelling myrrh' of peace and reconciliation to rebellious sinners, pardon to guilty ones, rest to those that are burdened, comfort to the distressed, and life to all his people: this he did in the days of his flesh, and still continues to do by his ministering servants; who are his lips, by whom he speaks, and are thought by some ^{f159} to be chiefly intended here; and so will his lips drop 'sweet-smelling myrrh,' the words of eternal life, when he shall say, 'come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

2. His lips drop words, for matter like 'sweet swelling myrrh,' preserving from rottenness, putrefaction and corruption: Christ's words preserve from the corruption of sin; his doctrines are 'according to godliness;' they are so far from having a tendency to encourage persons in sin, that they are the best antidote and preservative against it; the doctrines of grace teach us 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;' they are the means of implanting and maintaining principles opposite to them: they also preserve from the corruption of false doctrines, which are pernicious to souls, and 'eat as do a canker;' but Christ's words are wholesome ones; and those whose hearts are established with them, are not 'carried about with divers and strange doctrines;' nor are they 'tossed to and fro with every wind' of error, but retain their steadfastness in Christ Jesus: likewise, wherever Christ's words come with power, they preserve from going down to 'the pit of corruption;' for Christ says that whosoever 'keeps his sayings, shall never see death,' that is, the second death.

2dly, The manner of the delivery of Christ's words; which, as the matter of them is grateful, this is grateful, and is said to be dropping,

1. Gradually, and not all at once: Christ did not speak all at once to his disciples, but by little and little, as they were able to bear it; they had not

their light, knowledge and comfort all at once; no more have saints now, nor must they expect it; we are first babes, then young' men, and then fathers in Christ.

2. Seasonably, at proper times, as the wants and necessities of his people require; for 'God hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,' ^{<2804>}Isaiah 50:4.

3. Constantly; his lips dropped sweet-smelling myrrh when on earth, and still drop it now he is in heaven; 'see that ye refuse not him that speaketh;' that now speaketh, continues to speak, and will do so until all his people are gathered in.

4. Powerfully and effectually; though his words do but drop, yet they drop with power; they make and leave impressions where they drop; they work effectually in them that believe.

5. Yet sweetly and gently; not like hasty and sudden showers of rain, which beat down the grass and corn; but as rain that drops gently and mildly, and so is acceptable to the earth, and makes it fruitful; 'my doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew,' etc., ^{<680D>}Deuteronomy 32:2. Now this graceful and agreeable manner of his delivery, as well as the grateful matter of his words, render him very acceptable to his church, and shew him to be a most excellent person, and 'the chiefest among ten thousand;' which is what she attempts to demonstrate, in this description, to the daughters of Jerusalem. The kisses of Christ's lips, or the manifestations of his love, may be taken into the sense of these words which are as delightful as sweet-smelling myrrh; see chapter 1:2 and such a sentiment is expressed in the same language by others. ^{f160}

VERSE 14.

*His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl:
his belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires*

THESE words contain the sixth and seventh particular in stances of Christ's beauty, or distinguishing characters of him, whereby he might be known from all other beloveds, and wherein he was preferable to them.

I. She describes him by 'his hands;' which, she says, 'are as gold set with the beryl.'

II. By ‘his belly or bowels;’ which, she says, ‘is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.’

I. She sets forth the beauty and loveliness of his hands, by comparing them with ‘gold rings set with the beryl;’ which is the sixth particular instanced in: it was usual in former times, as now, for gold rings to be set with one precious stone or another, ^{f161} and particularly with the beryl. ^{f162} And by his hands may be meant, either,

1st, The munificence and liberality of Christ, manifested in the distributions of his grace to his own people: all grace is in Christ’s hands, being put there by God the Father, as an instance of his love to Christ, as mediator, and his regard to those whom he made his care and charge; ‘the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands,’ ~~John~~ John 3:35, all fullness of grace is in Christ, of justifying, sanctifying, pardoning and adopting grace; all the blessings and promises of the covenant are in his hands; all fullness of wisdom and strength, light and life, peace, joy and comfort, is with him which is all lodged in his hands, in order to be distributed to God’s chosen ones: Christ, as the ascended Lord and King, ‘received gifts for men,’ and as such, gives them to them; the daily experience of souls testify it, for ‘of his fullness we all receive, and grace for grace.’ Christ does all this liberally, and upbraideth not; he does not do it with a reflection on our ‘unworthiness; nor does he hit us on the teeth of our manifold sins and transgressions: as he does not withhold the blessings of grace from those they belong to; so when he gives, he does not do it grudgingly, but freely and cheerfully; not sparingly, but plenteously; he openeth his hands wide, and largely communicates to his people: all which he does wisely and prudently, at such times and in such ways, as will best suit with their wants and necessities; for as a ‘wise and faithful steward’ of God’s grace, he gives to every one ‘their portion of meat in due season.’ And now these hands of Christ’s, which so faithfully and wisely, so liberally, freely and largely distribute the blessings of grace to the saints, are as beautiful and lovely as hands adorned with gold rings, set with the most valuable precious stones: How glorious does he appear to the eye of faith, ‘as exalted to be a prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins,’ with his hands full of grace, and a heart to give it! How beautiful do both his right and left hand look, in whose ‘right hand is length of days,’ and in whose ‘left hand are riches and honor!’ Or else,

2dly, By his hands may be meant his power in working: Christ's hands have always been active; 'my father worketh hitherto, and I work;' that is, I have been working, and I continue to do so. Those hands of Christ, which are said to be 'as gold rings,' etc. laid the foundation of the heavens and the earth, formed all things out of nothing, reared up the beautiful structure of the universe, and filled it with proper inhabitants; for without him was not any thing made that was made:' and in doing this, his hands look like gold rings; there is a shine, a luster on them; the glory of the divine perfections appears in them; 'the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work;' these hands also bear up and support the pillars of the earth; and in this he appears to be the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, in that he upholds all things, by the word of his power: these hands likewise hold the reins of government; the government of the whole universe in general, as well as of the church in particular, is in the hands and upon the shoulder of our Lord Jesus Christ: but in nothing does Christ's hands appear more beautiful and lovely, like gold rings set with the beryl, than in grasping, holding, and retaining the saints; who are put into his hand by God the Fathers where they are safe and secure; for out of his hands none can pluck: How beautiful do the hands of Christ look, in holding those bright stars, the ministers of the gospel there! for he 'holdeth the seven stars in his right-hand:' and more do they appear so, when we view all the saints there; who are so many gold rings, jewels, pearls, and precious stones in Christ's esteem. Or else,

3dly, By his hands may be meant, his works performed by his almighty power: as lips being the instruments of speech, intend Christ's words in the former verse; so hands being the instruments of action, may intend his works in this; such as the works of creation and providence, which are all formed in a beautiful order, in a delightful connection with, and an agreeable subordination and subserviency to each other; his works of miracles here on earth, on all which were a shine of deity, and were a demonstration of his being the true Messiah and Savior of the world; and more especially his works of grace and redemption, which may be said to be 'as gold rings set with the beryl.'

1. For the perfection of them: the circular form is accounted the most perfect, and therefore they are compared to gold rings, which are of such a form; Christ is a rock and his work is perfect, and particularly that of redemption: he does none of his works by halves; and especially this, which

he never left till he could say, it is finished; and so being made perfect himself through sufferings, having perfectly fulfilled both the preceptive and penal parts of the law, he became the complete author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

2. For the excellency and glory of them; gold rings are valuable, beautiful and ornamental: all Christ's works of grace are glorious and honorable; and more especially this of redemption, in which the glory of all the three persons, and the glory of all the divine perfections, is manifestly displayed, and eternally secured; 'his glory is great in thy salvation,' ^{<1915>}Psalm 21:5.

3. For the variety of them; gold rings, in the plural number, are here mentioned: Christ's works of grace are many and various, they are more than can be reckoned up; and even in the work of redemption, there is an admirable variety; many are the things which he has wrought out, brought in, and procured by his precious blood; such as a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, peace and reconciliation, liberty of access to God, deliverance from all enemies, sin, Satan, hell, and death, etc.

4. Christ's hands in working out redemption, may be said to be as gold rings set with the beryl: this is one of the precious stones in the high priest's breast-plate, mentioned in ^{<1231>}Exodus 28:20 and is one of the pearl foundations of the new Jerusalem, ^{<6211>}Revelation 21:20, the appearance of the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, is said to be like it, ^{<3116>}Ezekiel 1:16, and the body of that great person who appeared to Daniel, chapter 10:6, is said to be as this stone; so that it is no wonder that Christ's hands should be said to be as gold rings set with it.

The Hebrew word Tarshish, here used, is sometimes the name of a person, and at other times the name of a place, and is used sometimes to signify the sea; and naturalists ^{f163} tell us, that the best beryl is that which most resembles the color of the sea; thus all the three Targums on ^{<1231>}Exodus 28:20 call it *amy pwrk crum yamma*, from its being of a sea color; and Junius and Tremellius here render it, *beryllus thalassius*, the sea coloured beryl: this stone is found in India; and being carried about by persons, is said ^{f164} to inspire them with courage to help them to conquer their enemies, and to put an end to strifes and controversies. Christ, whose hands are said to be as gold rings set with beryl, in working out man's redemption, discovered the utmost courage, resolution and magnanimity of mind; when he was bearing his Father's wrath, suffering the severe strokes

of justice, and grappling with all his and our enemies; when he was deserted by his friends, forsaken by his God, and insulted by his enemies, he failed not, neither was he discouraged; when he saw that there was none to give him the least assistance, his own arm brought salvation to him; he stood the field, fought the battle alone, got an entire victory over all enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; saved us out of the hands of them all, and put an end to that grand controversy between God and us, occasioned by sin; he repaired that breach, made up that distance, and reconciled those two contending parties, by making peace between them, through the blood of his cross.

5. Some think that the chrysolite is here meant, as Ainsworth and others; which is a precious stone of a golden color, ^{f165} from whence it has its name; it is mentioned in ~~(621)~~ Revelation 21:20 and is said ^{f166} to be good against melancholy, fear and folly, and to fill the mind with courage, cheerfulness and wisdom; which, being applied to Christ's hands in working out redemption, may shew that Christ not only performed this work with courage, but with cheerfulness, and also with the utmost wisdom: his wisdom appears in all the works of his hands, as the psalmist says, ~~(104)~~ Psalm 104:24. 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!' but in none more than in this of redemption, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; this was so well contrived, and so fully effected, that all the divine perfections are glorified in it; he has herein secured the glory of justice and holiness, as well as given the greatest display of his grace and mercy; he has satisfied a broken law, and destroyed sin, and yet saved the sinner; herein appears the manifold wisdom of God; there is such a variety of it, and such a glory in it, that angels are amazed at it, and desire to look into it: Christ, as the great Redeemer, is not only the power, but also the wisdom of God; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; of which he gave the fullest proof when he was concerned in this work.

6. Others think that the hyacinth or jacinth is here intended; Pagnine renders it, 'full of precious stones, like hyacinth; the Vulgate Latin and Tigurine versions render it the same way; this is likewise mentioned in ~~(621)~~ Revelation 21:20, it is of a violet or purple color, for which reason the flower so called has its name; ^{f167} also it is said ^{f168} to be good against the bitings of venomous beasts; and being worn on the finger, and put about the neck, keeps strangers safe, and renders them grateful to their host: the bluish and purple color of this stone, and its ruby veins, which some say it

has, may represent a crucified and bleeding Christ; when his precious hands, which are as gold rings, wrought out man's salvation; by whose blue wounds and purple streams of blood, souls have a cure for every disease; and particularly for those wounds which their sins, those scorpions within, and Satan, that old serpent without, have made in them; for by his stripes we are healed; it is the precious blood of Christ, and spotless righteousness and glorious redemption wrought out thereby, which being applied by the Spirit, and laid hold on by faith, preserve souls safe from all enemies and evils, as sin, Satan, law, hell and wrath; and which only render them grateful and acceptable to God; for saints are only accepted in the beloved on the foot of redemption, and upon the account of his justifying righteousness; for the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness-sake, because he hath magnified the law, and made it honorable, ^{<322>}Isaiah 42:21.

7. Others have thought that the sardonyx is intended, as Cocceius; this is an Arabian gem, and one of the principal ones; it is a composition of the sardius and onyx stones ^{f169}, as appears from the name; it is of a white and ruddy color, and much resembles the nail of a man's hand, set in flesh, both for color and smoothness; and it used to be set in rings, and wore on the hand; hence an hand adorned with one, is called *sardonychata manus* ^{f170}; and a ring set with this stone, was called *sardonyche* ^{f171}: this is also mentioned in ^{<621>}Revelation 21:20, and may represent the glorious deity, innocent humanity, and bloody sufferings of Christ, whose hands have obtained eternal redemption for us; it was necessary that he should die, in order to satisfy for our sins, which he could not have done, had he had any sin of his own; neither would the sufferings of this innocent person have been sufficient, had he been a mere creature, and not truly God: it is by the precious blood of Christ that we are redeemed, and by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish; and what made this blood powerful and efficacious to such a purpose, is the influence of the divine nature: all these three may be observed in one verse, ^{<394>}Hebrews 9:14.

II. She describes him by his belly, which, she says, is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. The generality of ancient interpreters ^{f172} understand by *belly*, the human nature of Christ, which is expressed by this part, because of the frailty and weakness of it: Christ's human nature, though not attended with sinful, yet with all sinless infirmities; he was encompassed with them; and was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; and yet, like ivory, was firm, constant, and immoveable in sufferings, being supported and strengthened by the divine nature, he

appeared to be the man, of God's right hand, the son of man whom he made strong for himself; and, like bright and white ivory, pure, holy, innocent and spotless; and now like bright and white ivory overlaid: with sapphires, being glorified and exalted at God's right hand. Ivory is used to express the beauty of persons; see chapter ^{<2100>}7:7, so the beauty of AENEAS is described by it ^{f173}; even by such as has been in the hands of a workman, smoothed and polished by him, and so become bright, as here called: the sapphire is used to express the glory and majesty of the Divine Being, in ^{<2210>}Exodus 24:10.

The Septuagint render it thus, 'his belly is an ivory box upon a sapphire stone ^{f174},' and this serves very well to represent the body, and may very aptly be applied to the human nature of Christ, in which 'the fullness of the Godhead dwells,' and displays its glory: but the words may be better rendered, 'his bowels are as bright ivory,' etc., ^{f175} so the same word is translated in verse 4, and may express the love, grace, mercy, pity and compassion of Christ to poor souls; which may be compared to bright ivory,

- 1.** For the valuableness and excellency of it: the ivory is the tooth of the elephant, and is very valuable; Solomon made himself a throne of it, and overlaid it with gold; that is, studded it, and enameled it with gold, as this is said to be sapphires: nothing is so valuable as Christ's love; the brightest ivory, the richest jewels, most precious stones, and excellent sapphires, are not to be compared to it; his 'loving; kindness is better than life,' or all the things which render life comfortable and delightful.
- 2.** For the purity, sincerity, and chastity of it; there is no spot, stain, or blemish of hypocrisy and deceit in it; but like pure bright ivory, is without the least sully or tarnish: nor is there any reason for jealousy' of it; both the ivory and the sapphire are observed to be preservatives of chastity; and though God's children are often jealous of Christ's love, yet they have no reason for it; for as he loves them above all others, so he loves none but them in that way; and he 'rests in his love' towards them, and is the 'same yesterday, to day, and for ever.'
- 3.** For the firmness, constancy and durableness of it; ivory is firm and lasting; Christ's love is so; it is from everlasting to everlasting, always the same, never varies, and will continue so for ever; for 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'

4. For its reviving, refreshing and strengthening nature; ivory, to which Christ's bowels are here compared, is said ^{f176} to be a great strengthener of the bowels and inward parts: Christ's love being shed abroad in our hearts, revives our fainting souls, puts new strength into our graces, and makes us not ashamed or confounded, even in a day of trouble.

5. It is like bright ivory 'overlaid with sapphires;' that is, either covered with them, as the word signifies, or rather enameled with them: of this precious stone frequent mention is made in scripture; it is used to express the glory of God, ^{<0240>}Exodus 24:10, and the throne of his majesty is said to be as the appearance of it, ^{<0126>}Ezekiel 1:26, the beauty of the Nazarites is represented by it, ^{<0307>}Lamentations 4:7, and the glory of the church in the latter day: ^{<2541>}Isaiah 54:11, it was one of the precious gems in the high-priest's breast-plate; and one of the foundations of the new Jerusalem: some of the Jewish writers ^{f177} say, that the two tables on which the law was engraven was made of this; it is a very clear and transparent gem ^{f178}, of a coerulean or sky color, shining with golden specks; it is said ^{f179} to help those that are bitten with scorpions, to defend the heart from the infection of poison, and to cure intestine ulcers: this may all serve to set forth the glory and excellency of Christ's love; it is this oil of love, grace and mercy, which being poured in by the good Samaritan, heals the wounds that sin has made, and preserves from the dreadful effects of its poison and venom. Albertus Magnus ^{f180} says, that the sapphire creates peace and concord, and renders the mind pure and devout to God; but whether this be so or no, it is certain that the love of Christ, discovered to a poor distressed sinner, produces calmness and serenity of mind, creates 'a peace which passeth all understanding;' removes that enmity, and weakens the remains of it, which is naturally in the heart of man against God, Christ, his gospel, people, ways and ordinances; there is nothing attracts our love to Christ as this does; 'we love him because he first loved us:' nor is there any thing that more engages our hearts in acts of obedience to him than this; it is this which lays us under obligation, constrains us to, and enforces on us a regard to all his commands and ordinances, and makes us most cheerful in our observance of them.

But there are some interpreters ^{f181} who think, that not any part of the body is here described, as the belly or bowels, but rather that some covering of those parts is intended; and in, deed it does not seem so agreeable with the rules of decency, nor consistent with the spouse's modesty, to describe her beloved by those naked parts to the daughters of Jerusalem; any more than

it does with the scope of the place, which is to give some distinguishing marks and characters of him to them, that they might know him from another; but these parts being out of sight, and not exposed to public view, a description of them could be of no service to them in this respect; nor indeed does what is said serve so much to commend the belly, as it does some covering of it: R. Aben Ezra thinks the girdle about the loins is here meant; and if so, it may intend either Christ's royal girdle, which is a girdle of righteousness and faithfulness; all his regal administrations being performed, as well according to the strictest rules of justice and equity, as with the utmost wisdom and prudence: or else, his priestly girdle, which is called a golden one, ^{f183} Revelation 1:13, and is no doubt an allusion to what the high-priest wore: or else, the covering intended may respect the embroidered coat of the high-priest, which covered his whole body; whose embroidery were holes or incisures, in which, as Jarchi ^{f182} says, were put jewels and precious stones; and so as the church described Christ as a prince before, she is thought to describe him here as a priest: or rather, the ephod with the breast-plate is here alluded to, in which were twelve precious stones, and, among the rest, the sapphire, on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; and it is certain, that the Targum on this place has reference to it; for it mentions the stones one by one, with the several names of the tribes engraven on them: and this may represent Christ, as the great high-priest, bearing all his elect ones upon his heart in heaven, having entered there in their name to appear and plead for them, and to take possession of glory for them in their stead, until they are brought into the actual enjoyment of it themselves ^{f183}.

VERSE 15.

*His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*

THESE words contain the eighth and ninth particular instances of Christ's beauty, given by the church to the daughters of Jerusalem, or distinguishing characters of him, whereby they might know and discern him from all others. And,

I. She describes him by 'his legs,' which, she says, 'are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.'

II. By 'his countenance;' which, she says, is, *1st*, 'As Lebanon.' *2dly*, 'Excellent as the cedars.'

I. She describes him by his legs; which she says, ‘are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold;’ which is the eighth particular of this glorious description of Christ. The word translated legs, may as well be rendered thighs; which may very well be compared to marble pillars, both for form and color; especially when we consider, that it does not appear that the ancient Jews did in common wear any thing upon their thighs and legs, but only sandals upon their feet: or perhaps, by thighs may be meant, the femoralia ^{f184}, or garments on the thighs, which were wore by the priests when they ministered in holy things. I have observed that some interpreters think, that some garment of the high priest, either his girdle, or his embroidered coat, or the ephod, with the breast plate, is intended by the belly, in the latter part of the preceding verse; so that as Christ was described as a prince before, he is now described as a priest; which description may be still carried on here. These *femoralia*, or garments for the thighs, were made of fine linen, ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 28:42. and so are very aptly represented by white marble; they are also said to be made of fine twisted linen, ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 39:28, which the Jewish Rabbins ^{f185} say, was of thread six times doubled; and therefore these breeches must sit very full and stiff, like pillars of marble: and this may set forth the pure mad spotless righteousness of Christ, which is called, in ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 19:8, fine linen, clean and white, it is this which covers our nakedness, hides the impunities of our nature, and renders us acceptable unto God. Moreover, below these breeches of the priest, was the hem of the holy robe, round about which were set pomegranates and golden bells; which perhaps may be meant by the ‘sockets of fine gold,’ on which those pillars of marble were set; and may intend the glory and excellency of the righteousness of our great high priest, Christ Jesus.

Moreover, in this description, the church seems to take in thighs, legs, and feet; his thighs and legs are compared to pillars of marble, and that very aptly; his feet are intended by ‘the sockets of fine gold; which either respects the sandals bound about the feet with golden ribbands; or the custom of some who used to adorn their shoes with gold and precious stones ^{f186}: and that nothing may be wanting to set off her beloved as the most excellent, she represents him as having such sandals or shoes upon his feet; golden sandals on his snow-white marble feet and legs ^{f187}; for white marble is meant, such as Parian marble, so Aquila and Theodotion render it; or shoes gilt in the upper part, as noblemen in Spain wore, as Lyra on

the place observes. And now Christ's legs being said to be 'as pillars of marble, etc.,' may denote,

1st, The strength and power of Christ to bear tip and support what is or has been laid upon him: much of a man's strength is in his legs; these are by Solomon called 'the strong men,' ²¹²³Ecclesiastes 12:3, and are the pillars and support of the body which, when they begin to bow themselves, it is an indication that this earthly tabernacle is ready to be dissolved: Christ is the rock of ages in whom is everlasting strength; his legs are as pillars of marble, as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold, firm and immoveable, lasting and durable,

1. To bear the weight of the whole universe ^{f188}: the earth, with all the inhabitants thereof, would soon be dissolved, did not he bear up the pillars of it; as he made all things, so he upholds all things by the word of his power; with all the created inhabitants of it, have their dependence on him and are upheld by him; for as 'he is before all things, so by him do all things consist.'

2. To bear the whole weight of the covenant of grace: it was the business of the Levites to bear the ark of the covenant; but Christ is the covenant itself; he is so both materially and fundamentally; he is the matter, sum and substance of it ; he is the basis and foundation of it; all the blessings of it are upon him; and all the promises of it are in him, yea and amen: it is this which makes the covenant of grace, with all its blessings and mercies, sure, and renders it preferable to the covenant of works because it is 'established upon better promises;' which promises are upon a better foundation, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. To bear all the persons of the elect: as the legs of a man bear and support the whole body, so Christ's legs, which are as pillars of marble, bear up and support his whole body, the church: thus Christ bore and represented the persons of the elect in the everlasting covenant, and received all grace for them; and so he did when he hung upon the cross, when he died and rose again; and so he does now he is in heaven, even as Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel upon his breast-plate, for a memorial before the Lord.

4. To bear all their sins and transgressions: so Aaron bore the iniquity of the holy things of the children of Israel; and so did the scapegoat bear upon him their iniquities unto a land not inhabited; and therein were both types

of Christ, who was manifested in our nature for this purpose; on whom God the Father laid the iniquity of us all, and who actually bore it in his own body on the tree; and by so doing, made satisfaction for it.

5. To bear all the punishment due to sin: sin being laid on him, he, as the sinner's surety, bore the whole weight of his Father's displeasure for it; he had not the least abatement of his wrath, but suffered the severest strokes of his justice; and yet he failed not, neither was he discouraged, or was not broken; it was enough to have broken the strength of men and angels; but he stood up under it, 'his legs being as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold;' when God banished Cain from his presence, as an indication of his displeasure for his sin, he cried out, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear;' and indeed, who can stand in his 'sight when once he is angry?' and yet, what was this to what Christ bore in the room and stead of the elect?

6. 'His legs are as pillars of marble, etc.,' to bear the whole care and government of his church: the government of the church in general is upon his shoulder; and indeed no other shoulder is capable of it but his who is 'the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace:' it may be said of him, in a much more eminent senses what Paul said of himself, ^{<7128>}2 Corinthians 11:28, that 'the care of all the churches was upon him;' the care of every particular believer, as well as of the church in general, is upon Christ; for they cast their care upon him, who careth for them.

7. They are so, and need be so, to bear all the burdens of his people: there was a complaint of the Jews in Nehemiah's time, ^{<6910>}Nehemiah 4:10, that the strength of the bearer of burdens was decayed, but this cannot be made of Christ, who is the bearer of his peoples burdens; for 'his legs are as pillars of marble, etc.,' he has said, ^{<8572>}Psalms 55:22. 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;' he has both willingness and ability, a heart and a hand to do it.

8. To bear up his people under all their afflictions, trials, and temptations: 'in all their afflictions he is afflicted;' he supports and upholds them with the right hand of his righteousness; he suffers 'no temptation' to befall them, but what he gives strength proportionate to it, 'that they may be able to bear it;' he comfortably carries them through all the difficulties of life, and will not leave them till he has brought them to glory; for even 'to hoary hairs' he will carry them; he has made, and he will bear them.

9. To bear them up and keep them from falling: he is able to do it, and he will do it; he is that 'sure foundation,' on which their souls being built, 'the gates of hell' cannot prevail against them; and though they may be attended with many failings and infirmities, yea, with many slips and falls, yet they shall never fall totally and finally; for he 'upholdeth them with his hand.'

10. His legs are as 'pillars of marble,' etc. to bear 'all the glory of his father's house;' for as he 'builds the temple,' it is proper that he should 'bear the glory:' Adam had a great deal of glory put upon him, in being made after God's image and likeness, and in being the representative of, and a federal head unto all his posterity; but he 'being in honor,' did not abide long; the crown was too heavy for him, it soon fell from his head, he being a mutable creature: but Christ is 'the same, yesterday, today, and for ever;' and will for ever continue to bear the glory of the God-man and mediator, which no mere creature is capable of, being no ways able to effect the work. And now, when we consider all these things, Christ's legs had need be, as indeed they are, 'as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.'

2dly, By Christ's legs may be meant, his ways and paths ^{f189}, which he has trod in; for as legs are for the support of the body, so they are likewise the instruments of walking; and may intend, either,

1. Christ's ways of love, grace and mercy in the covenant; 'whose goings forth' in it were 'from of old, from everlasting;' these were, like 'pillars of marble,' firm and constant; his 'counsels of old are faithfulness and truth,' and like such, 'set upon sockets of fine gold,' glorious and excellent; the steps which were then taken, the measures and methods that were then concerted, were all to advance the glory of the three divine Persons, as well as to bring about and secure the salvation of sinners. Or,

2. The path of the incarnation which he trod in, as never any did before or since: it was a wondrous stoop, a surprising instance of his mighty grace, that he should come down from heaven, and converse with mortals on earth in our nature; and the manner in which this was done is no less amazing, as well as it is an indication of his love to his people, to be a partaker of the same flesh and blood with them. Or,

3. His walk and conversation here on earth, which, like 'pillars of marble,' was always upright, even and constant: he never went awry, or stepped aside from the path of righteousness and holiness; but always acted in a

perfect conformity to the law of God, which he made the rule of his obedience; and upon the whole of his conduct and conversation, there appeared a beauty, glory and lustre; so that his legs looked like ‘marble pillars set upon sockets of fine gold.’ Or else,

4. His walks in his churches, which are his ‘golden candlesticks;’ among whom he delights to be, and to whom his presence is very beautiful and glorious, delightful and desirable. Or,

5. His providential dispensations to his people, which are sometimes ‘past finding out;’ for his ‘way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters,’ so that his ‘footsteps are not known;’ he seems sometimes to come forth against his people in a way of anger and displeasure; and then ‘his feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,’ as they are represented in ~~Rev~~ Revelation 1:15. But yet these are,

(1.) Like pillars, straight and upright; for he ‘is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works’ and though wicked men, and sometimes God’s own children, through peevishness, impatience and unbelief, may say that ‘the Lord’s way is not equal,’ yet his is always equal, and theirs unequal. And,

(2.) Like ‘pillars of marble,’ are firm and constant; for ‘he is in one mind, and who can turn him?’ and ‘what his soul desireth, even that he doth.’ And,

(3.) They are like such pillars, ‘set upon sockets of fine gold;’ the basis and foundation of them are his eternal purposes and decrees; for he ‘worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:’ and this will all appear exceeding beautiful and glorious, when the book of purposes, and the book of providences are opened, and saints behold that delightful harmony and agreement which is between them; then will they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saving, ‘Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints, who shall not fear thee?’ etc. ‘for thy judgments are made manifest,’ ~~Rev~~ Revelation 15:3,4.

3dly, These legs may set forth the power of Christ, in treading under and trampling upon all his and our enemies; so his legs were like ‘pillars of marble,’ etc. when he hung upon the cross, who then trampled upon and triumphed over sin, Satan, and the world; and so they are now he is in heaven, ‘for he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet:’

Christ's legs and feet, in the government of his church, and in the subduing of his enemies, are not like the legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, in ~~2013~~ Daniel 2:33, whose legs are said to be 'of iron,' and 'his feet, part of iron and part of clay,' which were easily demolished and destroyed; but Christ's kingdom being a more glorious, durable, and lasting one, yea, an everlasting one, as in verse 44, therefore his legs are here compared to 'pillars of marble,' and his feet to 'sockets of fine gold;' his head and his feet are both of fine gold, which shows that his kingdom is glorious and excellent, and preferable to all others; and because Christ's legs and feet are such, hence the saints are 'more than conquerors,' and shall have all enemies trodden under their feet.

4thly, Some ^{f190} by these legs understand Christ's apostles, and the ministers of the gospel: who bear the name of Christ, carry his gospel, run to and fro, and diffuse 'the savor of his knowledge in every place;' are pillars in his house, are instruments to support and strengthen his interest; and are marble ones, constant and immoveable in their work, cannot be diverted from it, either by the frowns or flatteries of the world: and in the discharge of their work, are very beautiful; 'how beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!' and what makes their feet so beautiful? because they are as it were shod with gold; they are 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' with the golden truths of the gospel; and this makes them look like 'pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold.'

II. She describes him by 'his countenance;' or his appearance ^{f191}, look or aspect; which is the ninth particular instanced in: by this is meant, not his countenance or look by which he beholds others; but that by which he is visible to, and beheld by others, and which recommends him to them; as his grand and majestic form, his tall stature, his graceful mein and deportment, and stately walk. And this she says, is,

First, As Lebanon; which intends, either, 1st, The mountain of Lebanon; which was a large and goodly mountain, abounding with fruitful and fragrant trees, situated on the north side of the land of Canaan: to which Christ may be compared,

1. For the height of it: Christ, as God, 'is over all, blessed for ever;' as God-man and mediator, he has 'a name given him above every name; he is, 'higher than the kings of the earth,' or than all the angels in heaven; he is of

a more excellent nature, and has ‘obtained a more excellent name than they,’

2. For pleasantness; Lebanon is called by Moses, that goodly mountain which before his death he had a great desire to see: Christ’s countenance, form or personage, is more glorious and excellent than Lebanon, or any other mountain whatever; he is ‘the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.’

3. For the fruitfulness of it; Lebanon was a fruitful mountain for vines and cedars: on Christ all those ‘trees of righteousness’ grow, which are the Lord’s planting; from him they receive their life and nourishment, their verdure and fruitfulness; and by him they are supplied with all needful grace; for in him all fullness of it dwells,

4. For the fragraney of it; hence we read that the saints smell is as Lebanon, ^{<346>}Hosea 14:6, the trees and plants which grew there, were very odoriferous, and diffused a grateful smell to passers by: Christ’s person, grace, righteousness, sacrifice, and all that belong to him, are exceeding savory to believers; and hence it is, that he is in this song compared to spikenard, myrrh, camphire, the rose and lily, etc. Lyra interprets this, not of the mountain of Lebanon, but of the aromatic tree, *lebanah*, or frankincense; so Theodoret.

2dly, It may be meant of the forest of Lebanon. Some think, that she has a regard in this part of the description to the attire of the high-priest, in whose garments were curiously wrought the figures of animals, trees and flowers; so that when he had his robes on him, he might be thought in some measure to resemble a forest, and particularly this of Lebanon, which was esteemed the most excellent; and so may be expressive of the glory and excellency of Christ, as our great high-priest, so far exceeds Aaron and all his sons. Or else,

3dly, It may be meant of the temple, which is sometimes called Lebanon, as in ^{<310>}Zechariah 11:1, and it may be very well called so, because it was chiefly made of the wood of Lebanon: and Christ may be very well compared unto it, for the stateliness and magnificence of it; as well because that all that belonged to it, or were performed in it, were eminently typical of him, and did gloriously prefigure him; and hence he calls his body the temple, in ^{<429>}John 2:19.

Secondly, She says, that his countenance is, or ‘he is excellent or choice as the cedars’ which grew on Lebanon; and her meaning is, that as the cedars in Lebanon were the choicest, and were preferable to all other trees, so was Christ her beloved to her: saints are compared to cedars; see ^{<3921>}Psalm 92:12 and ^{<4045>}Numbers 24:5,6, but Christ is the chief cedar, the choicest of all the cedars; in him these are planted and take root, and by him they are made fruitful; to these sort of trees Christ may be compared, for their tallness, stateliness, fragranciness and durability; but these and all other things failing short to express his beauty, and set off his greatness, she concludes the description in the following words.

VERSE 16.

Former part. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.

IN these words we have,

I. The tenth and last particular instance of Christ’s beauty, or distinguishing character of him, whereby he might be known from all other beloveds; ‘his mouth is most sweet,’ or ‘sweetnesses.’

II. A comprehensive summary of all his excellencies and glories; ‘yea, he is altogether lovely.’

I. She here describes him by his mouth, which, she says, is most sweet ^{f192}; yea, sweetness itself, and that in the highest degree of it; sweetnesses, as the word may be rendered ^{f193}. And by Christ’s mouth here may be meant, either,

1st, The words of his mouth ^{f194}. In this sense is the word used, in ^{<4185>}Proverbs 5:3 and ^{<4187>}8:7, and by them may be meant, the ‘doctrines of the gospel;’ which are ‘the gracious words’ that proceed out of Christ’s mouth; and are sweet to believer’s taste, administer spiritual refreshment to his soul, and are preferred by him to his ‘necessary food:’ likewise the precious promises’ of it are the words of Christ’s mouth; which, if ever spoke to any purpose to a believer, they are spoke by Christ; and when they are so, they are exceeding sweet, and fill the soul with an unspeakable satisfaction. The kind invitations of the gospel also are not to be excluded, such as ^{<4551>}Isaiah 55:1; ^{<4113>}Matthew 11:28; ^{<6217>}Revelation 22:17, which manifestly speak out the love and grace of Christ to sinners; and when applied with power by the blessed Spirit, are exceeding sweet, comfortable,

and refreshing to the consciences of distressed sinners. Moreover, the comforts which Christ speaks to his people, either by his Spirit or by his ministers, may be included here; as well as his commands, which also are the words of his mouth, which he has enjoined us the observation of, and which are no ways grievous, but joyous to a believer; especially when he has the presence of Christ, the discoveries of his love, and is under the influences of the Spirit of grace, whilst he is engaged in acts of obedience to them: these ‘statutes and judgments of the Lord,’ as they are right and just in themselves, so they are to believers ‘more to be desired than gold, yea, than fine gold; sweeter also than the honey or the honey-comb;’ for such is the grace of Christ, that what he has made the believer’s duty, he also has made his privilege; and hence it is, that all wisdom’s ways are ‘ways of pleasantness’ to him, and the words of Christ’s mouth are carefully regarded by him. Or,

2dly, The kisses of Christ’s mouth may be here intended, or the sensible manifestations of his love and grace to souls, which are what the church earnestly desired, in chapter ~~2100~~1:2, than which nothing can be more delightful to the saints: these give them more pleasure and satisfaction than all the things this world can afford; but both these seem to be intended before, namely, the words of his mouth by his lips, and the manifestations of his love by his cheeks; and therefore perhaps something different from these is designed here. And,

3dly, Some ^{f195} think, that Christ’s voice in his ministers is here meant; this is net omitted in that glorious description of Christ which John gives, in Revelation 1, and which bears some resemblance to this, and is there said to be as the sound of many waters: now if it is not intended here, it does not appear in this whole description; and whether the word be translated, ‘the throat, mouth,’ or ‘roof of the mouth,’ as it may be either, they are all the instruments of the voice, and so may be expressive of it: moreover, nothing is more common with lovers, than to admire each other’s voice; Christ was takes with the church’s voice, and therefore desired to hear it, in chapter ~~2124~~2:14, saying, ‘Let me hear thor voice — for sweet is thy voice;’ and no wonder then that the church should admire Christ’s voice, and that it. should make such sweet music in her ears, as it seems from hence it did; his mouth or voice is most sweet; I am charmed with it: and so would you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, did ye but hear it.

The voice of the law is harsh and unpleasant; it pronounces guilty, curses and condemns; it is a voice of wrath and terror; it is a soul-cutting and soul-killing one; it is a voice of words, and of words that are not grateful; and therefore those who had once heard it, entreated that it might not be spoken to them any more: but the voice of Christ in the gospel is exceeding sweet, delightful and alluring; and no wonder it is so, for it is a voice of love, grace and mercy; it speaks peace and pardon, and brings the agreeable news of life and salvation by Christ to lost sinners; it is also the voice of the church's beloved, of him whom she loves with all her heart and soul, and therefore must needs be sweet unto her; it is what she is well acquainted with, perfectly knows, and can distinguish from a stranger's; nor is she ever more delighted than when under the sound of it; hence, in chapter ²¹⁸³8:13, she says, as it is commonly understood, 'O thou that dwellest in the gardens? where the companions hearken to thy voice,' and are charmed and ravished with those warbling notes of thine, cause me also to hear it; for no concert of music whatever is equal to it.

4thly, The word translated *mouth*, may be rendered *taste*, as it is in chapter 2:3, or rather, 'the palate or roof of the mouth,' which is the instrument of tasting, as it is in chapter ²¹⁰⁹7:9, and as the roof of the church's mouth is there commended by Christ, why may not the roof of Christ's mouth be here commended by the church? Christ has a palate or taste, that, as Job says, chapter ²¹⁵⁰6:30, can discern perverse things; distinguish between the precious and the vile, knows the difference between the good and bad, and can tell what food is best for his people, and what a portion of it is necessary for them; and therefore gives to every one of them their portion of meat in due season: he has a taste that disrelishes all carnal and earthly things, even in his own people, as well as others; that savors nothing but what is spiritual; a believer being a compound of flesh and spirit, the spiritual part of him savors the things of the spirit, and the carnal part the things of the flesh; but Christ having no flesh, no carnal part in him, savors nothing but the things of the spirit: hence he provides no food for his people but what is wholesome in itself, and savory to them; and they may very safely eat of it, when Christ, whose taste is most sweet, has prepared it for them, set it before them, and bid them welcome; nay more, he himself sits at the table, and sups with them, and they with him. And, 'his taste is most sweet,' that is, the taste of him is so; 'Come, taste and see,' says the Psalmist, ¹³⁰⁸Psalm 34:8, 'that the Lord is good;' and every regenerate soul finds him so: Christ, and all of Christ, is sweet to a believer's taste, his

person, grace, and righteousness; what he is in himself, and what he has done for his people, are all so; and hence the church could say, in chapter 2:3, by good experience, his fruit was sweet unto my taste. Or else,

5thly, and lastly, By Christ's mouth may be meant, the breath of his mouth ^{f196}: which being most sweet, wonderfully recommends him to the church's love and affection. Job's breath was strange to his wife; but Christ is sweet to his people, nay, sweetness itself; and by it we may understand, either,

1. The expressions of Christ's love to his people: wicked men breathe out threatenings, cruelty, ruin, and destruction to God's children; but Christ breathes out nothing but love, grace and mercy: fury is not in him, but mercy is; for with the Lord is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption; it is true, 'the breath of the Lord is like a stream of brimstone,' even an overflowing stream to destroy the wicked for with the breath of his lips shall he slay them; but it is like an overflowing stream of love, grace and mercy, which abounds and super-abounds towards his people in their everlasting salvation. Or,

2. It may be understood of Christ's mediation: the prayers of believers are called their *breathing*, in ^{<2186}Lamentations 3:36. Christ's prayers, mediation and intercession, upon the account of his people, may bear the same name. Now this is most sweet, and is therefore compared to incense; it is sweet and acceptable unto God, and what sweetens and perfumes the saints sacrifices of prayer and praise; and hence it is, that the prayers of the saints are called *odors*; see ^{<688}Revelation 5:8 and 8:3,4. Though,

3. A late writer ^{f197} thinks, that this may as well be referred to Christ's breathing upon his apostles, when he bid them receive the Holy Ghost; which was one of the finishing actions of his life on earth, as this is the finishing part of his description here: and indeed, Christ's breathing the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit upon his apostles then, mad upon his churches and ministers in all ages since, he having the fullness of it with him, renders him exceeding amiable and lovely to them.

II. She sums up the whole character, and doses the description of him, in stying, 'Yea, he is altogether lovely; or, he is all desire' ^{f198}, as the Septuagint read it; or, 'all desires,' as it is in the Hebrew text: he is exceeding desirable to believers; there is none in heaven or in earth they desire besides him; and one of the characters which he was known by, under the Old Testament, was, 'the desire of all nations. And now what

makes him so desirable to the church and to all believers, are, The divine excellencies and perfections which appear in his person; for ‘ in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: there is no perfection or excellency in the Deity, but what may be found in Christ; and if so, there can be nothing that is excellent in any creature, either in heaven or earth, but what is eminently so in him; and therefore he must needs be a desirable person.

2. The mediatorial qualifications he is possessed of; he has a fullness of the gifts and graces of the Spirit in him, which qualify him as man end mediator for his office; he has a fullness of fitness for it, and a fulness of abilities to carry him through it; which render him a suitable and a desirable high-priest unto us.

3. The fullness of grace, life and salvation in him, makes him altogether desirable to souls; when they can see nothing in themselves, and all in Christ, an emptiness in the creature, and a fullness in him; that it is in vain to expect salvation elsewhere; but that there is enough in him to answer all their wants, present and future; every thing that will make them comfortable here, and happy hereafter; how can he be otherwise than exceeding desirable to them?

4. His agreeable carriage and deportment towards souls render him so; which is so wise and prudent, so loving, tender and compassionate, so weak and humble, so courteous and affable, and attended with such an air of familiarity; that it at once fixes our eyes upon him, attracts our affections to him, and makes him all desires unto us.

5. The names and titles which he bears: he has a name that is above every name, which awes and commands our fear, being full of majesty; and he has a name which draws our love, being full of sweetness, which is that sweet and precious name Jesus; which is as ointment poured forth, and therefore do the virgins love him; and so are all those names which are given him, in ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 9:6.

6. The characters he bears, and the relations he stands in to his people, make him exceeding desirable to them; and indeed, how can he be otherwise than so unto them, when he stands in the relations, and bears the characters of a tender husband, an indulgent father, a loving brother, and a faithful friend? He is all things to them ^{f199}, even all in all.

Again, if we read the words as they are translated in our bibles, ‘he is altogether lovely,’ we may observe,

1. That Christ, and all of Christ, is lovely to believers; he is so in his person, in all his offices, in his people, and in his ordinances; nay, the worst of Christ, or what may seem the most scaring and frightful to others, is lovely to the saints; as the cross of Christ, reproaches and sufferings on his account; for tho’ they are not lovely in themselves, yet they are for his sake; and are therefore preferred by believers to the pleasures of sin, and profits of this world; see ^{<8125>}Hebrews 11:25,26.

2. That there is a perfect loveliness in Christ, every thing in him is lovely, and there is nothing lovely but what is in him; he is comprehensively so: if the church is a perfection of beauty, and is perfectly comely, ‘through the comeliness’ which Christ has put upon her; he must needs be so from whom she has it, even ‘altogether lovely.’

3. That he is so to all: he is lovely to his Father, as he is his own Son, the dear son of his love; and as he is man and mediator, engaged in our cause, as having assumed our nature, and obtained eternal redemption for us; he is so to all the holt angels, many of whom descended at his incarnation, and sang his praise, ministered to him in his state of humiliation, attended on him when tempted in the wilderness, and when in his agonies in the garden; and gazed with wonder and delight upon his glorious person, as they accompanied him in his ascension to glory: hence this is said to be one branch of the ‘great mystery of godliness,’ that God, who was ‘manifest in the flesh, was seen of angels,’ and appeared lovely to them: and so he is to all the saints, for ‘to them that believe, he is precious;’ and indeed he is so to all but Christless sinners; who see no beauty, form nor comeliness in him, wherefore they should desire him.

4. As Christ is lovely in himself, and lovely to all others, so it is he that makes all the saints lovely to God: there is nothing in them, nor done by them, that can make them grateful to him; they are only accepted with him ‘in the beloved;’ he is pleased with Christ and his righteousness, and with them as considered therein: he must needs be lovely, yea, ‘altogether lovely,’ that makes all the saints lovely too.

Now the church having given such an ample description of her beloved to the daughters of Jerusalem, they might from henceforward cease to wonder, why she, who was ‘the fairest among women,’ was so deeply

fallen in love with Christ; why she made such a stir about him, was so much concerned at his absence, was so diligent in her search of him, and gave them so strict a charge concerning him; as well as they need not now be any longer at a loss to know who and what he was, he having given such distinguishing characters of him; and having done this, she closes all with claiming an interest in him, and appropriates him to her own soul, in the latter part of this verse; she having a clear sight of him, and her faith more strengthened in him.

VERSE 16.

*Latter part. — This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

THE church having given a large description of Christ, in the preceding verses, to the satisfaction of the inquiring daughters of Jerusalem; closes the account of him with a comfortable appropriation of him to her own soul, and a holy boasting of him before others; which she does, by considering him under those two characters:

I. As her beloved.

II. As her friend.

I. She points him out to the daughters of Jerusalem, and distinguishes him from all other beloveds; and boasts of him in the views of her interest in him, under the character of her beloved: which shows,

1. That her love and affection to him were strong and ardent, such as many waters could not quench nor any thing separate from; though she was forsaken by him, and had suffered much from the watchmen and keepers of the wall for the sake of him; she had sought him with a great deal of care and diligence to little purpose; she had called aloud, and with great importunity herself, and had made use of the interest of others with him, and yet could not prevail upon him to show himself; she could neither see him, nor hear him, nor get any tidings of him; yet notwithstanding all this, he is her beloved still.

2. It bespeaks the strength of her faith in him; for notwithstanding the sense of sins and infirmities, which she now had, the desertions, temptations, sufferings, etc., which she was attended with, yet she could say, 'This is my beloved:' this is the trial of faith, and herein lies the glory and excellency of

it, when a soul can believe in the dark, or as Abraham did, believe ‘in hope against hope;’ herein the church acted in some conformity to Christ, her head; who, when upon the cross, in the agonies of death, deserted by his friends, and forsaken by his God, yet nevertheless could say, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’

3. This shows that Christ only was her beloved; that she had singled him out from all others; and that he was in her esteem preferable to all others: there is none among all the angels in heaven nor any among all the sons of men on earth, neither is there any creature enjoyment whatever, comparable to him; and it is as if she should say, Let others take their beloveds to themselves, the idols of their own hearts, their carnal lusts and sensual pleasures whom they have chose; for my part, I ingenuously confess that this excellent person, whom I have just now described unto you, is only ‘my beloved;’ him I have chose, and I desire no other; and now I leave you to judge whether there is any comparison between him and others ^{f200}. But having met with his character already in this song, I shall not any longer insist on it now; but proceed,

II. To consider the other character which she gives of him ‘this is my friend’ ^{f201}. There is a mutual friendship between Christ and believers; he calls them his friends, in ^{<2101>}5:1 of this chapter, as the church calls him in this; and it is worthy of observation, that the very same characters of beloved and friend, which Christ gives to his church there, are given to him by his own church here; it being usual for therein this song to take up each other’s words, and return them. This character of a friend, undoubtedly suits well with Christ; in opening of which, I shall endeavor,

First, To give some instances and proofs of Christ’s friendship to his people.

Secondly, To show the transcendent excellency of this friend. And,

Thirdly, Consider in what manner the church here delivers herself.

First, it will be proper to give some instances of Christ’s friendship to his church and people; from whence it will manifestly appear, that he justly deserves such a character. And,

1. His engaging as a surety for them, is a manifest indication of it; when our cause was desperate he engaged in it; when justice was ready to give the blow our transgressions deserved, he interposed and averted it, and

took it upon himself; when he knew that we should run through all our stock, and become bankrupts, he became our bondsman, and engaged to pay the whole debt; when he saw that we should fall into the depths of sin and misery, he undertook to bring us out of them, cleanse us from all sin, clothe us with his righteousness, and safely conduct us to glory; and must not all this be esteemed a proof of Christ's friendship to us?

2. His dying for us is another: this is the greatest act of friendship among men, for one man to die for another; 'Greater love hath no man than this,' says Christ, ^{481B}John 15:13, 'that a man lay down his life for his friends;' but Christ has given a greater instance of friendship than this, in that he has laid down his life for his enemies; for 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son;' O matchless love! unparalleled friendship!

3. He has paid all our debts: our sins are called so in scripture, and a large score of them we have run; we owe 'ten thousand talents' and have not one farthing to pay; and to prison we must have gone, 'where we should have lain until we had paid the uttermost farthing,' had not Christ engaged to do it; which he has actually done, by making satisfaction to law and justice; on the account of which, God the Father has cancelled the bond, crossed the debt-book, and discharged both sinner and surety; it was an act of friendship now to be bound for us, but still a greater to pay the whole debt.

4. He has purchased our persons, and procured all things needful for us; we are 'not our own,' but 'are bought with a price;' which price is not 'corruptible things, as silver and gold,' but the 'precious blood' of Christ Jesus, which he has shed for the ransom of us: for a king to give a large sum of money for the ransom of any of his subjects out of Algiers, or any other place of slavery, is an instance of his beneficence, humanity, and friendship to them; but was he to give himself a ransom for them, it would be an unheard-of one, but Christ has done this for his people, and thereby redeemed them from the slavery of the law, sin, Satan, and the world and not only this, but has washed them from their sins 'in his own blood,' stripped them of their 'filthy garments,' and clothed them with 'change of raiment;' nay, has procured an inheritance for them, of which he now gives them the pledge and earnest, and ere long will put them into the full possession of it: and now, to do all this for persons who are entirely undeserving of it, is an instance of friendship indeed!

5. Not only so, but he is also gone to glory, to take possession of it in our name, room and stead; that so we may not be under any fear of losing it, nor of being by any means deprived of it; and in so doing, acts the part of a loving brother, a trusty co-heir, and faithful friend; as well as he is gone thither also to prepare a place for us, that it may be ready for us, when we, by his Spirit and grace, are made ready for that.

6. His acting the part of an intercessor and advocate for us with the Father, is another instance of his friendship; 'he appears in the presence of God for us,' presents our services and petitions to him; pleads for every blessing we stand in need of, for converting, pardoning, adopting, sanctifying, and glorifying grace, and answers all Satan's charges and accusations; and in so doing, shows himself friendly to us.

7. He supplies all our wants: he has all grace treasured up in his person for this purpose, and he does not withhold it from his people; but, at proper times, cheerfully and freely distributes it, according as their wants and necessities require; and this he does, not merely for their importunities sake, but because they are his friends; when disconsolate, he comforts them; when tempted, he succors them; when distressed, he relieves them; when hungry, he feeds them; when sick and wounded, he heals them, and discharges all the good offices of a friend unto them.

8. He shows his friendship to us, and maintains it by the kind and comfortable visits which he makes to us; for though he may absent himself for some time, yet he will not leave us comfortless, but will come and see us, and visit us with his salvation; which is such an astonishing piece of friendship, that we have reason to say as the Psalmist, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 8:4. 'What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?'

9. Whenever he pays those visits, it is with such an air of freedom and familiarity, as renders them exceeding delightful, and justly intitles him to this character; it was his free, courteous, and affable deportment to men in the days of, by his flesh, which occasioned the Pharisee's way of reproach, to call him 'a friend of publicans and sinners;' and so free and familiar are his converses with his people in a spiritual war; he talks with them, as one friend may with another; he walks with them, nay, he sits down at table with them, sups with them, and they with him.

10. He shows himself to be a friend unto them, and that he looks upon them to be his friends, by disclosing the secrets of his grace unto them; hence says he to his disciples, ^{<4815>}John 15:15. ‘I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you:’ he lay in his Father’s bosom, and so was privy to all his secret thoughts, counsels, purposes and decrees, and makes a discovery of them to us, so far as is needful to advance our good and his glory; for ‘the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant,’ ^{<49254>}Psalms 25:14.

And lastly, his friendship appears in the good and wholesome counsel which he gives unto us; which being taken, is always useful, and infallibly succeeds, being given with the utmost wisdom and the greatest faithfulness; of which see an instance in ^{<44818>}Revelation 3:18. Nay, his reproofs for sin, as well as his advice in distress, are exceeding friendly, and ought to be taken so; for, as the wise man says, ^{<4476>}Proverbs 27:5,6. ‘Open rebuke is better than secret love; faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.’ Thus much may suffice for some instances and proofs of Christ’s friendship to his church and people. I come now,

Secondly, To show the transcendent excellency of this friend; ‘this is my friend:’ he is a nonsuch; there is none like him, nor to be compared with him; for,

1. He is a ‘friend that sticketh closer than a brother:’ which may be expressive of that near union there is between Christ and believers; they are as if but one soul actuated them; and indeed but one spirit does, which is in Christ without measure, and in believers in measure; for ‘he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit:’ Christ stands in a nearer relation than that of a brother to his church; he is her head and husband, her bosom-friend; she is ‘flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone;’ though all these relations fall short of fully expressing the nearness, strictness, and indissolubleness of this union. Or else, this character may intend that sympathy and affection which Christ bears to his people, in all their afflictions, sorrows, sufferings, temptations, desertions, sins and infirmities; as well as signify his close adherence to our cause; who having once undertook it, never left it till he had completed what he had engaged to do; all which shows the transcendent excellency of this friend,

2. He is a constant friend, one that ‘loves at all times;’ he was a friend to us, when we were enemies to him; and merely by his love and acts of friendship to us, he overcame us, slew the enmity of our natures, and of enemies made us friends; and continues to be a friend to us in all the adversities and afflictions of life: when men are in prosperity, they have usually many friends; but when the day of adversity comes upon them, they soon forsake them: but Christ does not treat his people so; he is a friend to them in adversity, as well as in prosperity; he knows their souls then, when no body else will; he owns them for his own, and treats them as his friends, and so he will continue to do, even until death; and at that time wilt not fail to show himself friendly to them, no more than he will at the day of judgment, when he will publicly own them, before angels and men, to be his friends; set ‘the crown of righteousness’ upon their heads, and give them an admittance into his Father’s kingdom and glory.

3. He is a faithful friend; we may safely tell him all the secrets of our hearts, he will not betray us; we may trust him with our all, he will never fail us; and though the prophet says, ³¹⁷⁵ Micah 7:5. ‘Trust not in a friend, and put not confidence in a guide;’ yet we may safely trust in this our friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be our almighty God, and our trusty and faithful friend and ‘guide, even unto death.’

4. He is a rich friend; such an one is often useful and needful: a man may have a friend that has a heart to help him, but not in a capacity; but Christ, as he is heartily willing to help us, so he has an ability to do it; he is possessed of ‘unsearchable riches,’ and these he distributes among his friends; for it is from those ‘riches in glory,’ which are in Christ’s hands, that all the wants of his people are supplied.

5. He is an everlasting friend: a man may have a friend, but this friend may die, and then all his dependence on him is gone; but Christ ever lives, and ever lives to be a friend unto his people; death parts the best friends, and puts them into an incapacity of serving each other; but there is no fear or danger of this in Christ, over whom death shall no more have the dominion.

6. He is an unchangeable friend; he is always the same, ‘yesterday, to-day, and for ever:’ sometimes little things ‘separate chief friends,’ but nothing can separate Christ and believers; his mind never changes, his affections never cool, nor are the communications of friendship ever cut off; his ears are not open to every idle story, nor is he tempted to break off friendship with his people, by their unkindnesses and ingratitude unto him. But,

Thirdly, A little to consider the manner in which the church delivers herself in these words; which appears to be,

- 1.** In the strength of faith: she could comfortably appropriate Christ to herself, under each of the characters here mentioned; and though she had not the sensible manifestations of Christ's love to her, which she was desirous of, and had not those visible instances of his friendship she had formerly experienced, yet she did not doubt but that he was both her beloved and her friend.
- 2.** She seems to speak in an exulting and rejoicing manner; her soul was filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, as an effect of her faith in an unseen Jesus; and indeed she had all the reason in the world to rejoice in the views of her interest in such a beloved, and in such a friend, whom she had before described.
- 3.** She seems also to speak in a kind of boasting manner, 'This is my beloved, and this is my friend:' and indeed believers may do so, for though they may not glory in themselves, nor in any thing done by them, yet they may in Christ, and in what he has done for them: and so the Psalmist David did, ^{134D}Psalm 34:2, who says, 'My soul shall make her boast of the Lord:' and thus the church did here before the daughters of Jerusalem, and what effect this whole discourse of hers had upon them, may be seen in the following words.

CHAPTER 6

The discourse between the church and the daughters of Jerusalem is continued in this chapter: they inquire whither her beloved was gone, in order to seek him with her, verse 1 she tells them where he was gone, and for what purpose he went thither, and what he was doing there; and claims and asserts her interest in him, verses 2,3. Then follows a commendation of the church by Christ; who admires her beauty, and describes her by her eyes, hair, etc., verses 4-7, and prefers her to all others, being a singular and choice one to him, and being praised by others, verses 8-10, and next he gives an account of his going into his garden, and of his design in it, and of what happened to him there, verses 11,12. And the chapter is concluded with a charge to the Shulamite to turn herself, that she might be looked upon; which occasions a question, to which an answer is returned, verse 13.

VERSE 1.

*Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among, women?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

THE church having answered the former question of the daughters of Jerusalem to their satisfaction, by giving them an ample account of her beloved, what he was; they proceed to another question, and ask, whither he was gone, which we have in this verse. In which may be considered,

- I.** The title or appellation they give her, or their manner of addressing her, ‘O thou fairest among women.’
- II.** A question proposed by them to her, which is also repeated; ‘Whither is thy beloved gone? whither is thy beloved turned aside?’
- III.** The end of their asking this question; ‘that we may seek him with thee?’

I. The title or appellation which they give her, is, the ‘fairest among women:’ which is, no doubt, designed to express the exceeding greatness of her beauty; women being the fairest of human race, and she the fairest of all that sex; she was in their eye the ‘perfection of beauty,’ and therefore

they give her this character; and they were not mistaken in it, for Christ gives her the very same encomium, and that in the same words, in chapter ²⁰⁰⁸1:8. But now we must not understand this of her, as considered in herself; neither did the daughters of Jerusalem so understand it, who had been better informed from her own mouth; for she had told them, that she was *black* in herself, though *comely* in Christ: nor is it to be understood of her outward appearance in the world: for under that consideration she appears also black with reproaches, scandals, persecutions and afflictions: but this character suits her as she is considered in Christ, her head; as justified by his righteousness, washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. It may also be observed, that these persons continued in their esteem of her; for the same character they give her here, they gave her when they proposed the first question to her, in chapter ²¹⁸⁹5:9, nay, perhaps their esteem of her, and value for her, might rise higher than heretofore, they having a clearer knowledge of Christ than they had before; for as our knowledge of Christ and love to him increase, so do our love unto, and our esteem for his people: and it is very probable, that the beauty and loveliness which they saw in her, drew their pity and compassion towards her; so as to take notice of her case, condole her misfortunes in the loss of so excellent a person, and offer their service to assist her in the search of him. Likewise, no doubt but the veneration and esteem which they had for her person, made them more carefully attend to what she said concerning her beloved: for thus it is with persons under the preaching of the gospel; if they come prejudiced against the person who ministers, they take but little notice of what is said, unless it be to calumniate and reproach, and so reap but little advantage from it; when, on the other hand, if persons come, not only unprejudiced against, but having a veneration and respect for the minister of the gospel, they generally give the greater heed unto, and are most likely to profit by his ministrations.

Moreover, the daughters might make use of this title or appellation in their addresses, to assure her that they were serious and in good earnest in asking this question, as well as in the former; and that it was not to indulge a vain curiosity in themselves, nor designed for her disadvantage, but rather the contrary.

II. Here is a question put by them; ‘Whither is thy beloved gone?’ ^{f202} Which way did he take? what course did he steer? on which hand did he turn, when he withdrew from thy door? which question is repeated, though another word ^{f203} is used, yet to the same purpose, ‘Whither is thy beloved

turned aside?' Which way did he look? which way did he turn his face, when he turned it from thee? Now,

1. The putting of this question, and not insisting any longer upon the former, or upon the explication of any branch of her answer to it, supposes that they were entirely satisfied with it; therefore the question is not now, *who* or *what* her beloved was, for they knew that full well from the description she had given of him but now the question is, 'Whither is he gone?' This may teach us, that when younger Christians have any doubts, scruples, cases of conscience, or questions relating to faith or experience; to the person, office, and grace of Christ, or to any part of the great mystery of godliness, to be resolved, they should make their application to elder ones: this method these young converts, or daughters of Jerusalem, took here; which God was pleased to bless and succeed, for their increase in light and knowledge, and for the stirring up of their affections and desires after the Lord Jesus: and may serve to encourage the private conferences and conversations of the saints with each other: which, when carried on in an agreeable manner, when filled with spiritual discourses, and taken up with asking and answering proper questions relating to faith or experience, are highly well pleasing to God, and tend much to the edifying of one another: this may also serve as a direction to ministers to insist chiefly upon the glories and excellencies of Christ; for this is the way of preaching which God owns and blesses, for the conversion of sinners, and consolation of saints; the church's insisting on this subject, was made of great use to these persons, to draw out their love to Christ, and to make farther inquiries after him.

2. It may be observed from this question, that when Christ is known, who he is, and what he is; the next question is, where he is, and how he may be come at? whilst persons are insensible of their wretched state by nature, they see no need of Christ; and whilst they are ignorant of him, they have no value for him, nor desire after him; *ignoti nulla cupido*; there is no desire after an unknown thing; an unknown Christ is an undesired Christ: the reason why souls, in a state of nature, seek not after God is, because they have no understanding of him: 'there is none that understandeth,' says the apostle, ^{}Romans 3:11, 'there is none that seeketh after God:' the same reason holds here, with respect to Christ; for, whilst souls remain strangers to the beauties and glories of Christ's person, they will have no value for him, nor make any inquiry after him; but as for those that know the Lord, they will 'follow on to know him,' and make use of all means

appointed for that purpose; for the more a soul knows of Christ, the more it desires to know; mere speculative notions of his person, without knowledge of interest in him, and communion with him, will not satisfy them an account of him by hearsay, though exceeding ravishing and delightful to them, is not enough without seeing him; for where Christ's worth is once known, there is no contentment without the enjoyment of him; when he is once discovered as 'the pearl of price,' the soul is willing to run all risks, endure all hardships, part with every thing that is near and dear, so it may but be possessed of him: its language is, Give me Christ, or I die; ten thousand worlds, if I had them, for an interest in this glorious person: this seems to be the case of the daughters of Jerusalem here.

3. The repetition of this question, shows that they were serious and in good earnest, and did not speak sarcastically: ^{f204} and that they were impatient until they received an answer; 'Whither is thy beloved gone? whither is thy beloved turned aside?' prithee give us an answer speedily, keep us not in suspense; thou hast given us such a character of his person, that we long to see him, and are uneasy until thou givest us some notice of the place whither he is retired, that we may, along with thee, be searching after him.

4. There may be some knowledge of Christ, love to him, and desires after him, when there is but little faith in him that is discernible; all the graces of the Spirit are implanted at one and the same time, but they do not all appear at once in their actings upon Christ; love and affection to Christ, and desires after him, appear before faith does: so they did in these persons: they had got some farther knowledge of Christ from the church's description of him; were filled with greater love and affection to him, and had more ardent desires after him, and yet had but little faith in him; for they could not say, that he was their beloved; and therefore, as one ^{f205} well observes, they do not say, where is *our* beloved gone, but where is *thy* beloved gone?

5. It appears that they were willing to take the least hints, nay even conjectures, that if it was possible, they might improve them towards finding him, 'Whither is thy beloved gone?' Canst thou not give us some hints of it I canst thou not guess which way he took? which shows how intent they were of using all means, so that they might but find him; let it be which way it would, they were resolved to pursue it; could they but have the least notice of it, whether it was to the right-hand or left, backwards or forwards.

6. Their putting this question to her, shows that she was, or at least that they thought she was, capable of giving them some directions, though she was at the same time destitute of his presence; and it seems she was, by the answer she gives them in the following verse. The church knew where Christ usually retired, and granted his gracious presence to his people; and though he was not willing, at present, to show himself to her, yet she did not know but he might to them, and therefore directs them; nay, sometimes believers are capable of advising and directing others, when they cannot take advice themselves.

III. The end they propose in asking this question, is, that they might seek him with her: which may be considered as a motive to prevail upon her to comply with their request; for this shows that they were serious and in good earnest; that their end was not mere speculation, but practice, which indeed ought to be the end of all our inquiries; that it was their purpose and resolution to seek him; they had agreed and resolved among themselves to do it; for so the words may be read, ‘and we will seek him with thee;’ ^{f206} and if thou wilt tell us which way he went, it will lay us under an obligation to make good our resolution: nay, it shows also that it was her good they had in view, as much as their own; and self-interest goes a great way; so that, put all together, it is no wonder that she readily, and without any hesitation, answers the question. Now this being the frame of soul that these daughters of Jerusalem were brought into through her discourse concerning Christ; and seeking Christ being the thing which they had in view, and were desirous of being directed in; may lead us to observe the following things:

1. That the end of setting forth the excellencies of Christ, whether in private conversation, or in the public ministry, is to set souls a seeking after him; for this purpose the ministers of the gospel insist upon the glories of Christ’s person, the excellency of his righteousness, the efficacy of his blood, and the fullness of his grace; it was with this view that the church took so much pains, and spent so much time, in discoursing concerning this excellent person, her beloved, which had its answerable success.

2. It is very discouraging to seek Christ, and not know where he is; it is true, the church knew where Christ used to retire, when he withdrew himself, and therefore knew where to seek him, in hopes of finding him; but the daughters of Jerusalem were unacquainted therewith; and therefore it

was very proper for them to put such a question, previous to their seeking, him.

3. This should be the principal thing we should have in view in all religious duties, seeking and seeing Jesus; this is that one thing that should be uppermost in our hearts and desires, when concerned in the duties of hearing, reading, praying, meditating and conferring, that we may ‘behold the king in his beauty.’

4. Our seeking Christ should be jointly and together; we should seek him, not separately, but with the church: though this does not exclude our seeking him alone, in our closets and in our families; yet there is a social part of worship that we should be concerned in jointly; in which we are to worship the Lord with one shoulder and one consent, and ‘not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some too often is.

5. We should seek Christ in his ordinances, and where his church seeks him: we cannot expect the presence of Christ, when we run away from his church and ordinances, or when we seek him elsewhere; we should seek him with the church, and where the church seeks.

6. Their saying that they would seek him with her, was no doubt to encourage her in hopes of finding; they do as good as desire her not to be cast down at his departure; for they hoped he was not gone far, and that he would be found again, and at the same time promise her all the assistance they were capable of giving; though there is also reason to believe, that they were in hopes of sharing with her in so valuable a blessing; and indeed it was but reasonable, that if they bore part with her in the fatigue of the search, they should also participate with her in the enjoyment of the blessing; which no doubt she was willing to, and therefore immediately gives the following answer.

VERSE 2.

*My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices,
toiled in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*

THESE words contain the church’s answer to the second question of the daughters of Jerusalem; they had asked her what her beloved was more than others; she told them: they then proceed to ask, whither he was gone; to which she here replies. In which may be considered,

I. The place whither she says he was gone; ‘my beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices.’

II. The end of his going down, or what his business and employment was when there; which was twofold:

1st, ‘To feed in the gardens.’

2dly, ‘To gather lilies.’

I. The place whither she says he was gone, ‘into his garden;’ and more particularly, ‘to the beds of spices.’ And,

1st, It may be inquired what was meant by his garden, into which he was gone down. Some ^{f207} understand it of the heavenly paradise, whither Christ was gone to share the everlasting joys thereof, and converse with angels and saints; who may be said to be the ‘trees of righteousness,’ those spicy plants and precious flowers which are planted there; and in the midst of which stands ‘the tree of life,’ Christ Jesus, the glory of the whole garden; and into this, Christ’s lilies, when fully ripe, are transplanted by him. This sense is favored by R. Aben Ezra’s gloss upon the text, who says, ‘This is he who ascended on high,’ to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies, ‘because he dwelleth with the angels, who are the righteous ones.’ But if the words design Christ’s ascension into heaven, they should rather have expressed thus; ‘my beloved is gone up into his garden,’ than as they are, ‘my beloved is gone down into his garden:’ therefore I rather think, that the church of Christ here on earth is meant; which is as a garden separated by Christ from this world, whose enclosure is sovereign and distinguishing grace; in which are various trees, plants and spices, set and planted there by Christ himself, and where he takes his walks with pleasure; but in what sense the church may be compared to a garden, see more on chapter ^{<23112>}4:12.

2dly, It may be observed, that this garden is said to be his; and so it may very well; for of all others he has chosen this to be his garden; he asked it of his Father for this purpose, and he gave it him; he has also purchased it by his own blood, and distinguished it by his grace; he takes the care of it, waters it, and watches over it; it is he that hath brought it to its present perfection, and will bring it to a far greater; so that Christ retires and takes his walks here, not as one either upon trespass or sufferance, and by the leave of others; but as having an undoubted right and title to it, and as

being sovereign lord and owner of it; but of this, see more on chapter ^{<2346>}4:16.

3dly, Christ is said to be gone down into his garden: which perhaps may be an allusion to Solomon's gardens, which lay lower than his palace: and it is probable that those stairs, which went down from the city of David, the palace royal of the kings of Judah, were made to go down into the king's gardens, of both which you read in ^{<4425>}Nehemiah 2:15, and so 'the garden of nuts,' in verse 11. seems to be in the valley: or the allusion may be to what Solomon himself was wont to do, as Josephus ^{f208} relates; who used to go very early in a morning, in great pomp, to Etham, about two miles from Jerusalem, a pleasant place, abounding with gardens and flows of water, which might lie lower than Jerusalem. And in the spiritual or mystical sense, may point out,

1. The low estate of Christ's church here on earth: the saints are compared to myrtle-trees; and these are said, ^{<3008>}Zechariah 1:8. to be 'in the bottom,' that is, in a low estate, being depressed with many sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions; they are doves, but 'doves of the rallies,' mourning under a sense of their iniquities, being burdened with the weight of sin; and they are not only in a low estate, but also low and humble in their own eyes: and with such Christ delights to dwell; he often goes down into his garden to those humble souls, pays them a visit, grants them his presence, and bestows larger measures of his grace upon them.

2. It is also expressive of Christ's condescension in doing this: It was a wonderful stoop, and an amazing instance of his condescension, to come down from heaven, clothe himself with our nature, and converse with sinful mortals here on earth; for a king to come from his royal palace, and enter into the cottage of a beggar, and to eat, drink, and lodge there for a time, would not express so much humility and condescension as this does; and next to this is his granting his presence to his churches, and to particular believers here on earth; so that we have reason to say, when we consider the greatness of his majesty, and our vileness, sinfulness and unworthiness, with Judas, not Iscariot. 'How is it, Lord, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' ^{<6142>}John 14:22. And if,

4thly, It should be asked, How she could tell the daughters of Jerusalem where her beloved was, when she was at a loss for him, and in the search of him herself? it may be answered,

1. That though she had sought hires and found him not; though he was not pleased to manifest himself to her at that present time; yet having had large experiences of these things, she knew where Christ usually was, and would be found of his people; therefore she directs them where formerly she had, though now she could not find him, in hopes that they might. Or,

2. It may be supposed that the case was altered with her, that she was no longer at a loss for him; but having sought him, had found him, or at least had got some intelligence of him; which she no sooner had, but she informs them of it. Or,

3. Their inquiring whither he was gone, might bring to her remembrance what she had formerly heard him say, in chapter 5:1. 'I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse,' etc. but falling asleep immediately, entirely forgot it, until her memory was refreshed by the inquiries of these persons. Thus you see that weaker Christians may be useful to stronger ones; and even the very questions they put for information-sake, may prove the quickening of believers, and be the means of increasing light and knowledge, or at least; of reviving past experiences. But,

5thly, It may be observed, that she not only says that he was gone down to his garden, but that he was gone down 'to the beds of spices :' by which I understand particular believers, who are so many beds in Christ's garden; in which are planted those precious spices, the graces of the Spirit, which, for rareness, excellency and fragrancy, are called so: and these more especially intend growing, thriving and flourishing souls; lively believers, whose 'spices flow out,' whose grace is in exercise; such Christ has a particular regard unto, and delights to be with.

II. She declares the end of his going down into his garden, or what it is he employs himself about when there. And,

1st, She says, it was 'to feed in the gardens.' By gardens, I understand particular congregated churches ^{f209}; for though there is but one 'general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven;' which is redeemed by Christ's blood, and will be presented 'a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,' and therefore before called a garden, in the singular number; yet there are many distinct and particular churches; such as those of Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, Thessalonica, and the seven churches of Asia, were; which were

as so many distinct gardens, or plots of earth, that the one garden was subdivided into. And by feeding, here, is meant, either,

1. His feeding himself; ^{f210} which as to be understood of that pleasure and delight which Christ takes in being among his saints, and seeing their graces exercised upon their proper object; for as believers feed themselves by exercising their grace on Christ, so he feeds or delights himself in observing this; this is his meat and drink; this is his supping with them, as the other is their supping with him; and this Christ is invited to, in chapter ²⁰⁴⁶4:16, to which he complies, in chap. ²¹¹⁶5:1. Or else,

2. It may be understood of his feeding his flock, as R. Sol. Jarchi observes; for ‘he feeds his flock like a shepherd,’ though in such places as other shepherds do not; he feeds them in the gardens, which are unusual to feed sheep in; commons or enclosed grounds, and not gardens, being the most usual places for that purpose: and she makes mention of gardens, in the plural number, to show that Christ is not tied to one particular church, but feeds in all his churches, in all his gardens; where he feeds his people with himself, who is ‘the bread of life, the hidden manna;’ whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed: O precious food! delicious fare! he feeds them by and with his ordinances, which are those ‘breasts of consolation’ which convey much strength and nourishment to them; those green pastures into which he leads them, and ‘the fatness of his house’ with which he feeds them; and particularly the Lord’s Supper is that ‘feast of fat things,’ by which he sweetly refreshes them; he feeds them also by his ministers, who are his under-shepherds, to whom he has given a commission and also ability, to feed his people ‘with knowledge and with understanding:’ and so he does likewise by his Spirit; who takes the things of Christ, and sheds it in us; and the promises of Christ, and applies them to us; for which reason he is called ‘the spirit of promise.’ And now this may serve to direct poor hungry souls where to go for food, and where to expect it, even in Christ’s gardens, in his churches and in his ordinances, where he himself feeds.

2dly, Another end of his going down into his garden, is ‘to gather lilies or roses, as the Targum renders it; to crop them with the hand’ ^{f211}; lilies are liable to be cropped; hence Horace ^{f212} calls the lily, *breve lilium*, the short-lived lily: by which may be meant, either the good works of the saints, which he is well pleased with, and takes notice of; insomuch that he writes them down in ‘the book of his remembrance,’ as R. Solomon Jarchi

observes; for he 'is not unrighteous to forget their work, and labor of love,' but will reward them in a way of grace: or else, by them is meant, the sweet-smelling graces of his own Spirit, growing in his churches, as Ainsworth thinks, with which he is wonderfully delighted: or rather, the persons of the elect, and members of his church, who may be compared to lilies, for the glory, splendor, and beauty in his righteousness; of which see chapter ^{<211P>}2:2.

Now there was,

- 1.** A gathering of these lilies at Christ's death: as all the Sins of the elect were collected together and were laid on Christ, when he hung upon the cross; so all their persons were collected and gathered together in one head, Christ Jesus; they all met in his person, and were represented by him; for this purpose Christ came down from heaven, took our nature, and suffered in it; see ^{<815I>}John 11:51,52; ^{<811O>}Ephesians 1:10.
- 2.** There is a gathering of these lilies in effectual calling, through the ministry of the word, by the mighty power of divine grace; and this work Christ is daily concerned in, in his church, and will be until all his elect are gathered in.
- 3.** There is a gathering of them into church-communion, which is also Christ's work; who takes 'one of a city, and two of a family,' and brings them to Zion; and in doing this, he shows his regard to the good of souls, and at the same time 'glorifies the house of his glory;' see ^{<211D>}Isaiah 60:7,8.
- 4.** There is a gathering into nearer communion with himself, which he often does after great desertions; see ^{<234D>}Isaiah 54:7.
- 5.** This may be expressive of that great delight and pleasure which Christ takes in his people: no man can take more delight in plucking fruit, or gathering flowers in a garden, than Christ does in his own people, and in his own grace in them; see ^{<211F>}Song of Solomon 5:1.
- 6.** This may be meant of their being gathered by death; so Abraham and Isaac, when they died, are said to be 'gathered unto their fathers,' ^{<815B>}Genesis 15:8 and 35:29. Christ comes into his garden, the church, sometimes to plant new lilies, and sometimes to crop and gather old ones, when they are fully ripe; not to destroy them, but to remove them into his paradise above; and at the last day, by the means of angels, he will gather in all his elect ones from the four winds, as wheat into his barn, and as lilies

into his garden; see ^{<ORP>}Matthew 3:7 and 13:48 and 24:31. This sense of the word is given by several Jewish writers. ^{f213} And now, lest any should think that this was a mere surmise, conjecture, and imagination of hers; or if any should call in question her knowledge in this matter, she declares in the following verse, that she was not only well acquainted with him, but was nearly related to him; and therefore was capable of informing any person where he was, and what he was about.

VERSE 3.

*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:
he feedeth among the lilies.*

THAT these words are expressive of that mutual interest and property which Christ and his church have in each other, of that strict and inseparable union that there is between them, and also of that mutual affection and complacency which they have to and in each other, as well as of her knowledge and assurance of her interest in Christ, has been shown on chapter ^{<2116>}2:16, but it may be farther observed, that the order of the words is here inverted; that whereas in chapter ^{<2116>}2:16, the order of the words is this, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his;' from whence has been observed, that Christ is first ours, and then we are his, which is an undoubted truth; for Christ first gives himself to us, before we are capable of giving ourselves to him; but that which was first there is here last, and what was last is first; for she first says, 'I am my beloved's; and then, 'my beloved is mine:' from whence it may be observed, that though Christ is first ours in fact, yet our being his, may come first to our knowledge, may be first in discovery; that is to say, that we may know that he has called us by his grace, and enabled us thereby to give up ourselves to him: so that we can say, Lord, we are thine, thou hast conquered our souls by thy grace, and hast taken possession of us, which thou wouldest never have done, had we not been thine; and from this work of grace upon our souls, we conclude that thou art ours. Thus the cause may be known by the effect; and our interest in Christ, by the displays of Christ's grace to us, and in us; likewise, if we consider the words as connected with her former carriage and behavior to Christ, and what she had met with from him, they will lead us to observe; that all the infirmities, sins, and miscarriages of God's people, do not destroy their union with, and interest in Christ Jesus: she had treated him very rudely, when he, in the most moving manner, and with the most tender language, entreated her to arise and let him in; she put

him off with idle excuses, which he so much resented, as to absent himself from her, and left her to seek him in vain, and to be abused by the watchmen and keepers of the walls; and though he thus visited her transgressions with this rod of correction, his own absence, for that is so to God's children; and with those stripes and blows which she received from the watchmen; yet he did not take away his loving-kindness from her, nor break his covenant with her; and she was satisfied of this, and therefore could say, notwithstanding all this, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;' and if, with R. Aben Ezra, we connect the words with the preceding verse, there will appear a beauty and glory in them, 'My beloved is gone down into his garden,' etc. It is true, he is so; but though he is gone, and I am left alone, he is departed from me, and when he will return, I cannot tell; perhaps I may never see his face more here on earth, in a way of sensible communion and fellowship with him, as I have heretofore done, though I hope I shall; yet if I never do, I am satisfied as to my covenant-interest in him, and union to him; I know that I am my beloved's, and that my beloved is mine; here lies the glory and excellency of faith, thus to believe in an unseen Christ: though it may be, as the Targum intimates, that she had now the presence of Christ, the glorious Shekinah, with her; he had once more shewn himself to her, and, upon the sight of him, she says, as Thomas did, my Lord, and my God: but however, whether she had or had not the visible tokens of Christ's presence, her faith was certainly in exercise upon him; nay, she had not only faith, but the joy of faith; she not only knew her interest in Christ, as her salvation, but also had the joys of this salvation restored to her. And again it may be observed, that tho' she excludes all other beloveds from having any share in her affections, or from being in competition with him; yet by saying what she does, she does not exclude others, particularly the daughters of Jerusalem, from having an interest in him, as well as she, as R. Sol. Jarchi thinks; who paraphrases the words thus, 'I am my beloved's, and ye are not his, and therefore shall not build with us,' and then explains it by ¹⁵⁰³Ezra 4:3, but though the church knew that a whole Christ was hers, yet she knew that he was others also; and would therefore never say so to the daughters of Jerusalem, to discourage them in seeking of him.

Moreover she adds, as in chapter 2, 'he feedeth among the lilies;' which may be considered, either as an apostrophe to him, 'O thou that feedest among the lilies;' or as descriptive both of him and of the place where he was; that others might, readily know where her beloved was, and where he

was to be found: but of this we have spoken, on chapter 2:16, and shall not here repeat it; only observe, that Christ having been a long time absent from his church, and would not make himself known, nor speak one word a great while, at last breaks silence, and, like another Joseph, cannot refrain himself any longer from her; but must make himself known to her, and bursts out with words of love and joy, in the following commendations of her.

VERSE 4.

*Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah ;
comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*

THESE are the words of Christ; who, having absented himself from his church for a considerable time, to show his resentment of her former carriage to him, now manifests himself unto her, and declares that he has the same love and affection for her as ever he had, and therefore addresses her with this title or character, ‘O my love!’ nay, that she was as beautiful and comely in his eye as ever she was, notwithstanding all her failings and infirmities; which beauty of hers he describes first more generally in this verse, and then more particularly in the following ones. In this general description of her beauty are three parts: ‘that she is as beautiful as Tirzah.’

I. He says,

II. ‘Comely as Jerusalem.’

III. ‘Terrible as an army with banners.’

I. He declares her to be as ‘beautiful as Tirzah.’ The Septuagint do not take it to be the proper name of a place, as we, with R. Aben Ezra, do, and therefore translate the word, and render it thus, **ὡς εὐδοκία**, as good-will or *good-pleasure*; which may be expressive of the sweetness of her temper and disposition, which is heightened by using the abstract; she was all over good-will and good-nature, not only sweet, but sweetness itself, as she says of him, in chapter ²¹⁵¹⁶5:16. Moreover, this may be spoken of her, as she is the object of God’s good-will and pleasure; and so she appears to be, as chosen in Christ by him, to be a partaker of grace and glory with him; which was not done upon the foot of works, but by an act of his sovereign good-will and pleasure, who ‘will have mercy on whom he will have mercy:’ also, as she is redeemed by Christ: in which there was such a

discovery of ‘the exceeding riches of God’s grace,’ such an appearance of his ‘goodwill to men,’ that the angels could not but take notice of it, when they celebrated with a song the birth of an incarnate Savior, ^{<1124>}Luke 2:14. likewise, as called and sanctified by the blessed Spirit of grace, who ‘worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ And now if we thus consider the church as the object of God’s good-will and pleasure, in those several instances of it, she will appear beautiful and lovely. Or else, this may be said of her, as she is filled with good-will to God, to Christ, his people, gospel, worship, ways and ordinances: the church and all true believers in Christ bear a good-will to God; they ‘love him, because he first loved them;’ they love him, not only for what he is unto them, and what he has done for them, but also for what he is in himself: for he is in his own nature, in his own perfections, amiable and lovely: they bear a good-will to Christ, he is altogether lovely to them; they have none in heaven but him, nor as there any on earth they desire besides him; every thing that belongs to him is exceeding precious to them: ‘his name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him;’ they bear a good-will to his people, who have his image enstamped upon them, and to his gospel, which they prefer to their necessary food; and to his worship, ways and ordinances; they love the habitation of his house; his tabernacles are amiable; his ways are ways of pleasantness; his commands are not grievous, but exceeding delightful to them. Now if we consider the church :as being of this sweet and loving disposition, which is wrought, influenced and maintained by divine grace, how beautiful does she appear!

Again, the word Tirzah comes from a root, which signifies to be grateful, or to be accepted; and so R. Solomon Jarchi paraphrases the words, “Thou art beautiful, O my love, seeing that thou art acceptable to me;” and so he says it is explained in an ancient book of theirs, called Siphre ^{f214}: and if we take the words in this sense, they set forth the beauty and glory of the church, as she stands before God, ‘accepted in Christ the beloved.’ God is well pleased with Christ, and with the church in him; he is well pleased for his righteousness sake, and with her as she appears in that; for so considered, she is a complete beauty, fair and without spot, lovely to look upon, delightful to Christ, and acceptable to God.

The Targum paraphrases the words thus, ‘How beautiful art thou, O my love, in the time it is thy will to do my pleasure. Our righteousnesses are indeed as filthy rags, and we ourselves as an unclean thing;’ yet when we are made ‘willing in the day of God’s power,’ to act according to his will,

and that in faith, from a principle of love, and with an eye to his glory; it is accepted by him, the same way as our persons are.

But I see no reason why we should not take the word as the proper name of a place; seeing it is certain that there was such a city as Tirzah, in the land of Judea, which was a very pleasant and delightful place, as its name manifestly shows; for which reason, no doubt, it was made choice of by one of the ancient kings of Canaan, to be the place of his residence; see ~~<6122>~~Joshua 12:24, as it was afterwards by Jeroboam and his successors, until Zimri's time: who, when the city was taken, burnt the king's house with fire. Now either for its pleasant buildings, or beautiful situation, or some such tiring, the church is here compared unto it, being arrayed with Christ's righteousness, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit. But,

II. Lest this should not be sufficient to commend her beauty, he says also, that she is as 'comely as Jerusalem;' which was not only the chief city in Judea's land, but as Pliny ^{f215} says, was the most famous of all the cities in the east; nay more, it was 'the joy of the whole earth:' the church goes under this name, both in the Old and New Testament; for which, see the following texts, ~~<240D>~~Isaiah 40:2 and ~~<251D>~~52:1; ~~<4025>~~Galatians 4:25,26; ~~<8122>~~Hebrews 12:22; ~~<610D>~~Revelation 21:2. Now she may be said to be 'comely as Jerusalem,' for the following reasons:

1. Jerusalem was a well-built city, its houses were closely joined together, and its streets uniform; hence the Psalmist says, ~~<82D>~~Psalm 122:3, 'Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:' so the church of Christ, and the members of it, as they are built upon the same foundation, and are closely joined to the same head, Christ; so they are strictly united one to another, and are like 'a building fitly framed together,' or like an human body that is 'fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth;' all the members being set in their proper places, in a just symmetry with, and subserviency to each other; see ~~<402D>~~Ephesians 2:20,21; and ~~<4016>~~4:16.

2. Jerusalem was not only the metropolis of Judea, but was the chief city in all the world, as has been observed: and this may set forth the superexcellency, glory and comeliness of the church, above all the world besides; which will more manifestly appear, when 'the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and be

exalted above the hills, and God's Jerusalem be a praise in the earth;' see ~~3BP~~ Isaiah 2:2 and 62:7.

3. It was a very beautiful city; ^{f216} it had many beautiful structures in it, particularly the temple, which was the finest building that ever was seen in the world; it was also very beautiful for situation, as well as for buildings, and therefore was called the perfection of beauty; as the church also is, being beautified with the garments of Christ's salvation.
4. It was a very rich and opulent city; especially in Solomon's time who 'made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones:' in the church, not only the unsearchable riches of Christ, are preached, but also the immense riches of divine grace and mercy are expended upon the members of it; so that every inhabitant of this Jerusalem is a king and a prince: How rich must that city be, all whose inhabitants are kings and princes? such are the saints, the members of Christ's church, who are made by Christ kings and priests to his Father.
5. It was not only the place of the residence of the kings of David's line, where they had their palaces, and kept their courts; but also, what made it more glorious and comely than all the rest, it was 'the city of the great king;' even of him who is the King of kings, who was set up by his Father, as king over his holy hill of Zion: so the church is Christ's palace, where he keeps his court, grants his presence, shows himself, and entertains his friends as courtiers; it is his rest, his habitation, where he dwells and delights to be, having chosen it for that purpose,
6. What made Jerusalem also exceeding comely, was, that the worship of God was kept up there: here was the temple; here sacrifices were offered up; hither the tribes went up to worship; and therefore is called, the city of our solemnities: Christ's church is the place of worship where saints assemble together, where God is revered and adored by them; where the sacrifice of prayer and praise are offered, up; where the word of God is preached, and his ordinances administered, to the comfort of his saints, and to the glory of his name.
7. Jerusalem, as it was beautiful in its inward buildings, so it was likewise in its outward fortifications, which were both natural and artificial; it had not only many towers and bulwarks, which were its artificial fortifications, but had also mountains around it, which were natural ones; and for this reason the church and people of God are compared to it, in ~~BCSD~~ Psalm

125:2. 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever.' God himself is a wall of fire around his church; Christ is a strong tower in the midst of it, and salvation has God appointed for walls and bulwarks about it.

8. Jerusalem was a free city, as is Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all; it had many privileges and immunities, as has also the church of Christ, and all the members of it; all who are 'fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God,' are all Christ's freemen, and enjoy the liberty of the gospel, and can never lose their freedoms, nor be deprived of them; they shall never be arrested by divine justice, nor come into condemnation, nor be reduced to a state of bondage.

III. He also says of her, that she was 'terrible as an army with banners.' This comparison manifestly shows, that it was not any single person that is intended in this song; not Pharaoh's daughter, nor any single inhabitant of Jerusalem; but a considerable company of persons, a collective body, such as the church of Christ is; for a single person cannot well be compared to an army with banners. Now this shows that the church of Christ on earth is militant; she is in a warfare state, and has many enemies to fight with, as sin, Satan, and the world; she has enemies within and enemies without; 'a great fight of afflictions' to endure, and 'the good fight of faith to fight,' after which she is to receive eternal life: the use of banners has been taken notice of, on chapter ~~2:4~~ 2:4. Moreover, this comparison may lead us to observe, that the church was as an army in good order, well-disciplined, having proper officers and good armor: Christ is the chief general; the ministers of the gospel are the under-officers; the banner is love; and the armor they are accoutred with, what you read of in Ephesians 6, says not only so, but that she was in a posture of defense, ready to fight, whenever the enemy should attack her: she appeared like an army, having its general at the head of it, its colors flying, drums beating, and sword in hand; and being so, she was terrible to her enemies, sin, Satan, and the world.

Now the terribleness of the church of Christ, here spoken of, may be understood, either,

1. Of that awe which godly persons have over the wicked; the good examples and pious conversations of the saints often distress the consciences, and strike an awe upon the minds of the ungodly; they are deterred sometimes by them from evil practices, especially when in the

presence of them, and are awed by them from doing them any hurt; thus Herod feared John the Baptist, because he was a holy man, ^{<116>}Mark 6:20. Or,

2. Of the invincibleness of the saints, when united together; when they are at peace one with another, and have no discord and mutiny among themselves, but keep close to each other, and endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,' they are like an army in battle-array, that cannot easily be broke in upon by the enemy. Or,

3. Of her constancy and undauntedness in seeking of him; and it is as if he should say, When I parted from thee, what difficulties, didst thou meet with? How wast thou abused by the watchmen and. keepers of the walls? who smote and wounded thee, and took away thy veil from thee; and yet thou wast not discouraged, but still went on in search of me, marching like an army with banners, bearing down all before thee, surmounting all difficulties until thou hadst obtained what thou soughtest for, Or,

4. Perhaps Christ may say so of her, as regarding himself: who had felt the power of her arms, and was conquered by her; like another Jacob, she 'had power with God, and prevailed.' Her love to Christ was so great, her faith so strong, she so diligent in her search, and so importunate in her desires, that he could not withstand her; and therefore, as one that had found her to be 'terrible as an army with banners,' says, in the following words,

VERSE 5.

*Former part. Turn away thine eyes from me,
for they have overcome me. —*

IN this and the two following verses, Christ gives a more particular account of the church's beauty, and begins with her eyes in these words; for though they are delivered in such a manner as they be, yet they serve to commend that particular part of her, here mentioned; which is never taken notice of by Christ in this song but with commendation; see chapter ^{<2015>}1:15 and ^{<2011>}4:1,9; and ^{<2004>}7:4. And in these words may be observed,

I. Something that is enjoined the church by Christ; which is, to 'turn away her eyes from him.'

II. The reason of it; 'for they have overcome me.'

I. Here is an injunction laid upon the church by Christ, to turn away her eyes from him; in which may be inquired,

1st, What is meant by her eyes,

2dly, What by turning them away from him.

1st, By her eyes may be meant, as has been observed on chapter ~~2015~~1:15, the ministers of the gospel, who are that to Christ's body, the church, as eyes are to an human body; they are placed in a more eminent part of it; their business, is to watch, inspect, and overlook the several members of the body, and therefore are called-watchmen and *overseers*; they pry, search and penetrate into gospel truths, and discover them to others; they guide and direct those who are under their watch and care, 'teaching them to observe all things' which Christ has commanded them. The Targum, by eyes, understands the Rabbins, and wise men of the great congregation: and R. Aben Ezra, by the turning of them away, the removal or ceasing of prophecy in the second temple. Or else, by eyes may be meant, the enlightened eyes of the church's understanding; the eyes of her faith, love, and knowledge; that eye of faith which looked upon Christ in the dark) and was the evidence of an unseen Jesus to her; so that she could say, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:' this eye of faith, I say, had pierced the heart of Christ, won it, and got an entire conquest over it; which obliged him to say these words, 'Turn sway thine eyes from me,' etc. That love which she had shown unto him, though absent from her, discovered in a variety of expressions to the daughters of Jerusalem, appeared exceeding fair and beautiful to him; her strong and constant affections to him, being attended with solid judgment, and an exact knowledge of his person and grace, took much with his heart, struck the passions of his soul, which shewed and gave themselves vent in such expressions as these. And these eyes of faith and love, I take to be principally intended here. But,

2dly, It may be inquired what is also meant by turning away these eyes from him, Some read the words thus, 'Turn about thine eyes over against me;' so Ainsworth: and this. is favored by the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase upon the text; and so indeed the word signifies to *turn to* as well as to *turn from*. And this,

1. Suits well with the mind and will of Christ: which is, that his church and all believers should be continually looking to him for life and salvation, righteousness and strength, peace and pardon, joy and comfort; and in

short, for every needful supply of grace, until they are brought safe to glory: his language is, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else,' ^{<342>}Isaiah 45:22.

2. It suits with the experience of God's children; who often have their eyes taken off from Christ, and set either upon their own righteousness, their duties, and their frames; or else upon creature enjoyments, the transitory and perishing things of this world; and therefore have need to be called off from them, to look to him: and perhaps this was the case of the church here; she had had her eyes intently fixed on Christ for some time, and now on a sudden they are diverted from him, and therefore he gives her this exhortation, to turn them again to him. Which shows,

3. That he was well pleased and exceedingly delighted with them: faith is a precious grace; it is so in its own nature, and in the actings of it upon the person of Christ; it is a precious grace to believers, being very useful to them in dealing with Christ, and receiving from him; and it is also precious to Christ, seeing it brings all the glory back to him: how much Christ is delighted with both these eyes of faith and love, may be seen in chapter ^{<343>}4:9,10.

4. This version, or reading of the words, may lead us to observe, that Christ would have us not: to take side-looks only of him, but full views; 'turn about thine eyes over against me,' right over against me; look me full in the face: it is true, Christ's countenance is as the sun, when it shineth in its full strength; which we, in this imperfect state, cannot so fully and directly look at; yet there is a vast difference between faith's looking at Christ at one time and at another: sometimes we have only a glance, a side-look at Christ; at other times, faith, with open face, beholds, 'as in a glass, the glory of the Lord:' our eyes, as Solomon directs, ^{<344>}Proverbs 4:23. 'look right on, and our eyelids look straight before us;' and this is what Christ would have his church do here.

5. It gives us an intimation, that we should look all around Christ, and take as it were a survey of his person, and the glories and excellencies of it; turn about thine eyes; look all around me, view me from head to foot, on all sides: It is true, thou hast been viewing me, as if he should say, and giving an excellent description of me; but turn thine eyes about me again and again, thou wilt find more glories still, fresher beauties, and be able to make new discoveries of my person and grace.

6. This being the first time of their meeting together, after she had so shamefully and basely treated him; she might be filled with so much shame and confusion at the thoughts of it, that she could not lift up her eyes, and look him in the face; which agrees with the experience of the psalmist, when he said, ^{<B412>}Psalm 40:12, 'Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up,' And this now being her condition, Christ speaks these words to her, for her encouragement, turn thine eyes unto me; look up with an holy and humble confidence to me, for thine iniquity is done away.

But then, if we consider the words as our translators have rendered them, we are not to understand them, either,

1. As a reprehension of her curiosity, in prying and searching into the glory and greatness of his majesty, which is the sense that some ^{f217} give of the words; for though Christ, as God almighty, cannot be found out to perfection; nor can we comprehend his person and grace as God-man in this imperfect' life; nor see him as he as, which is reserved to another and more perfect one; yet this does not forbid our search and inquiries, in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of him; though a check should be given, and a restraint laid upon all vain curiosity': but this does not appear to be the case of the church here; Christ was not displeased with her, nor had he absented himself from her on such an account as this, but because of her slothfulness and negligence in duty; besides, it does not appear likely that Christ, when he is extolling and commending his church in such a manner, should give so severe a rebuke unto her.

2. Nor were these eyes of hers carnal and sinful, haughty and lifted up, or wanton and unchaste, and therefore disagreeable to him; no, her eyes are said to be doves eyes within her locks, modest, humble and chaste; which are well-pleasing to him, and are always commended by him. Nor,

3. Are we to understand the words as if Christ did not approve of her looking to him by faith; for there is nothing more grateful to him; faith always meets with a kind reception from him, and is always commended by him: souls need not fear its being accounted a piece of boldness or presumption in them to believe in Christ, for he gives all encouragement to it; 'Ye believe in God,' says he, 'believe also in me,' ^{<B410>}John 14:1. But,

4. It is expressive of the exceeding great passion of love he was in with her; he could stand it out no longer, but must acknowledge he was overcome

by' her, and therefore bids her turn away her eyes from him; not through any dislike, but as having his heart overpowered with love by them: the expression is designed to signify the exceeding greatness of Christ's love to the church, as well as, her surpassing beauty. Unless,

5. We would rather understand it as his will, that she should cease petitioning to him. seeing he had granted her request; thus, lifting up the eyes to God, signifies prayer to him; see ~~<4012>~~ 2 Chronicles 20:12. ~~<4301>~~ Psalm 123:1, and if we take it in this sense here, it is as if he should say; thou hast been lifting up thine eyes to me, and petitioning me, that thou mightest have some discoveries of my grace, enjoyment of my presence, and communion with my person; and now thou mayest turn away thine eyes from me, or cease petitioning; for thou hast the thing thou hast been praying and looking up to me for.

II. The reason of Christ's saying so to his church, or bidding her 'turn away her eyes from him,' is because they had overcome him. These words are very differently rendered.

1. Some read them thus, 'for they have lifted me up,' so Ainsworth; or, 'that they might lift me up,' ^{f218} so Junius that is, make me chearful, comfort and encourage me: there is a near union between Christ and his church, from whence arises a very great sympathy; he has a fellow-feeling with his people in all their afflictions, both inward and outward, temporal and spiritual; when they are afflicted, he is afflicted; when they are cast down, he is as it were cast down with them; and when they are cheerful, he is so too; he 'weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that rejoice:' the church being in a comfortable frame, and in the exercise of faith and love upon him, he is as it were cheered by it, and rejoiced at it; but this must be understood only as expressive of that near sympathy there is between them, and not as implying weakness or alteration in him, who is subject to no change.

2. Others read the words thus, 'for they have strengthened me;' ^{f219} and so our translators have rendered the word, in ~~<4D88>~~ Psalm 138:3, and then the sense is, they have strengthened my desire towards thee and confirmed me in it, as R. David Kimchi ^{f220} observes; and it is as if he should say, It is true, as I am thine, and thou art mine, I always had a desire towards thee, and to thy company; and it is not long since I signified it to thee; but since thine eyes have been so intently fixed on me, thy faith and love have been

so exercised upon me, methinks my desire towards thee is strengthened and increased: but this must be understood as expressive of that great regard which Christ had to her, and be taken with the same caution as before.

3. Others, ^{f221} as R. Sol. Jarchi, read the words thus, ‘for they have made me proud;’ the word is rendered, ‘to behave one’s self proudly,’ in ^{<23B>}Isaiah 3:5, by our translators: Christ, as I may so say, is proud of his people, whom the Father has given him, and he has purchased with his own blood; he takes a kind of pride as well as pleasure in them; he is proud of that beauty which he himself has put upon them, and of those graces which he has wrought in them, and especially that of faith, when it is in exercise: What notice did he take of the Centurion’s faith? and in a kind of a boasting manner, as being proud of it, say to his followers, ‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel:’ here is an instance of faith for you, such an one as is not to be matched in Israel.

4. Others ^{f222} read them thus, ‘they have made me fierce;’ not with anger and indignation, but with love; for there is a power, a force, a fierceness in love, as well as in wrath; ‘love is strong as death;’ it is so not only in Christ’s people towards him, but more especially in him towards them; his affections are very strong towards them, and are sometimes let out with a greater force upon them than at other times, as *they* seem to be here.

5. R. Aben Ezra ^{f223} renders them thus, ‘they are stronger than me,’ or, ‘they have taken away my strength;’ so that I am as one that is dead, and have no life and spirit in me; these sparkling eyes of thine have transported me into a kind of ecstasy, that I am scarce myself: and to this purpose the Septuagint render it, ‘they have made me to fly away;’ ^{f224} that is, out of myself; which agrees with our version, ‘they have overcome me,’ I am not master of myself; the sense is the same with chapter ^{<21B>}4:9. Now this shows us,

(1.) The power of faith; which not only ‘subdues kingdoms, stops the mouths of lions, and puts to flight the armies of the aliens,’ but conquers God himself.

(2.) This is owing very much to the importunity of it, which is increased by seeming denials: faith will not let Christ alone, nor let him go, nor will I cease petitioning, till it has got the blessing; sad the

repulses it meets with, do but increase its importunity; see ^{<0326>}Genesis 32:26; ^{<0330>}Exodus 32:9,10; ^{<0524>}Matthew 15:24-28.

(3.) Christ's being overcome by the church, does not imply any, weakness in him; but is a discovery of his astonishing, condescending love and grace, that he should be willing to be held, as it were a captive, by a poor sinful creature; that He should be willing to be overcome by us, who has conquered all our enemies, sin, Satan, hell and death for us, is surprising and amazing; and perhaps on this account, as well as upon some others, we may be said to be 'more than conquerors,' because we are the conquerors of him who has conquered all.

VERSE 5. LATTER PART —

Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

VERSE 6.

Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep, which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

VERSE 7.

As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

THESE commendations of the church's beauty are delivered in the same words in chapter ^{<2041>}4:1-3, but the repetition of them here is not vain and idle, but may be for the following reasons:

- 1.** To show the reality and certainty of her beauty; that it was no imaginary beauty, but a real one: so things are sometimes repeated for the confirmation of them.
- 2.** To put her in mind of it, that she might value it, and herself upon it, as coming from Christ; who had made her perfectly comely, through the comeliness which he had put upon her.
- 3.** To assure her that her beauty was still the same, and that he had the same opinion of it as ever he had, notwithstanding all her failings and infirmities; and therefore expresses it in the very same words he had used before her backslidings from him.

4. To manifest the unchangeableness of his love towards her; that he is ‘Jesus, the same today, yesterday, and for ever;’ that is ‘the Lord that changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.’ But having explained these words in chapter 4. I shall not consider them any farther here; but only just observe some variations and differences between them, though they are not indeed very material. In verse 5, the word mount is omitted, which may be supplied from chapter ^{2MAB}4:1. In verse 6, the word sheep is expressed, which is understood in chapter ^{2MAB}4:2, as are the words even shorn omitted here, though expressed there. In verse 7, is wholly omitted that part of the description which concerns the beauty of the church’s lips and speech; though it is added at the end of the sixth verse by the Septuagint; but is not in the Hebrew copies; neither is it taken notice of by the Targum on the place; nay, the Masora on chapter ^{2MAB}4:3, remarks some words as only used in that place, and therefore this was not repeated here in the copies then in use.

VERSE 8.

*There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines;
and virgins without number.*

VERSE 9.

My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her: the daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

CHRIST having commended the church’s beauty, both in general and in particular instances, as she might be considered by herself, without respect to others, in the preceding verses; now commends her, as she might stand related to, or be compared with others. And,

I. The persons with whom she stands compared, and to whom she appears preferable, are ‘queens, concubines, and virgins without number.’

II. The things in which she appears to be preferable to them, are,

First, That she ‘is but one.’

Secondly, ‘The only one of her me, thee.’

Thirdly, ‘The choice one of her that bare her.’ And then,

III. Her beauty is commended by the notice the ‘daughters, queens, and concubines’ took of it; who, as soon as ever ‘they saw her, blessed and praised her.’

I. The persons with whom she stands compared, and appears preferable to, are, ‘the threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number,’ mentioned in verse 8, which words may be considered, either as an assertion that there are so many, a certain number being put for an uncertain one; or else, as a supposition, though there may be so many, yet ‘my undefiled is but one,’ etc. Queens are those who were the principal wives of kings, who brought portions with them; whose children inherited, and they themselves, with their royal husbands, had the management of affairs: Concubines are secondary wives, or half wives, as the word ^{f225} may be rendered; they were such who brought no portions with them; ^{f226} and though they were admitted to the fellowship of the bed, yet their children did not inherit, but had only some gifts given to them; nor had they themselves any share in the government of the house, but rather acted like servants under the other; such were Hagar, Zilpah, Bilhah, etc. ‘The virgins without number,’ are unmarried persons; these were the maids of honor, who waited and attended upon the queens. Now there are in the words an allusion either to the custom and practice of kings and great persons, who had more wives than one, had many concubines, and a large number of virgins to attend upon them; and this was not only the practice of heathen, but also of Jewish princes, as David and Solomon; which latter, more especially, had a large number: and it is thought that a regard is had more particularly to his queens and concubines in this text; for which reason some have thought that this book was written before he gave so great a loose to his lusts, as we find he did; for we are told, ~~111108~~ 1 Kings 11:3, that he had ‘seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. Or else, the allusion is to a nuptial solemnity, and the ceremony of introducing the bride into the bridegroom’s house, who used to be attended with a large number of persons of distinction; so four times sixty virgins are said to attend the nuptials of Menelaus and Helena: ^{f227} see Psalm 45, between which and this song there is a very great resemblance; and perhaps that was the plan of this: there the queen is represented as standing in ‘gold of Ophir,’ which answers to Christ’s church and bride here, and means the same there: also ‘kings daughters,’ which answer to the queens here, are

said to be among her ‘honorable women’ who were attendants on her; and the ‘virgins, her companions,’ are said to ‘follow her,’ when she was introduced into the king’s presence.

Now by these ‘threescore queens, fourscore concubines, and virgins without number,’ may be meant, either,

1st, The several kingdoms and nations of the world: and by queens may be meant those kingdoms and countries, which are more large, rich, and flourishing; by concubines, those which are inferior to them, either in largeness, riches, or numbers; and by virgins, the vast multitude of inhabitants which fall them; and then the sense is this: though there are many large, rich and populous nations in the world; yet my church is preferable to them all: these all put together, cannot equal her; for ‘as the lily is among thorns,’ and is preferable to them; ‘so my love is among the daughters,’ the nations of the world, and is preferable to them all. Or,

2dly, By them may be meant false churches, who pretend to be the true spouse of Christ, but are not so: by queens may be meant, those who boast themselves of their riches and numbers, and would be esteemed on that account the true bride of Christ; as the church of Rome, who ‘saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow;’ and yet is an harlot, nay, ‘the mother of harlots.’ By concubines, such who are inferior in wealth and numbers, but equally corrupt in principles, and which make the same pretensions the others do; such are the Arian, Socinian, etc., churches: and by ‘virgins without number,’ the large multitude of poor, weak and ignorant people, who are seduced and carried aside by them. But now Christ’s church, though it does not make so great a figure in the world; nor does it appear in so much external pomp and splendor; nor has it the riches and numbers that these may have; yet in Christ’s esteem is preferable to them all. Though,

3dly, Others ^{f228} think, that the several sorts of preachers in the church are here intended: and that by queens, are meant ministers of the first rank; who are faithful to Christ and his gospel, and are instrumental in bringing forth many souls unto him: and by concubines, such who ‘corrupt the word of God, and handle it deceitfully:’ who are ‘false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ;’ who seek not Christ but themselves; not his honor, but their own applause: and by virgins, such who, though regenerated, yet at present are not fit for the ministry, but are training up for it in the several churches or schools of

learning; and may be such, whom the apostle calls novices; *not a novice, νεφύτον*, a young tender plant; one that is newly planted in Christianity, and has arrived to some knowledge of the gospel, but as yet not fit for the office of a bishop. But,

4thly, The words seem rather to be understood of the several degrees of believers. ^{f229} By queens, may be meant believers of the highest form; such whom Christ has honored with greater gifts and larger measures of grace; in whose hearts and lives grace reigns more gloriously than in others; and who have a greater nearness to Christ, and more communion with him than others have: and by concubines, believers of an inferior sort, who are of a more servile and legal spirit, have more of ‘a spirit of bondage than the spirit of adoption,’ but yet these have fellowship and communion with Christ at times: and by virgins, young converts, newborn babes, that have not so much experience as either of the former: so that this distribution of believers into ‘queens, concubines, and virgins,’ seems to suit with the division of them into ‘fathers, young men, and children,’ which is made, ~~απο~~1 John 2:13,14, and what seems to strengthen this sense of the words, is their blessing and praising the bride in the following verse. In an ancient tract of the Jews, called Midrash Hanneelam, ^{f230} the queens, in the next verse, are said to be the fathers or patriarchs; the concubines, the proselytes of righteousness; and the daughters, the daughters of Jerusalem. Now Christ’s church, considered as a collective body, is preferable to single believers, even to the greatest of them: and it is also well observed by one, ^{f231} that there are more concubines than queens, and more virgins than either of them; for there are more weak believers and babes in Christ, than there are strong ones; those of the highest rank and form are very rare; there are but few to be found in comparison of the other; but Christ’s bride comprehends them all, and is preferable to them; which is the next thing to be considered.

II. Christ, in verse 9, commends his church above all these queens, concubines and virgins; he gives her two excellent titles, which show her to be superior to others; the first of which, ‘my dove,’ has been explained in chapter 2:14, and the other, ‘my undefiled,’ in chapter 5:2, and therefore need no farther explanation here. The things in which she appears to be preferable to all these fore-mentioned persons, are,

First, That she is *but one*, and they are many: which may be expressive,

1. Of the church's fewness in number; who, if compared with the nations of the world, which is the first sense given of the former words, she is but like one to sixty or eighty, nay to an innumerable multitude; there are but few that are chosen, though many are externally called: Christ's church is a remnant, according to the election of grace; it is but one of a city, and two of a family that Christ brings to Zion; they are but a little flock, to whom the heavenly kingdom is bequeathed.

2. Of the church's unity in herself.

(1.) She is but one body; as there are various members in an human body, and yet but one body; so likewise is the church, though consisting of many believers; as there are many sheep and lambs in a flock, and yet but one flock, under the care of one shepherd; many beds in a garden, and a variety of spices, flowers, herbs and plants in these beds, and yet but one garden; even so, though there are many particular congregated churches, and in those churches many believers; yet there is but one 'general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven.'

(2.) She has but one spirit, which actuates and influences this body, the same Spirit that dwells in the head, Christ, dwells in his body, the church; and the same that dwells in the body, dwells in every member of it; for though there are diversities of gifts, and various graces, yet there is but one Spirit who distributes them to the several members, for their use and profit.

(3.) She has but one head and husband, Lord and Savior: she has but one head, to whom she holds, and from whom she receives life and nourishment, and so increases with the increase of God; but one husband, whom she owns and acknowledges as such, and to whom she is 'espoused as a chaste virgin;' but one lord. under whose government she is, and to whom alone she yields obedience; and but one mediator, that she regards, and makes use of, and that is, 'the man Christ Jesus.'

(4.) Though the church consists of many members; yet being but one body united to one head, and actuated by one and the same Spirit, they enjoy the same privileges; they are built upon one and the same foundation, Christ; they are washed in the same blood; they wear the same righteousness, and receive from the same fullness, 'grace for grace.'

(5.) They make a profession of one and the same faith, for as there is but one Lord, so there is but one faith; the doctrine of grace is invariable; it is like the author of it, 'the same yesterday, today, and for ever;' there never was another gospel, nor never will be; the faith which the church now professes, is what was 'once delivered to the saints,' to be kept by them; and which they, standing fast in one spirit, should strive for the purity of; which cannot be, unless they are 'perfectly joined together in the samemind, and in the same judgment.

(6.) They are in the same one in worship: the object of worship is one and the same; and so is the Spirit which assists them in it, as well as the form of it; for as there is but one Lord, and one faith, so there is but one baptism: whose subjects and mode of administration should continue the same, without any variation, until the end of time: and but one Lord's supper: and so it may be said of every other ordinance, and of every part of religious worship; for saints, as they worship one and the same God, under the influences of one and the same Spirit, and in the same way; so likewise should they, with one consent: which they cannot be said to do, when an ordinance is administered by some one way, and by some another.

(7.) They are one in affections, or at least ought to be; their chief business should be to 'keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,' and that from the aforesaid considerations: for this is one end of their calling, the glory of their profession, and a distinguishing character of their being the disciples and church of Christ.

This may be also expressive of her being the only spouse and bride of Christ; 'my dove, my undefiled is but one;' that is, though other princes may have their sixty queens and eighty concubines, and an innumerable company of virgins to wait upon them; yet I have but one, and am well satisfied with her, I desire none but her; my one is preferable to their many; as she says, 'I am my beloved's:' that is, I only am his, he has none besides me and 'his desire is towards me,' and to none else.

Secondly, He says, that 'she is the only one of her mother.' By *her mother* is meant 'Jerusalem, which is above, which is the mother of us all:' and by her being 'the only one of her mother,' we are to understand that she had no other but her: for though we read, in chapter ~~2006~~1:6, of 'her mother's children,' yet we are to understand them of carnal professors; who had the name, but not the nature of children; were not true sons of the church,

were bastards, and not sons. Or else the meaning is, that she was to him as a mother's only child; no mother could more tenderly love an only child, than he did her: so that it may be expressive of that strong affection and tender passion which he bore to her.

Thirdly, he says, that 'she is the choice one of her that bare her,' which is a periphrasis of her mother; and her being the 'choice one of her,' shows how much she was valued and esteemed by her; of all her mother's children, she was loved the best. Moreover, the word may be translated, 'the pure or clean one'; ^{f232} and so she is as clothed with that 'fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints,' as washed in Christ's blood, which 'cleanseth from all sin;' as sanctified by the Spirit, purified by faith, and sprinkled with clean water, the grace of the everlasting covenant: also, as she was free from the pollution of error and false worship; was of an unspotted conversation; and was now, or at least had been lately, in the furnace of affliction, where Christ had purified her, and made her white and clean.

III. Christ commends her beauty, by observing what notice the daughters, queens and concubines took of it, and how much they praised and commended her for it: 'The daughters saw her, and blessed her, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her:' it may seem strange that concubines should praise a queen; but it was not unusual in the eastern countries; with the Persians, as the queen admitted of many concubines, by the order of her lord the king; so the queen was had in great veneration, and even adored by the concubines. ^{f233} Which may be understood,

- 1.** Of the great esteem which the church had or should have in the world, and that from the great men of it; which will appear more visibly in the latter day, when those prophecies shall be fulfilled, of which we read in ²⁴²³Isaiah 49:23 and ²⁴⁰⁸60:3,10,11, when kings shall be, her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers; and God's Jerusalem, the church, shall be the praise of the whole earth. Or,
- 2.** Of the great value and esteem which professors, and especially young converts, have of the church; in whose eyes she is 'the fairest among women;' who, as soon as ever they saw her, were ravished with her beauty, loved her, and wished themselves as happy as she: for,
- 3.** They blessed her; that is accounted her happy; as well they might, seeing she was 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ;' and indeed whether

we consider the saints, either as to their entertainment in God's house, or their employment there, it may be said of them what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon's servants, ^{<4108>}1 Kings 10:8. 'Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.'

And,

4. They wished all happiness to her, and prayed for it, which also may be the sense of the words, they blessed her; see ^{<4098>}Psalm 129:8, they prayed for the peace of Jerusalem, which was their duty; and in doing which, they show their affection to the church: nay,

5. They not only thought well of her, and wished well to her; but they also praised her, that is, they spoke well of her, and highly commended her beauty: so that Christ was not alone in his opinion of her; for others thought her to be an accomplished beauty, as well as he: and this, as it serves to commend her beauty, so its being taken notice of by Christ, shows how much he was pleased with it, for as those that touch his people, 'touch the apple of his eye;' and whatsoever is spoken against them, he takes as spoken against himself; so, whenever they are praised and spoken well of, he is well pleased with it.

VERSE 10.

*Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon,
clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

THESE are either the words of Christ, commending and wondering at the beauty of his church, and confirming the daughters praises of her; which shows that they were neither wrong, nor were they alone in their opinion of her; for she was an astonishing beauty in the eyes of him, who seeth not as man seeth, neither judges after the outward appearance: or else, they are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem continued; and this I rather incline to, for the following reasons:

1. The connection between this and the preceding verse is very easy; especially if we supply the word *saying*, as it is sometimes done, as in ^{<4108>}Jeremiah 31:3, and so read the words thus; "the daughters saw her, and blessed her; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her, saying, 'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?'" etc.,

- 2.** This gives a ready answer to such a question that she might be asked, What was it the daughters, queens, and concubines said of her, when they gave her commendations, declared her the happy person, and sung her praises? why, it was this, ‘Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?’ etc.,
- 3.** It confirms what Christ had said of her, in verse 4, that she was ‘terrible as an army with banners;’ that they had just the same opinion of her as he had, and therefore use the same words: but if they were supposed to be the words of Christ, it would make a manifest tautology, which is scarce to be allowed of in the same commendation.
- 4.** It best agrees with other parts of this song, which appear to be the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, as chapter [ZIR6](#)3:6 and [ZIR6](#)8:5.
- 5.** The Targum, or Chaldee paraphrase upon this text, takes them to be the words of the people or nations of the world, which, in this paraphrase, are sometimes understood by the daughters of Jerusalem. And though the words are interrogatory, yet they are not the effect of ignorance, but of wonder and surprise, These daughters were not ignorant of the church; they knew who she was, but were surprised at her glory and beauty: the way of speaking is much like that in [ZIR6](#) Isaiah 63:1. ‘Who is he that cometh from Edom,’ etc. Having now considered whose words they are, I shall in the next place consider the words themselves, and the meaning of them: and they may be expressive,

First, Of the state and condition of the church in the several ages of the world; especially in those three remarkable ones, that before the law, that under the law, and this under the gospel. There is a manifest gradation in the text; and this appears in the church, in those several periods; in which there was an increase of her faith, light, knowledge, and glory. And,

1st, The state of the church before the law was given, from Adam to Moses, may be intended in the first expression, ‘Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?’ And here give me leave to observe,

- 1.** That Adam’s sin brought not only a night of darkness upon his own soul, but also upon all the world besides: man, who in his first creation was endued with light and knowledge, is now become a poor, dark creature, by the fall; nay, in darkness itself: he is born and brought up in darkness, and walks on in it, not knowing whether he goes, until he is called by divine

grace; when he appears to be a child of the day, and not of night, nor of darkness.

2. The first display of grace to fallen man, which was in the garden, after the night of darkness had invaded his soul, was like the dawn of the morning; when the seed of the woman, the glorious Messiah, was made known to Adam; as who should break the head of the serpent, and so redeem him, and those of his fallen race, whom God had set apart for himself: this struck the light of joy and comfort into his soul; those dark and dreadful apprehensions he had of things, in a great measure then vanished and disappeared; this breaking up of covenant grace unto him, was like the break of *day*, or like the first appearance of a glorious morning: and as for Satan, whose works are works of darkness, and cannot bear the light; like a beast of prey he leered off, and lurked into his den, when this morning light thus first broke out: this was the first appearance and revelation of grace to fallen man.

3. This light of grace, which now began to show itself, like the morning light, increased yet more and more: there were greater breakings forth of it afterwards; not only to Adam himself, who was taught by God the way of sacrificing, and therein to look by faith to the great sacrifice, Christ, who was to be offered up for the sin of man; but also to succeeding patriarchs, particularly to Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, became a preacher of righteousness; and that not of moral righteousness only, but also of evangelical, even the righteousness which is by faith: but more especially to Abraham, to whom it was promised, that the Messiah should be of his seed, and in that seed all nations be blessed; there was so great a discovery of grace made unto him, that the gospel is said to be preached unto him: and then to his grandson Jacob, there was a greater discovery made; for not only the Messiah was revealed unto him as God's salvation, which he says he waited for, and that he should be of Abraham's seed; but also more particularly, that he should spring from the tribe of Judah: the time of his coming is pointed out by him, as well as the glory and magnificence which should attend him, by mighty confluence of people to him, in that famous prophecy of his, ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾Genesis 49:10, thus the morning-light of the gospel went on apace, and increased exceedingly. But,

4. Though here was light broke forth, and that increasing, yet it was but small, in comparison of what appeared in after ages: the first display of grace seems rather to be by way of threatening to Satan, than by way of

promise, to fallen man; and tho' it was made known to our first parents, that the Messiah should be the seed of the woman; yet perhaps it was not so clearly revealed, till Isaiah's time, that he should be born of a virgin; which might be the reason that our mother Eve was so mistaken in the birth of her first son, as to imagine that she had got the Messiah; for so those winds, in ^{<000E>}Genesis 4:1, according to some, may be read, 'I have gotten a man, ^{f234} the Lord;' and Jonathan Ben Uzziel, in his Targum on the place, paraphrases it thus, 'I have got the man, the angel of the Lord;' but she could never have thought so, had she known that he was to be born of a virgin. Moreover, the greatness of his person, his several offices, of prophet, pries, and king; the nature, efficacy, and end of his sufferings; his resurrection, ascension and session at the Father's right hand, are more clearly spoken of by David, in his book of Psalms, and by Isaiah, in his prophecy, than were before; and no doubt but there was more light in the church, in David's, Solomon's, and more especially in Isaiah's time, than there had been in ages preceding. But yet,

5. Those discoveries of grace, which were mate before the law was given, like the cheerful morning, brought joy and comfort along with them, particularly to A tam; who stood trembling, expecting every moment to have the awful sentence of wrath pronounced, and the severe stroke of justice given; when on a sudden grace appears, a Savior is revealed; and the darkness of guilt and horror which filled his soul disappears, and in the room of it an universal joy and pleasure diffuses itself. The Jews ^{f235} tell us of ten songs that are sung in the world; and the first, they say, was that which Adam sung when the Lord pardoned his iniquity; and indeed he had a great deal of reason for it. Nay, it was not only joy to Adam; but also to all the angels in heaven, who stood astonished and surprised to see all human nature lost at once, and that to all appearance irrecoverably; but whilst they were waiting to see what the issue of things would be, a glorious display of grace is made; the way of salvation, by the incarnate Son of God, is opened; which caused these bright seraphs to clap their wings, and these morning stars to sing together, 'Glory to God in the highest:' for if they rejoice at the conversion of a single sinner muchmore would they at the tidings of salvation to Adam, and to so many of his race; and so all after discoveries of grace, to succeeding patriarchs, were more or less attended with joy and pleasure: it is particularly remarked of Abraham, ^{<000E>}John 8:56, that he saw Christ's day, and was glad.

2dly, The state of the church under the law, may be represented under the second expression, ‘fair as the moon; which, though it receives its light from the sun ^{f236} yet splendor and brightness are ascribed to it, ^{<4812>}Job 31:26, and by other writers, ^{f237} it is represented as fair and beautiful; and the beautiful form of persons is expressed by it. ^{f238} Such was the nature of divine worship under that dispensation, that it may very aptly be set forth by this phrase; and I cannot but be of opinion, that the ceremonial law is intended by the moon, which is said to be under the church’s feet, in ^{<611>}Revelation 12:1. for though it was abolished by the death of Christ, yet it was kept up and maintained by many of the Jews, even of those that believed; so that it as one of the greatest difficulties that the Christian church had to grapple with; for though it was under the feet of Christ) yet it was a long time before it was under the feet of the church; and a wonder it was when it was accomplished; for persons are naturally fond of ceremonies; and many had rather part with a doctrine, or an ordinance of the gospel, than with an idle ceremony, or an old custom, though never so ridiculous; and this was in a great measure the case of the Jews; ‘Thou seest, brother,’ says James to Paul, ^{<421>}Acts 21:20, ‘how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law.’ Now the ceremonial law may be very aptly represented by the moon; for,

- 1.** It consisted much in the observation of new moons; its solemn feasts were governed by them; see ^{<4812>}2 Chronicles 8:12,13; ^{<2013>}Isaiah 1:13,14; ^{<1015>}Amos 8:5; ^{<5016>}Colossians 2:16.
- 2.** There was some light in it, and it gave light to the saints in the night of Jewish darkness; it pointed out Christ unto them; and was their schoolmaster, to teach and lead them to him. But,
- 3.** Like the moon, it was the lesser light, that which ruled by night, and not by day: the light it gave was inferior to that which saints have under the gospel-dispensation.
- 4.** As the moon has its spots, so had this its imperfections; had it been faultless, there had been no need of a new dispensation, to have succeeded; but God had provided some better thing for us, New Testament saints, that they, the Old Testament saints, without us should not be made perfect; for this law could not make them so; it could neither perfectly sanctify, nor justify, nor expiate sin.

5. Like the moon, was variable and changeable: it is done away; this middle wall of partition is broken down; this hand-writing of ordinances is blotted out; it is not only like the moon in the wane, waxen old, but is also entirely vanished away. But now, notwithstanding all this, the church, as considered in her observance of the ceremonial law, was fair; there was a beauty in that kind of worship; the laws of it, being the ordinances and institutions of God, and when performed in faith, and according to the will of God, were amiable and lovely. But,

3dly, The state of the church under the gospel-dispensation, may be said to be 'clear as the sun;' for now the glorious sun of righteousness is risen, that great 'light of the world' has appeared, and made 'that day,' which, by way of emphasis, is so often spoken of in the books of the prophets: now the shadows are fled and gone, Christ, the substance, being come; greater light, and more knowledge, with clearer faith, are the saints possessed of than they were under the law; 'the least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John the Baptist: now saints, not with faces veiled, but with open face; not through cloudy shadows and cloudy sacrifices; but as in a clear, transparent glass behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed' into it; Some Jewish writers ^{f239} interpret this of the coming of the Messiah, and redemption by him, before whom darkness will flee away.

Moreover, as there is one glory of the moon, and another glory of the sun, and that of the sun far exceeds that of the moon; so the glory of the gospel dispensation far exceeds that of the legal one: if the church was then 'fair as the moon,' she must be now 'clear as the sun.' The excelling glory of the gospel-dispensation is set in a true light by the apostle, in Corinthians 3:7-10. Now,

4thly, The church, in all these several periods whether she be considered before the law, or under the law, or under the gospel, is 'terrible as an army with banners;' the church was always militant in all ages of the world; and as she never wanted enemies to fight with, so she never wanted a leader, and a commander to march before her; nor proper officers to keep her in order; nor suitable armor to put on and use; nor did she ever fail of victory, but was always 'more than a conqueror through him that loved her;' and so was like a well-ordered or well-disciplined army, terrible to her enemies.

Secondly, The state of the Christian church, from the times of Christ and his apostles, until his second coming and presentation of her to himself in glory, may be here represented. And,

1st, *The primitive church*, or that in the age of the apostles, may be intended by the first expression; ‘Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?’ for then the morning of gospel light broke, and swiftly and suddenly spread itself over the nations of the world; it produced joy and gladness wherever it came; and moved on irresistibly, maugre all the opposition that was made against it; and could no more be stopped in its progress, than the morning-light can.

2dly, The state of the church, in some after-ages, may be set forth by the next phrase, ‘fair as the moon,’ it being variable and changeable; and like the moon, had different phases and appearances; sometimes lying under sore trials and grievous persecutions, and at other times enjoying rest and peace; sometimes retaining the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel. in their power and purity, and at other times overrun with errors and heresies.

3dly, The church being said to be ‘clear as the sun,’ may either be descriptive of her state and condition in Constantine’s time, when she was ‘clothed with the sun;’ was in a great deal of splendor and glory; had the moon, the ceremonial law, ‘under her feet,’ and ‘a crown of twelve stars upon her head,’ the glorious doctrine of the twelve apostles; and were as terrible to her adversaries ‘as an army with banners:’ or else, the state of the church in the latter-day-glory; when ‘the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold:’ or else, as glorified in heaven, enjoying consummate happiness with Christ in the kingdom of his Father; where ‘the righteous shine forth as the sun,’ and are out of the reach of all their enemies.

Thirdly, These words may also be expressive of the state and condition of particular believers, who, in their first conversion, may be said to ‘look forth as the morning;’ their light and knowledge being but small, and their faith weak; but yet, like the morning-light, increasing; for ‘the path of the just is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day:’ as also her being compared to the morning, may intend the beauty ^{f240} and glory of believers, both in their faith and walk; ‘she looks forth as the morning;’ the look of faith is exceeding beautiful in Christ’s eye; see chapter ²²⁴⁰4:9, or, ‘goes forth as the rising morn’ ^{f241} as the Vulgate Latin reads it; that is, her talk and conversation is exceeding comely. Moreover,

believers, as to their sanctification, may be said to be ‘fair as the moon,’ which has its spots in it; and what light it has, it derives from the sun: so the sanctification of believers is imperfect, and all the light, grace, and holiness they have come from the sun of righteousness; but then as to their justification, they are clear as the sun. all fair and no spot in them; and in their faith and conversation are terrible to their enemies, as an army with banners.

VERSE 11.

I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley,
and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates
budded.

THESE are either the words of the church, or of Christ: Some ^{f242} take them to be the words of the church, who not finding Christ on earth, sought him in the heavenly paradise, which they understand by this nut-garden; and by her going down into it, the lively exercise of her faith on the unseen joys and glories of it, in looking to them, seeking of them, and pressing after them: though others ^{f243} who also understand them as the words of the church; yet think that they represent her as giving a reason why, upon his departure from her, she went not only into the city, but also into the fields, and that in the night-season, which might not appear so reputable to one of her sex; therefore to wipe off all reproach, and to remove all suspicion of evil designs in her, as well as to inform him now she had employed herself during his absence, she tells him that she went into the nut-garden, to inspect the fruits of it, and to see in what case the vines and pomegranates were. Tho’ I rather think that they are the words of Christ, declaring to his church where he went, and what he employed himself about, when he departed from her; and that he was not even then altogether unmindful of her; but narrowly looked into the state and case of her, and her members, when she thought he was at a distance from her: and this agrees with what Christ had said, in chapter ^{21RE}5:1, ‘I am come into my garden,’ etc. and also confirms what she had said, in ^{21RE}5:2, of this chapter, ‘My beloved is gone down into his garden,’ etc. Besides, it best suits with him, who is the owner of the garden, to look after the fruits of it, and to see in what case it stands: moreover, this was the usual place of Christ’s residence. Taking them then to be the words of Christ, there are two things to be considered.

I. Want is meant by this ‘garden of nuts,’ into which, Christ says, he ‘went down.’

II. The tact of his going there; which is threefold.

1st, ‘To see the fruits of the valley.’

2dly, ‘To see whether the vine flourished.’

3dly, Whether ‘the pomegranates budded.’

1. I shall inquire what is meant by this ‘garden of nuts,’ into which Christ is said to go Some Jewish ^{f244} interpreter, understand by it, the second temple, which was built by the commandment of Cyrus king of Persia; but it seems better to understand it of the church of Christ, which is compared to a garden, in chapter ^{<2112>}4:12, and for what reasons has been there shown; and Christ being said to go down into it, may be an allusion to Solomon’s gardens, which lay low, and required a descent unto them from his palace; and thus not only is expressive of the state and condition of Christ’s church, but also of his condescension in visiting it, as has been observed on ver.

2. Now this garden here, is said to be a ‘garden of nuts;’ a garden where nut-trees only grew; for the ancients had places appropriated to such trees, ^{f245} and with propriety might be called nut-gardens; tho’, by what follows, there seem to be vines and pomegranates, and other fruits, as well as nuts in this garden; nuts might be the principal tree whence it had its name. The words are by some ^{f246} translated, ‘the pruned gardens,’ or ‘the gardens of pruning or shearing:’ deriving the word from a root, which signifies to cut or sheer; and so signifies that it is a garden well dressed, and pruned, and kept in good order: and so indeed is Christ’s church; and therefore is opposite to, and different from the field and vineyard of the sluggard, ^{<1248>}Proverbs 24:30,31, which was neither in good order, without nor within; without, its stone-wall, its fence, was broken down; and within, it was all overrun with thorns and nettles: but Christ’s garden is in a much better case; for,

1. It is well fenced with sovereign powerful and distinguishing grace; nay, God himself is ‘a wall of fire’ about it, and has appointed ‘salvation for walls and bulwarks’ all around it; so that it is strongly enclosed, and well secured from the ‘boar out of the wood’ wasting it, and from ‘the wild beast of the field’ devouring it.

2. It is well planted; it is not an empty garden within, but is well stored with plants of all sorts, and those the most excellent, as appears from chap. ^{<2043>}4:13,14, it is filled with ‘trees of righteousness,’ which are laden with the fruit thereof, and therefore are very valuable.
3. It is well pruned; for as Christ is the vine, the principal plant in this garden, on which all others grow, and from whence they receive their life and nourishment; so Christ’s ‘Father is the husbandman, the vine-dresser, the keeper of the garden, and he keeps the plants in good order; for ‘every branch that beareth not fruit,’ he lops it off, and taketh it away; and ‘every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth,’ or pruneth it, ‘that it may bring forth more fruit,’ ^{<150>}John 15:1,2.
4. It is well watered; as the Lord is the keeper of it, so he ‘waters it every moment’ with the refreshing dews and delightful showers of divine love and grace; there as a fountain in the midst of it to water all the beds, and this is Christ himself; who therefore, in chapter ^{<2045>}4:15, is called the ‘fountain of gardens;’ who also is the ‘well of living waters;’ and whose grace is as ‘streams from Lebanon:’ so that every particular believer, every plant here, is ‘like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.’
5. It is well weeded; there are tares grow up in Christ’s field, and weeds in his garden, such as hypocrites and carnal professors; and Christ sometimes weeds his garden of many of these; and that by causing the sun of persecution to arise upon them, which scorches and burns them up, they not having root in themselves; he sometimes takes his fan in his hand, and with it purges his flower of the chaff, and clears his churches of such sort of persons as these; but this he will do more effectually at the last day, when he shall send his angels to ‘gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity,’ ^{<131>}Matthew 13:41.

Moreover, by these well-dressed or pruned gardens may be meant, those particular churches of Christ, which are regularly formed, are in good order, and are well disciplined; whose members are lively in the exercise of their faith, walk agreeably in their lives and conversations; are zealous for the truths of the gospel, and for the maintaining the ordinances of it in their purity; and are not remiss in dealing with offenders, whether they be immoral in their lives, or erroneous in their principles, such were. in a great measure, the churches of Ephesus, and Colosse, see ^{<111>}Revelation 2:3;

<5015>Colossians 2:5, and with such churches Christ delights to be; and these may expect his presence.

But the word, ^{f247} though only used in this place, is by Jewish writers generally rendered a *nut*; and so it is by the Septuagint, as well as by our translators and others: this is very properly taken notice of in this love-poem; it being usual for new-married persons to get nuts, and throw them among children to make pastime; and to signify, among other things, that they now renounced childish things. ^{f248} And by the garden, is meant the church of Christ, as has been observed before; and by the nuts which grow in this garden, from whence it has the name of a nut-garden, are meant believers; who may be called so, for the following reasons:

- 1.** Because though they are mean and abject without, yet are glorious and valuable within: the ‘king’s daughter is all glorious;’ the inside of a believer, like that of the nut, is the best part of him: the outward appearance of saints is but mean, and the world judging according to that, not capable of seeing any farther, look upon them as the off-scouring of all things: but Christ, who knows their inside as well as their outside, knows what they are by his grace, as well as what they are by nature, that though they are black in themselves, yet are comely in him; he reckons them the excellent in the earth, in whom is all his delight.
- 2.** Because of their several coverings: in the nut there are the husk and shell, and besides these, an inward covering; believers have several coverings; they have the robe of Christ’s righteousness to cover them, which may answer the shell of the nut; being lasting and durable, will abide for ever, and will bring the soul that is enwrapped in it safe to glory: there is also ‘the new man,’ or garment of sanctification, which is put on by the believer; and this may answer the inward covering of the nut, as being more thin and tender, weak and imperfect: and then there is likewise the outward garment of a gospel-conversation; and this may answer the husk of the nut, as being the coarser and more imperfect covering, which, continually needs washing in Christ’s blood.
- 3.** Because of their hardiness in enduring afflictions: they wade through a sea of troubles in this world, before they enter the kingdom; and this they do with becoming cheerfulness, patience, courage, and magnanimity of mind; they ‘are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,’ <4018> 2 Corinthians 4:8,9 and that because they are supported

under all these trials and exercises, and carried above them by a superior power.

4. Because of their hiddenness; the best part of the nut is hid: the saints are hid from everlasting, in the bosom of the Father, in the hands of the Son, and in the everlasting covenant of grace; until they are made openly to appear to be the people of God, by powerful and efficacious grace in conversion, and therefore are called God's 'hidden ones;' and after conversion they are hid from the men of the world; the work of grace upon their souls is hid from them, and therefore called 'the hidden man of the heart;' their joys and comforts are hid from them, and so indeed is their whole life of grace here, as well as their life of glory hereafter: for though they are 'the sons of God, yet it does not appear' so fully to themselves, much less to the men of the world, 'what they shall be.'

5. Because of the safety and security both of their persons and their graces: nuts, in the greatest showers of rain, have only their outside washed the more, but their inside remains untouched, and is no ways hurt; so saints are safe and secure, notwithstanding all the floods, storms, and tempests of temptations, persecutions and afflictions; being built upon the rock, Christ Jesus, and hid in him, the ark of the covenant; the inward principle of grace in them cannot be lost; that hidden seed is incorruptible, and will abide so for ever.

6. Nuts often grow in clusters; which may not only denote the multitude of believers, and their close adherence to Christ, his gospel, cause and interest; but also their unity among themselves: and as it is a very pleasant and delightful sight to see nuts grow in clusters; so it is much more to see 'brethren dwell together in unity.'

7. Saints being compared to nuts, and to those of the best sort which grow in gardens, shows, that they have not only the shell of an outward profession, but also the kernel of true grace: some have only 'the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; profess to know God in words, but in works deny him;' have a name to live, but yet are dead; but such are not these who are here compared to nuts.

8. Their being compared to nuts, may denote their preservation from the pollution of the world, though in the midst of them: as a nut, though it may fall into the mire and dirt, yet the inside is no ways defiled therewith; so R. Solomon Jarchi, out of the Midrashes ^{f249} explains these words of the

impollution of the works of the Israelites, when they were in captivity among the nations of the world.

9. The kernel of the nut does not appear, ^{f250} until the shell be broke: the graces of God's children generally show themselves most when they are under afflictions; for 'tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;' that is, makes those graces to appear more in their lively exercise; even as spice smells most when beaten in a mortar: moreover, this rich treasure of divine grace, which is put into our 'earthen vessels,' will not be so clearly seen, until these vessels are broken in pieces; nor will the soul appear so beautiful and glorious, being clothed with Christ's righteousness, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit, as when it is dislodged from 'the earthly house of its tabernacle,' and is joined with the 'spirits of just men made perfect.'

10. Some ^{f251} think, that not the common nuts, but the fruit, which we call nutmegs, are here intended; but such nuts grew not in those parts: rather, walnuts are meant, which the Arabs call *gauz* or *geuz*, which is the same word that is here used; as walnuts were in great esteem in the eastern countries, among the gardens Solomon had, ^{<2007>}Ecclesiastes 2:7, one might be appropriated to these; and at Etham, about two miles from Jerusalem, Solomon had gardens, into which he had used to go early in a morning, as Josephus ^{f252} relates: pistacia-nuts were well known in Syria, ^{f253} which joined to Judea, and which might have a part in this garden: nuts grew in Judea, of which Josephus ^{f254} makes mention, as in great plenty; and they are reckoned among the beat fruits of the land of Canaan, ^{<0491>}Genesis 43:11, and if nutmegs were designed, they might be expressive of the fragrancy and sweet odor of the saints, as they are clothed with Christ's garments which 'smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia;' and as they are perfumed with 'his ointments,' which are exceeding savory. But,

II. Let us consider the end of Christ's going down into this garden of nuts; which is,

1st, 'To see the fruits of the valley.' By fruits, are meant the graces of the Spirit; the growth, actings and exercises of which, Christ went down to take notice of: and these are said to be the 'fruits of the valley,' because they grow upon humble souls, with whom Christ delights to be, and on whom he bestows more grace; though it is a wonderful instance of his grace and condescension to vouchsafe a regard to such poor, low, mean,

and worthless creatures: see ^{<257B>}Isaiah 57:15 and ^{<240I>}66:1,2. Some interpreters translate the words, ‘the shoots or fruits of the brook or river; ^{f255} agreeable enough to the Hebrew word, ^{f256} which signifies a torrent, as well as a valley; and so are expressive of the fertile soil in which believers are planted, and which is the occasion of their fruitfulness; see ^{<1900B>}Psalm 1:3.

2dly, ‘To see whether the vine flourished.’ In what sense particular churches or believers in Christ may be compared to vines, has been shown on chapter ^{<210B>}2:13, who may be said to flourish, when they increase in number, gifts and grace, and become fruitful in every good word and work, which Christ much looks after in his churches and in particular persons.

3dly, To see whether ‘the pomegranates budded.’ By pomegranates are meant believers; see chapter ^{<204B>}4:13, and by their budding, the beginnings or first putting forth of grace in them; which Christ takes much notice of, and is highly well pleased with. And from all this may be observed,

1. The particular care and notice which Christ takes of his plants; he misses none, but goes from one to another; observes them all in what case they are, takes notice of the meanest, as well as the greatest; the fruits of the valley, as well as the vines and pomegranates.

2. That Christ is well pleased with the fruitfulness of them; he has been at a great deal of labor and expense to make them so; for this purpose he has made, planted, dunged and watered this garden: and now it must be some pleasure to him, to ‘see of the travail of his soul, and to have the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands;’ for as herein is his Father glorified, so herein is he well pleased, that his people ‘bring forth much fruit;’ see ^{<131B>}John 15:8; ^{<5010>}Colossians 1:10.

3. That he particularly takes notice of the first appearances and budding of grace in young converts; these he has a tender regard for, and takes a more than ordinary care of; see chapter 2:15, ^{<240I>}Isaiah 40:11 and 42:3.

4. That Christ has plants of various sorts and different growths in his garden; some vines, some pomegranates, and some nut-trees: all have gifts and grace differing one from another; some have ripe fruit upon them, others are blossoming, and some are but just budding forth.

5. Yet they are all fruit-bearing trees in Christ’s garden: there are none else mentioned here; and there are none in it, which are of his planting, but

what are fruitful. Seeing then that Christ does so narrowly inspect the plants and trees in his garden, and expects fruit from every one of them; how much should we be concerned to be ‘filled with the fruits of righteousness!’ lest when he comes into his garden, and finds no fruit upon us, neither in the blossom nor in the bud, he should give orders to cut us down for cumber-ground; ~~¶~~ Luke 12:6,7.

VERSE 12.

Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.

THESE are either the words of the church, or else the words of Christ: if we consider them as the words of the church, then they may be expressive, either,

1st, Of that rapture which her soul was in, in the views of those heavenly joys which, some ^{f257} think, she had been taking notice of, and meditating upon in the former verse; which, whilst she was doing, ‘or ever she was aware,’ her soul took wing, and fled as swiftly in thought ^{f258} towards those happy regions, as ever the chariots of Amminadib ran: she seems to be in much such an ecstasy as the apostle Paul was, ~~¶~~ 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, when he was ‘caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter;’ who then knew not whether he was ‘in the body’ or ‘out of the body,’ and therefore in his account of it, leaves it as a thing only known to God; so she here says, ‘or ever I was aware,’ or, as it is in the Hebrew text ‘I knew not;’ ^{f259} that is, scarce where I was, or, whither I was going; or whither I was in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; so sudden was the snatch, so surprising the rapture, that I cannot tell what better to compare it to, than the swift run of Amminadib’s chariots. Or,

2dly, Of her ignorance where Christ was, and yet her diligence in seeking of him; ‘I knew not, that is, where my beloved was: he departed from me, and was absent a considerable time, and I could hear no tidings of him; it is true, I had heard him say that he was come into his garden; but, alas! through my drowsiness and sleep I had entirely forgot it, until discoursing with the daughters of Jerusalem about him, it came fresh into my mind; but even then, when I knew not where he was, ‘my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib;’ I ran about here and there in search of him until I found him, as swiftly as ever his chariots did; see chapter 3:1,2 and 5:6-8,9. Or else,

3dly, Of that prodigious haste she made, as soon as ever she knew where he was; and it is as if she should say, As soon as ever I understood that my beloved was gone down into his garden, to take a view of the trees and plants which grow there sudden, as it were and of the fruits of it; immediately, on a at unawares, such was the strength of my love and affection to him, that I moved as swiftly after him as if I had been in one of the chariots of Amminadib. Or,

4thly, Of her courage and resolution in surmounting all difficulties for the sake of him: love makes persons bold and oaring; ‘perfect love,’ as the apostle says, ^{ἄγῶν} 1 John 4:18, ‘casts out fear;’ and so it did in her; for she feared nothing that might befall her, and what did, did not discourage her; for though she was abused by the watchmen, and unveiled by the keepers of the walls, yet she drove on as briskly and as courageously as ever Amminadib drove on his chariots in the field of battle. Or,

5thly, They may be expressive of the modesty and humility of the church, in not thinking that such praises as those which had been given her, both by Christ and by the virgins in the preceding verses, belonged to her; ‘I knew not;’ I did not think, being conscious to myself of my own imperfections, that such commendations belonged to me; but finding that they did, nay soul made the greater haste to answer those characters, and to enjoy the company of him whom I dearly love; and therefore she takes her leave of the virgins, her companions, who had hitherto accompanied her in the search of her beloved, that she might be alone with him; which occasioned them to say, in the following words ‘Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon thee.’ Though I rather think, that these are the words of Christ, as those in verse 11, also are; who, having gone down into his garden, to observe the fruitfulness of the trees and plants of it, declares in these words in what case he found them, or rather, in what he did not; ‘I knew not,’ or I did not perceive them to be in a fruitful and flourishing condition: and to this purpose Junius and Tremellius read the words, *Nondum percipientem haec*, ‘Not yet perceiving these things;’ that is, the vines to flourish, or the pomegranates to bud; therefore his soul put him upon using speedy methods to bring his garden, and the plants of it, into a more fruitful condition. From whence we may observe,

1. That sometimes there may be but little fruitfulness appearing in the churches of Christ: faith may be very low, as to its actings and exercise; the life and power of godliness may be much decayed; there may be but little

warmth, zeal and activity for Christ, his gospel, cause and interest; the ministry of the word may meet with but small success; so that there may be no pomegranates budding, as well as no vines flourishing. But,

2. Christ will not always leave his churches in such a condition; but will make haste unto them, and bring them into a more fruitful state; he will come and revive his work upon the hearts of his people, and make them fruitful in every good word and work; he will bless the ministry of the word, not only for comfort and edification, so as his vines shall flourish, but also for conversion, so that the pomegranates shall bud forth. And,

3. It may be observed, that it is Christ's presence that makes churches fruitful: as his absence causes a winter-season, both with churches and particular believers; so his presence is as the returning spring which renews the face of the earth, causes the flowers to appear above ground; the pomegranates to bud, and the vines to put forth their tender grapes; he is that 'sun of righteousness,' by whose warm and quickening beams of light and love, souls 'grow up as calves of the stall.'

Moreover, these words may be expressive of that transport of love, with which Christ was filled towards his church, which caused him so speedily to return to her, as is here intimated; 'or ever I was aware,' that is, on a sudden, and in a surprising manner, my love and affection to my church broke out and discovered itself; which powerfully moved and inclined me to make speedy haste unto her, and afford her all the assistance I could, as well as grant her my presence, which she was so desirous of: not that we are to suppose that any thing comes to Christ at unawares, or is done inadvertently by him; but this he says to show the strength of his love, and in what a sudden and surprising manner it brake forth towards his church and people. And in these words may be considered these three things:

- I.** What it was that put him upon this speedy return to his church; 'my soul made me,' etc.
- II.** In what manner this was effected, or what his soul made him to his church, in his return to her; it made him 'like the chariots of Amminadib.'
- III.** Whose chariots these are which Christ's soul made him like unto, or set him upon; or rather, who the persons are to whom his soul made him as chariots.

I. In these words we have an account of what it was that moved him to, or put him upon this speedy return to his church; which was not any worth or worthiness, love or loveliness in her; it was not her grace, nor the exercise of it, considered in themselves, but his own soul that moved him to it; that is, that love and affection which he bore in his own heart towards her; it was this that moved him first to undertake her cause, assume her nature, and die in her room and stead; and it is this which causes him to manifest himself in a way of grace, and pay those love-visits to her, which he frequently does.

II. The manner in which this was effected, or what his soul made him to his church and people, may he here also observed; it made him 'like the chariots of Amminadib.'

1. Like these chariots he moved swiftly to her: Christ is a 'present help' to his people in their time of need; he helps them, 'and that right early;' he makes haste, and delays not to afford them his assistance; for which reason he is said to be as 'a roe or a young hart, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,' in chapter 2:8,9.

2. He is like chariots to support, bear up and carry his people; he takes them up in his chariots of salvation, and carries them through all the troubles and difficulties of this life, safe to glory, as he himself declares he will, in ^{234B}Isaiah 46:3,4.

3. He is as chariots to them, to protect and defend them from their enemies: That which chariots and horses are to others, that is Christ to them, and much more so; whilst 'some trust in chariots, and others in horses, they trust in the name of the Lord their God; who comes with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire,' ^{236S}Isaiah 66:15.

4. It may denote the majesty and glory in which he visited her; which, as it was an instance of his condescension, so it was putting an honor upon her; that one so great as he, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, should visit one so poor and mean as she.

III. It may also be considered whose chariots these are, which Christ's soul made him like unto, or who the persons are to whom his soul made him as chariots. Some take Amminadib here to be the proper name of a person; ^{f260} who perhaps was one of Solomon's chariot-drivers, and was

famous in that way; was an artist in it, and who, Jehu-like, drove on swiftly, and furiously; and therefore Christ, speedily returning to his church, compares himself thereunto. Though I rather think, with R. Aben Ezra Jarchi, and others, that it should be considered as two words, thus, *ammi*, which signifies my people, and *nadib*, willing or princely; and so the words may be rendered, ‘the chariots of my willing or princely people. And this may be understood, either,

1st, Of angels, who are Christ’s willing people; who are always ready to do his pleasure, obey his orders, and execute his commands with the utmost cheerfulness and alacrity imaginable; see ^{<9A3D>}Psalm 103:20,21, and therefore, one of the petitions in that prayer, which Christ directed his disciples to, is, that God’s will might ‘be done on earth, as it is in heaven.’ These are also the chariots of the Lord, as is manifest from ^{<9B87>}Psalm 68:17. The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: These are made use of by him in a providential way, to execute his will, and do his pleasure: see ^{<8065>}Zechariah 6:5, and so they are in a way of grace; they are made use of by him to carry messages of grace to his people; for they are ‘all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.’ These are his chariots, which he sends out to bring his children home; in these Elijah was conducted, body and soul, to glory; for the chariots and horses of fire, which carried him thither, were no other than angels, who appeared in such a form; by whom also Lazarus was carried into Abraham’s bosom; and perhaps Christ might here make use of the ministry of angels, and ride in these chariots in this discovery of himself to his church. Or else,

2dly, It may be meant of the ministers of Christ; who preach Christ and his gospel freely; ‘not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.’ These may be called the chariots of the Lord; as Elijah, in ^{<1012>}2 Kings 2:12, is called the ‘chariot and horsemen of Israel:’ and they may be called so, because they bear the name of Christ, and carry and spread his gospel throughout the world, and are his chariots to bring home souls unto him, as the trophies of his grace; see ^{<266D>}Isaiah 66:20, and in which Christ frequently rides and shows himself unto his people. Though,

3dly, I should rather think, that the people of Christ themselves are here intended, whom Christ is as chariots to; for so I think the words may very well be rendered, ‘or ever I was aware, my soul made me as chariots to my willing or princely people;’ and so it points out the persons who shared in

this instance of his grace: and these are said, in ^{<3810B>}Psalm 110:3, to be ‘a willing people in the day of his power;’ and they may be called so,

- 1.** Because they are made willing to part with sin: This God requires, but man is naturally loth to do it; for sin is a sweet morsel in his mouth; ‘he hides it under his tongue, he spares and forsakes it not, but keeps it still within his mouth;’ but when the Spirit of God convinces him of the exceeding sinfulness of it, that which was before sweet, is now bitter; and what was delightful is now odious; and what his soul adored, it now abhors, and says, as in ^{<3840B>}Hosea 14:8 with Ephraim, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’
- 2.** Because they are made willing to part with sinful companions: This is what God calls his people to; but is a thing that is not so easily complied with, until by mighty grace they are made willing to it; for it is no other than a forsaking a man’s own people, and his father’s house; besides a great deal of reproach is cast upon them for so doing; for ‘he that departs from evil, maketh himself a prey;’ but when the spirit of God convinces the soul of the necessity of parting with such company, and the danger of continuing in it; it is not only willing to do it, but also laments that it has been so long in it, saying, as in ^{<3800B>}Psalm 120:5,6. ‘Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!’
- 3.** Because they are made willing to part with their own righteousness; not in point of obedience, but in point of dependence; not as ornamental to the Christian, but as constitutive of him; not as it glorifies God, but as it is made use of as a plea with him, either for grace here, or glory hereafter: again, not as it is a guard or fence against the reproaches of men, but as matter of boasting before God; not as it is agreeable to God’s law, but as it is opposite to God’s revealed method of justifying sinners by his Son-righteousness: but this, man is not naturally willing to; it goes against him to part with it, because this is most agreeable to nature; it is his own offspring, the effect of great labor and toil, and what affords matter of boasting to him; but when the Spirit of God convinces him of the weakness and insufficiency of it, and shows him the glory and fullness of Christ’s righteousness; he then desires with the apostle Paul, ^{<3080B>}Philippians 3:9, to be ‘found in him, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.’
- 4.** Because they are willing to be saved alone by Christ: man is naturally for bringing his own works, either as the sole cause of, or as partners with

Christ in salvation-work; but when souls are made to see the imperfection of these, and that salvation is only by Christ, and in no other, their language is, ‘Ashur shall not save us; we desire to be saved no other way than by Christ;’ and therefore they say, with Job, chapter ^{<181315>}13:15,16, ‘though he slay us, yet will we trust in him; he also shall be our salvation.’

5. Because they are as willing to serve Christ as they are to be saved by him; and this, not from fear of punishment, but from a principle of love the love of Christ constrains them to it; nor do they perform it in a servile mercenary way, but freely; not as a task, but as a pleasure: for to them wisdom’s ‘ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are paths of peace.’

6. Because they are willing to bear the cross of Christ; this Christ requires of them, and this they readily and voluntarily submit unto: Christ’s cross is to them preferable to crowns and kingdoms: with Moses, ^{<8125>}Hebrews 11:25,26, they choose ‘rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’ Now to such a free and willing people as these Christ makes himself as chariots.

But again, the word may be rendered, ‘my princely people;’ and such are the people of Christ; see ^{<1317>}Psalms 113:7,8, they are all princes, being the sons of a king; they are all heirs to a kingdom, have a crown of life, righteousness and glory laid up for them, and a throne of glory prepared for them to inherit; they wear princely robes, enjoy princely fare, and have a princely equipage; the angels of the Lord attend them continually as their life-guard. So the church is said to be a prince’s daughter, in chapter ^{<2171>}7:1, and to her Christ here make himself as chariots, and takes her up along with him, that she might enjoy his delightful company, which she had so long sought after, and so much desired; which occasioned the daughters of Jerusalem, who had hitherto accompanied her in the search of him, to say, in the following words:

VERSE 13.

Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon thee: What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

THESE words consist of two parts:

I. A call, either of Christ or of the daughters of Jerusalem, to the church, to return, that they might have a full view of her.

II. A reply to that call, which is made by proposing a question, and returning an answer to it.

I. Here is a call, either of Christ or of the daughters, to the church, to return, that they might have a full view of her: in which may be considered,

First, The name she is called by, or the title and appellation which is given to her, Shulamite.

Secondly, What she is called upon to do; and that is, to return, which is repeated over and over.

Thirdly, The end of it, which is, that they might ‘look upon her.’

First, The name she bears, or the title and application which is given her, is, Shulamite; and she may be called so, for the following reasons:

1st, Because she was an inhabitant of Salem or Jerusalem: ^{f261} as the woman with whom Elisha lodged, is called a Shunamite from her dwelling in Shunem; so the church is here called a Shulamite or a Jerusalemite, from her dwelling in Salem or Jerusalem: Jerusalem was formerly called Salem; so it was in Melchizedek’s time, as is thought, who was king of that place; which ancient name of it is mentioned by the Psalmist, in ~~1971D~~ Psalm 76:2, ‘in Salem also is his tabernacle.’ And now it is no wonder that the church, or any particular believer, should be called a Shulamite, seeing the church, both in the Old and New Testament, frequently bears the name of Jerusalem; so that to be a Shulamite, is to be a ‘fellow-citizen of the saints, and of the household of God,’ and to share in all the privileges and immunities thereof, as they do; who, besides the company of angels, and conversation of saints, enjoy the presence of Father, Son, and Spirit; and share in all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; for to the Shulamites, these natives of Zion, or inhabitants of Jerusalem, do these properly belong; see ~~283B~~ Isaiah 33:24; ~~381D~~ Zechariah 13:1.

2dly, Because she was the wife of the true Solomon, Christ Jesus. This is thought by some, ^{f262} to be the same with Solomon, having a feminine termination, which suits well with her: and as it is a common thing for the wife to have the same name with the husband; so it is no unusual thing for the church to be called by the same name as Christ is; Is he the Solomon?

she's the Shulamite: Is he Jehovah our righteousness? this is also the name wherewith she is called: See ²²⁷⁶Jeremiah 22:6, compared with chapter 33:16, hence it is, that she shares in all the blessings he is possessed of, and in every thing he has a property in: for Christ being hers, all that he has is hers.

3dly, The word ^{f263} flora whence this is derived, signifies both perfection and peace; so that she may be called the Shulamite, from that perfection, and peace which she enjoys in and through Christ.

1. She may be called so from that perfection, which She is or shall be possessed of; 'Return, return, O Shulamite;' or, 'O thou perfect one;' who art an accomplished beauty, being the perfection of it; whose renown is gone forth among the heathen for it; for thy beauty is perfect, through the comeliness which the Lord hath put upon thee. Now the church may be said to be a Shulamite, a perfect one, these several ways:

(1.) Not as she is in herself, but as she is in Christ; as she is in herself, she is black, but as she is in Christ, she is comely; as she is in herself, she is imperfect, but as she is in him, she is complete; as she is in herself, she is full of spots, but as she is in him, 'she is all fair, and without spot.'

(2.) She is perfect: not as considered in her own righteousness, but as considered in Christ's; as she is considered in her own, she is perfect, that being so; which she frankly acknowledges, saying, ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 64:6, 'we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;' but as she is considered in Christ's righteousness, she is perfect, being completely justified, acquitted., and discharged thereby from all sin; and so may be justly reckoned among the number 'of the spirits of just men made perfect.'

(3.) She may be said to be perfect: not absolutely as in herself, but comparatively, with regard to others: so saints may be said to be perfect, when compared either with themselves before conversion, or with hypocrites and carnal professors, or with the profane men of the world: so Job, though he may be said to be 'a perfect and an upright man 'on the account of his having Christ's righteousness upon him, and the truth of grace within him; yet he may also be said to be so, as being compared with the men of that generation in which he lived; and

therefore the Lord says of him, ‘there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man.’

(4.) She may be said to be perfect, or, with a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; it is true, the believer has a complete sanctification in Christ, but not in himself: moreover, every part, power and faculty of the soul, may be sanctified, but not wholly, or to that degree as it shall be: the new creature is formed in all its parts, but it is not yet grown up to be ‘a perfect man in Christ;’ it is not adult, it is as yet in its nonage, in its infancy.’

(5.) She may be called the Shulamite, or ‘the perfect one,’ not as she is now, but as she shall be hereafter; for though saints ‘are now the sons of God, it does not yet appear what they shall be;’ they are now in some measure like to Christ, but then they shall be perfectly like unto him; they have now spots upon them, but then they shall be without ‘spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;’ they will then appear to be complete in Christ, and to be ‘the fullness of him,’ as the church is called, in ^{<B123>}Ephesians 1:23, which then she may be said to be, when all the elect are called by grace, and not one member of the body is missing; and when all these members are filled with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit in their measure, and are all grown up to a just proportion in the body.

2. She may be called the Shulamite, ^{f264} from that peace which she does or shall enjoy in and through Christ.

(1.) She may be called so from that peace which she has through Christ: who is her peace, and has made peace for her through the ‘blood of his cross,’ and thereby has reconciled her unto God; so that being now ‘justified by faith’ in his blood and righteousness, she has ‘peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

(2.) From that peace which she has from Christ; who gives unto her such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away: ‘Peace I leave with you,’ says Christ, ^{<B147>}John 14:27, ‘my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you;’ which is such an one as the believer can experience, even in the midst of the world’s frowns, troubles and persecutions: this is a peace which ‘passeth all understanding;’ and which is spoken only by the blood of Jesus, that ‘speaketh better things than that of Abel;’ and which the God of peace

gives to men, by leading their faith to the person, blood and righteousness of Christ.

(3.) From that peace which she does or should enjoy in her members: who ought to endeavor 'to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;' which they will do, if 'the peace of God rules in their hearts,' as it should do; for hereunto are they called.

(4.) From that peace which she is entitled to, and shall enjoy hereafter; for though this world is a world of trouble to the believer, yet he is no sooner out of it, but 'he enters into peace;' and into such an one as will never be interrupted and broke in upon, either by sin, Satan, or the world; for 'mark but the upright and perfect man,' the true Shulamite, 'for the end of that man is peace.' But,

Secondly, Let us now consider what is said unto this Shulamite; and that is, 'return, return:' which, if we understand as the words of Christ, may be expressive, either,

1. Of the spiritual return of his church and people to him after sin and backslidings; which sense is favored by the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase upon this place; and also suits with the former state and condition of the church, who was fallen into a piteous frame of spirit, was sleepy and drowsy, negligent of her duty, and slighting Christ, for which reason he departed from her; but now returning himself, invites her to return also to him; which shows the exceeding greatness of his love unto her, and tenderness for her; and therefore to answer all objections, and remove all discouragements, he not only speaks to her in such loving and endearing language; but also repeats the call over and over, to shew how earnestly desirous he was of it, as well as the haste and speed he would have her make in it; see ^{<240>}Jeremiah 3:1-12; ^{<241>}Hosea 14:1-4. Or,

2. Of the conversion of the Jews: ^{f265}The name by which the church is here called, may more especially intend the Jewish church; and the words, 'return, return,' aptly represent the present state of the Jews, who are in a state of blindness, impenitence and unbelief; and have not only veils over their heads, but also over their hearts, when the law of Moses is read and expounded among them; they have their backs turned upon God, and their hearts set against the true Messiah, Christ Jesus: moreover, their conversion is expressed both in the Old and New Testament, by a turning or a returning unto the Lord; see ^{<242>}Hosea 3:5; ^{<243>}2 Corinthians 3:16; and

the repetition of these words, 'return, return,' not only shows the power and haste in which this shall be accomplished; for then shall that prophecy be fulfilled, which is mentioned with so much wonder and surprise, in ²³⁶⁸Isaiah 66:8. 'Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?' but also their being repealed four times, ^{f266} may denote the collection of the Jews, at the time of their conversion, from the four corners of the earth; see ²³¹¹²Isaiah 11:12. I rather think, that these are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, who, perceiving that the church was going away from them, call after her to return from them; they first meet with her in the time of her beloved's absence from her, and had accompanied her in her search after him hitherto; but not having met with her beloved, who had made himself unto her as 'the chariots of Amminadib,' she takes her leave of them, and in all haste goes along with him; which they observing, call to her after this manner: or else, these daughters having observed how the church, through modesty and shamefacedness, 'being conscious of her former treatment of Christ, hang down her head, and hid her face, as blushing and being ashamed to look up, being now in his presence; they call to her to turn, as some ^{f267} tender the word; that is, to turn her face, that they might behold the beauty and glory of it. Which leads us to consider,

Thirdly, The end of this call, which is, that they might 'look upon her:' and if we take them to be the words of Christ, then the *we* are either the Trinity of Persons, Father, Son and Spirit; who are all well pleased with returning sinners, look upon them with delight and pleasure, and grant them communion and fellowship with them: or else, Christ and his angels, who, together with Christ, not only rejoice at the conversion of profane stoners, but also at the return of backsliding ones: or else, he and the daughters, her companions; who, as well as he, were in love with her, and with wonder gazed at her. Though they seem rather to be the words of the daughters themselves; who here express their desire of seeing her, and therefore call to her to return unto them: ^{f268} they had heard very great commendations of the church's beauty, in the preceding verses, which had excited desires more narrowly to look upon, and take a fuller view of her, than hitherto they had done: as also, that they might again enjoy her company and conversation, which had been so useful and instructive to them; and which, they might imagine, would be. more so, seeing she had so

lately met with Christ, and had some fresh experiences of his love to her. So much for the first part of the words.

II. Here is a reply made to this call of Christ, or of the virgins to the church, to return; which is done,

1st, By proposing a question, ‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’

2dly, By returning an answer to it, ‘as it were the company of two armies.’

1st, A reply is made, by proposing this question, ‘What will ye see in the Shulamite?’ which is done either by Christ; who was best able to answer it; and this he does, not as being ignorant of what was to be seen in his church, nor with a design to lessen his church’s glory and excellency; but rather to heighten it, and to animate and excite the desires and affections of these virgins more strongly towards her: or else this question is put by the virgins, one to another; some of them wished for her return, and others asked what they would see, or what they expected to see in her. Though I rather think, it is put by the church herself; who, perceiving that the daughters were so very importunate with her to return to them, that they might look upon her; ask what they could expect to see in her, who was in herself and in her own opinion, such a poor, mean and unworthy creature; not fit to be looked upon, there being nothing in her that was extraordinary, or indeed valuable, or worth seeing;

2dly, An answer is returned unto this question, thus, ‘As it were the company of two armies;’ which is either given by Christ as an answer to his own, or to the daughters question, and that with a design to set forth the glory and majesty of the church: should it be asked, as if he should say, What is to be seen in my church? I answer, a great deal of glory; for though she is militant, yet she is ‘terrible as an army with banners;’ nay, there is as much stateliness and majesty to be Seen in her, as in two armies set in battle array; or else, they are the answer of the virgins, one to another, declaring what they expected to see in Christ’s spouse; and that is; either such a glorious and joyful meeting between Christ and his church, as is often, between great persons, which is frequently attended with singing and dancing; for the word translated *company*, ^{f269} signifies a company of those who dance and sing and therefore is rendered by the Septuagint, *χοροι*, *choirs*; an instance of which spiritual joy, signified by such metaphors, see in ~~4082~~ Psalm 68:24,25, or as an army at the reception of

their prince, for the sake of greater honor and majesty, divides itself into bands, or else, it was an angelic glory which they' expected to see in her, or to see her face as the angel of the Lord; which would be as delightful and refreshing a sight unto them, as that was which Jacob had, when he had just parted with Laban, and was in danger from his brother Esau; who, ^{<E31>}Genesis 32:1,2, saw the angels of God as two bands, the one to go before, and the other behind him; and therefore he called the name of the place *Mahanaim*; which signifies *two hosts* or *two armies*, and is the same word that is here used; and to this history the allusion seems to be here made: or else, by this company of two armies, which these virgins expected to see, and were desirous of seeing in the church, may be meant, the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body; which will be effected in the latter day; and when it is, it will be a glorious and delightful sight. Though I rather think, that both the question and the answer are the church's; who first asks what they could expect to see in her; and then replies, that nothing could be seen in her, but as it were the company of two armies; that is, flesh and spirit, grace and sin, which were continually warring against, and opposing each other; see ^{<E172>}Romans 7:23; ^{<E517>}Galatians 5:17, and this surely could be no pleasant or desirable sight, as she thought to them: but notwithstanding she had such a mean opinion of herself, yet very large and noble commendations are given of her in the following chapter, which fill up the greatest part of it; and thus it beams:

CHAPTER 7.

In this chapter Christ gives a fresh commendation of the beauty of his church, in a different order and method than before: beginning with her feet, and so rising gradually upwards to the hair of her head, and to the roof of her mouth, verses 1-9. And then the church asserts her interest in him; and declares his desire towards her, verse 10 and invites him to go with her into the fields, villages, and vineyards; and offers various reasons, by which she urges him to a compliance with her invitation, verses 1-3.

VERSE 1.

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

THESE are either the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, who having desired the church to return unto them, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, that they might take a view of those incomparable and astonishing beauties, for which she had been commended; to which request, she complying, they now with wonder look upon her, and give those large commendations of her, which are in this and some following verses: and what seems still more to strengthen this sense of the words, Christ is spoken of in verse 5 as a distinct person, both from the person who is described, and also from the persons by whom the description is made. Though I rather think, that they are the words of Christ; who, observing his church think so meanly, and speak so modestly of herself, enters afresh upon the commendation of her beauties; to the end, that all her discouragements might be removed, her objections answered, and she be fully assured that she was as beautiful in his eyes, and as much the object of his love, as ever she was, notwithstanding her unkind treatment of him, and behavior to him. Moreover, it may be observed, that the title, which is given the church, in verse 6 does not suit well to come out of any other's mouth but Christ's, whose love peculiarly she is: nor indeed would it appear so proper to any as to Christ, to give such commendations of the church as here are given. And it is also worthy of our notice, that the order in which Christ proceeds here, in the description of the beauty of his

church, is not only different from that method which she took in setting forth his glory, in chapter 5, but also from that which he himself took, when upon the same subject, in chapters 4:6, for as he there began with the hair of her head, her lips, teeth, cheeks, and temples, and so proceeded downwards; he here begins with her feet, and rises upwards: which may be,

1. To show that he takes notice of and has a value for the meanest members of his mystical body, the church; he takes notice of her feet, which, though they have the lowest place in the body, yet are not without their usefulness; ‘for the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you;’ and as they are not without their usefulness, so neither are they without Christ’s-notice; who has a real value, and has made provisions of grace for them, as well as for the other members of his body, and therefore appears in a garment down to the feet; which garment of his justifying righteousness, covers the feet and toes, as well as the other parts of the Body: nay, Christ not only takes notice of, and has a value for the meanest saints, but also for their meanest performances; he hears and despises not the prayers of his destitute ones: he bottles up their tears, and forgets not their labor of love towards his saints; such as visiting them when sick, feeding them when hungry, and clothing them then naked, nay, even the giving them a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple; all which he looks upon as done to himself, and will remember, and speak of them when they have forgotten, them, and at a time when they little thought to have heard of them.

2. It may be also to lead the church, together with the daughters of Jerusalem, gradually, by little and little, into the glory and beauty which she received from him; and so bring them to consider what glory and beauty he must be possessed of, from whom she received all hers; for if her feet with shoes were so beautiful, what must the other parts of her body be, which were still more gloriously adorned! and if she in all her parts was so glorious; what must he be who made her so!

3. He takes notice first of her feet, because she was now upon the return unto him after her backsliding from him, which was exceeding grateful to him: the returning prodigal was not more welcome to his father; who, seeing him afar off, ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him; than a poor backsliding sinner is to Christ Jesus.

4. He inverts his former order and method, to show that the manifestations of his love are not always alike; he sometimes takes one way, and another

and whether a believer is considered sometimes either one way or another, he is always beautiful in Christ, and in his eyes. But let us now consider the words themselves; in which may be observed,

I. The noble and excellent title which is given her; ‘O prince’s daughter!’

II. The commendations of her; which are,

1st, Of her feet, and these are said to be ‘beautiful with shoes.’

2dly, Of the joints of her thighs;’ which are said to be ‘as jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.’

I. Here is a new and noble title given to her, ‘O prince’s daughter!’ Christ finds new names and titles for his spouse; and that not only to set forth her excellency the more, but also to express the largeness of his love and affection to her; who may well be called a prince’s daughter, as she is the king’s daughter in ¹⁹⁶¹³Psalm 45:13, and that because she is the daughter of the King of kings, and Lord of lords: and so she is,

1. By covenant grace, which makes her so; for God has in covenant made over himself unto his people, and declared that he will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters; for even thus saith the Lord Almighty: and now that same grace, which has taken them into that relation, will make it appear manifestly that they are so, by bestowing all that grace which is laid up in covenant for them, and all that glory which is there provided for them.

2. By birth, or by the grace of regeneration: the church of Christ is a prince’s daughter by birth, being born again, ‘not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;’ the original and descent of the children of God is not base, mean and low, but high and noble: those that are born again) are born *ἄνωθεν* from above, as that word may be rendered; they are born heirs to an inheritance, that is not of this world, which is fading and perishing, but to one that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them: and as they are born, so they are brought up as the sons and daughters of kings and princes; they are brought up in the king’s palace; they feed at his table, and partipate of all his royal dainties; their clothing shows them to be such, which is all of wrought gold; as does also their equipage and retinue: who,

besides the virgins or maids of honor to wait upon them, have also a guard of angels continually to attend them.

3. By adopting grace: angels are the sons of God by creation; but saints by adoption: they are predestinated to it; and by the Spirit of God, who is the spirit of adoption, are put into the possession of it, and reap the benefits, and enjoy the comfort of it, through his witnessing with their spirits, that they are the children of God; which is such a surprising instance of God's grace, that all who share in this privilege have reason to say, with the apostle John, ^{<101>}1 John 3:1, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'

4. By marriage: The church is married to Christ, the eternal Son of God; whose titles are, 'The Prince of peace, and the Prince of the kings of the earth:' so that she is both a prince's daughter, and a prince's wife; and is the former, by becoming the latter; she is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ, who is the only Son of the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God.

Moreover, the words may be rendered, 'O noble, or princely daughter!' ^{f270} that is, who art of a noble and princely spirit: and this is,

(1.) A free spirit, in opposition to a servile one: and so the word is translated, in ^{<1512>}Psalm 51:12. 'Uphold me with a free or princely spirit:' and such a spirit believers have, being freed from the servitude of sin and Satan; and being delivered from a spirit of bondage to a law of works, serve the Lord with all cheerfulness and readiness, being made a willing people in the day of his power.

(2.) To be of a princely spirit, is to be of a free, noble, generous, bountiful and liberal spirit; and such a spirit saints have, not only in distributing their temporal things to the necessities of the poor, but also in communicating their spiritual things to the mutual comfort and edification of each other; so the word is rendered in ^{<2316>}Isaiah 32:5,8,

II. Having considered the title, it will be now proper to take notice of the commendations given her:

1st, Of her feet, which are said to be beautiful with shoes.

2dly, Of the joints of her thighs, which are said to be 'as jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.'

1st, Her feet with shoes are here commended: it is no unusual thing to describe the comeliness of women by their feet, and the ornaments of them; so Hebe is described by Homer, ^{f271} as having beautiful feet; and Juno, by her golden shoes: particular care was taken of, and provision made for the shoes of queens and princesses in the eastern countries; Herodotus ^{f272} relates, that the city of Anthylla was given peculiarly to the wife of the king of Egypt, to provide her with shoes: the Targum here is, purple shoes; and those of a red, scarlet or purple color, were in esteem with the Jews, ^{<360>}Ezekiel 16:10. and with the Tyrian virgins, their neighbors; ^{f273} and also with the Romans, ^{f274} with whom likewise white shoes ^{f275} were much in use. By these feet with shoes may be meant, either,

1. The ministers of the gospel, ^{f276} whose feet being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, are exceeding beautiful, according to ^{<350>}Isaiah 52:7. ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace,’ etc. These are the church’s feet, which run to and fro in the world, whereby the knowledge of Christ and his gospel is increased; which was eminently true of the apostles and first ministers of the gospel, who swiftly ran over the Gentile world; and wherever they came, diffused the savor of Christ’s knowledge, and were instrumental in the conversion of thousands of souls; for their sound went into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the world. And now these feet being said to be beautiful with shoes, may denote,

(1.) The promptitude and readiness of Christ’s ministers to preach the gospel: as the people of Israel, having their shoes upon their feet when they eat the passover, just when they departed out of Egypt, showed their readiness for their journey; so these feet of the church, having shoes on, show the readiness of the ministers of the gospel to, preach it in every place where they are called to it, tho’ in the face of the greatest opposition; ‘I am ready,’ says the apostle Paul, ^{<316>}Romans 1:16, ‘to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also;’ his feet were shod with it, and he was prepared to preach ‘it; even where not only the seat of the empire, but the seat of persecution was, where it was the hottest and raged the most furiously; and the reason he gives is, for, says he, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;’ no, not in Caesar’s palace: faithful ministers are ready to preach it any where, and at any time; and are ‘instant in season and out of season;’ they preach, ‘not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.’

(2.) It shows their intrepidity in preaching the gospel; a man that ‘has his feet well shod, regards not the roughness of the way, nor the sharp stones which lie in it, nor the pricking briars and thorns through which he walks: the ministers of the gospel, whose feet are well shod with it, regard no difficulties that lie in their way, so as to be discouraged by them, and desist from their work; but, with the utmost courage and magnanimity of mind, bear and surmount them; with scorn and contempt they trample upon all the briars and thorns of reproaches and scandal .that are cast upon, and persecutions which are leveled against them; none of these things move them; neither do they count their lives dear to themselves; so that they may finish their course with joy, and the ministry, which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

(3.) It is expressive of their beauty and glory: the ministers of the gospel are not only beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are made useful, either for conversion or consolation; but also in the eyes of Christ; especially when they faithfully discharge their work; though they run the risk of losing their credit, honor and reputation in the world, nay, their lives also. Or else,

2. By these feet, may be meant the affections of the church towards Christ; ^{f277} which are that unto the soul, as feet are to the body; these carry it up and down, hither and thither, at pleasure: and being said to be beautiful with shoes, show that they moved in an orderly way; constrained her to turn her feel to his testimonies, and enlarged her heart to run the way of his commandments; which made them appear exceeding beautiful to him, so that his heart was ravished with them; see chapter ^{<2149>}4:9,10, the eyes of Holofernes are said to be ravished with the sandals upon Judith’s feet, which she had put on, on purpose to deceive persons; see Judith 10:4 and 16:11, and this shows it to be the custom of women to adorn their shoes or sandals, that they might enamor their lovers; to which custom perhaps the allusion is here made. Or else,

3. By them may be meant the actings of faith on Christ, in saints coming to him and walking on in him, as they have received him: as faith is the eye of the soul, which sees Christ, and the hand which receives him, so it is likewise the foot which goes to him and walks in him; and nothing is more pleasant and delightful to Christ, than for souls to come unto him, and venture their all upon him, in expectation of receiving life and salvation,

righteousness and strength, peace and comfort, grace and glory, all from him and through him; for such he willingly receives, and has promised never to reject: and as their first coming, so their continued walking in him. by fresh repeated acts of faith, is well pleasing to him; these feet are beautiful with shoes. Though,

4. By them may be meant, the outward conversation of the saints; ^{f278} which is frequently expressed in scripture, by walking in the ways, commands and ordinances of Christ; see ^{<4106>}Luke 1:6; ^{<4017>}Ephesians 4:17; ^{<5015>}Colossians 4:5, which may be said to be beautiful with shoes,

(1.) When they appear to be ready to every good work; who, no sooner are enlightened into an ordinance, or called to a duty, but they readily comply with it, being beforehand furnished and prepared for it, having their shoes upon their feet, in a posture of readiness, to do it.

(2.) When the conversation is so ordered, as that the shame of our nakedness does not appear to the eyes of the world: To walk barefoot, was accounted shameful; see ^{<2304>}Isaiah 20:4, and so it is to have an ill-ordered conversation: but a well-ordered conversation is like shoes to the feet, which cover them, so that the shame thereof does not appear.

(3.) When it is conformed to God's law; which is 'a lamp unto the feet, and a light to the path.'

(4.) When it is becoming Christ's gospel.

(5.) When it is guarded against the reproaches and offenses of the world: as shoes upon the feet keep off the thorns and briars from pricking; so does a good conversation,, in some measure, keep off the reproaches of the world, or at least keep from being disturbed at them; for great peace have they which love God's law, and nothing shall offend them: and though it does not afford yet a believer, whose conversation is becoming the gospel, may say, as Samuel did, ^{<4123>}chapter 12:3, 'Whose ox have I taken? Whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded?' so that hereby he is fenced and guarded against the world's calumnies and contempt.

(6.) Then is it so, when there is such a luster in it as cannot but be seen by, and is conspicuous to all beholders; which raises their admiration, and gives them occasion of glorifying God; see ^{<4156>}Matthew 5:16, and this, as it is commendable among men, so it is beautiful in the eyes of

Christ; for so such who order their conversations aright, that is, whose feet are beautiful with shoes, will he show the salvation of God.

2dly, ‘The joints of her thighs’ are said to be ‘as jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.’ By which may be meant, either,

1. Some ornaments of gold, silver, or precious stones, which were used to be worn about the legs or feet by women in those times; which was a custom not only used among the heathens, ^{f279} but also among the Jews, as is manifest from ^{<238B>}Isaiah 3:18, where among the rest of the attire of the Jewish women. ‘The bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet’ is mentioned; and so may be expressive of the greater glory, luster, and beauty of the church’s conversation. Or,

2. The garments which covered the thighs; ^{f280} for it is not agreeable to the rules of decency and modesty to describe the naked thighs: the word ^{f281} signifies ‘the compassing of the thighs;’ which does not intend the ambient flesh, or the thickness of it about them, as R. David Kimchi ^{f282} supposes; but rather, the *femoralia*, or garments about the thighs, which encompassed and covered them; by which may be meant, ‘the garments of salvation, and robe of Christ’s righteousness,’ whereby the persons of God’s elect are covered, so that ‘the shame of their nakedness’ does not appear; and with which they are as richly adorned, as the bridegroom is with his ornaments, and the bride with her jewels, on their marriage-day. Moreover, this is not the bungling work of a creature, but ‘the work of the hands of a cunning workman;’ even of one that is God as well as man, and therefore is called the righteousness of God.’ Or,

3. The girdle about the loins, according to some, ^{f283} which was wont to be worn in those times: thighs being put for loins, as in ^{<044B>}Genesis 46:26 and may intend that girdle of truth with which the loins of believers are girt, and is joined with ‘the preparation of the gospel of peace,’ with which their feet are shod, in ^{<0064>}Ephesians 6:14,15, which metaphor is frequently made use of, when a gospel-con-versation is directed and exhorted to; see ^{<0125>}Luke 12:35; ^{<0013>}1 Peter 1:13. Or,

4. By these ‘joints of the thighs,’ may be meant young converts: The Targum expounds it of the children which sprung from the thighs or loins of the people of Israel; see ^{<044B>}Genesis 46:26; ^{<0005>}Exodus 1:5; ^{<0080>}Judges 8:30, where this phrase, ‘to come out of the loins,’ or, as it is in the Hebrew text, ‘the thighs,’ is expressive of generation; and therefore these

words, in a mystical and spiritual sense, may have reference to those many souls that are born again in the church; who are as jewels in Christ's esteem; and are the curious workmanship of the blessed Spirit, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' Or else,

5. By these 'joints or turnings of the thighs,' ^{f284} by which they move orderly and regularly, may be meant the principles of a believer's walk and conversation, as one ^{f285} well observes, without which it is little worth, nor can it be ordered aright; for principles denominate actions to be either good or evil. Now the principles of grace, from whence a believer acts in his conversation, and by which he moves in his Christian walk, are as valuable and as precious as jewels; and are wrought by no less a hand than the Spirit of God, who 'worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

VERSE 2.

*Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor:
thy belly is like an heap of wheat, set about with lilies.*

CHRIST here continues the commendation of his church, and gives two other instances of her beauty: and as in the former verse, he had commended those parts, which may be expressive of her outward walk and conversation, and of the principles of grace from whence she acted; so here he may be thought to set forth her inward glory by these, the navel and belly, which are more hidden and less conspicuous; for this 'king's daughter is all-glorious within, as well as her conversation is honorable without; her adorning not being the 'outward adorning, of plating the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but is the hidden man of the heart, is that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price:' but what is particularly intended by these parts, will more manifestly appear from a distinct consideration of them. And,

I. Her navel is said to be 'like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor.'

II. Her belly as 'an heap of wheat, set about with lilies.'

I. Her navel is compared to 'a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor:' by which some ^{f286} understand, not that part of the body itself, but some covering or ornament of it; as some jewel or plate of gold, which was so

called, either, because it was the shape of the navel, or else, because it covered and adorned it; as also, because the word translated *round* in the Chaldee language signifies the *moon*, it has inclined them to think that this ornament may be the same which the Jewish women are said to wear, in ^{<2388>}Isaiah 3:18, where mention is made of their ‘round tires like the moon;’ which figure is also understood by the Targum upon our text though others, ^{f287} who are also of opinion that some covering of these parts is intended; yet think that the reference is made unto that ‘clothing of wrought gold,’ with which the church is said to be arrayed, in ^{<943>}Psalm 45:13 in the midst of which, or in that part of it which covered the navel and belly, was a raised or embossed work, which resembled an heap of wheat, or rather, sheaves of wheat, round about which was an embroidery of curious flowers, and especially lilies; and in the midst of the whole work, a fountain or conduit, running with several sorts of liquors, into a great bowl or bason: Fortunatus Scacchus ^{f288} interprets it of a garment covering those parts, embroidered with lilies. By all which, the glory and beauty of the ‘garments of salvation, and robe of Christ’s righteousness,’ with which believers are adorned, may be represented to us. R. Aben Ezra, by the navel, understands the great Sanhedrim; as he does by the belly, the lesser: ^{f289} R. Solomon Jarchi, *lishcat gazit*, or the paved chamber an which they sat. Moreover, nothing is more frequent with Jewish writers, ^{f290} than to call the land of Canaan, and particularly Jerusalem, the navel of the earth; which they suppose to be in the very midst of it, for which reason they call it so; and it was from this navel of the earth, that the gospel of Christ, went forth into all the world; ‘for out of Zion shall go, forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem:’ The Targum, or Chaldee paraphrase on the place, applies it to the ‘head of the school; by whose righteousness the whole world receives nourishment, even as the child receives nourishment through its navel in its mother’s bowels.’ And I am inclined to think, that by it we are to understand the ministers of the gospel; who, in the administration of the word and ordinances, are that to Christ’s body, the church, as the navel is to an human body: and,

1. As the navel is placed in the more eminent part of the belly, so ate the ministers of the gospel in the highest place in the church; who, being called to the greatest work, have the greatest gifts, and largest measures of grace bestowed upon them, to furnish them for it; to whom others are exhorted to submit themselves, they being set over them ‘in or by the Lord.’

2. As the navel, they are placed in the midst of Christ's body, the church: it is in the midst of the church they do all their work, preach the gospel, and administer ordinances, in imitation of and conformity to their great master and prophet in Israel, Christ Jesus; who said, 'In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee,' ^{<8012>}Hebrews 2:12.

3. As the navel is the strength of the intestines; so the ministers of Christ are not only strong themselves, in the power and grace of Christ, as they had need be, but are also strength-criers of others; one principal part of their work being to 'strengthen weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees;' as our Lord said to Peter, 'when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' ^{<0223>}Luke 22:32.

4. As the navel conduces much to the health of the body, so do the ministers of the gospel to the health of the church: Solomon, speaking of the tear of the Lord, says, that 'it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones,' where, by the navel, he means the whole body; that being in a good plight, and a healthful condition, has much influence upon the whole body to make it so: The ministers of Christ, in preaching the everlasting gospel, and feeding souls with the 'wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ,' are very serviceable for the increasing and maintaining the health of the church; many things in the book of Proverbs are applicable to them in this case; see chapter ^{<0218>}12:18 and ^{<0217>}13:17 and ^{<0164>}16:24.

5. The navel is that part through which the child receives its nourishment in the womb; the ministers of Christ as they are instruments in begetting souls again, so they are useful in the nourishing of them, even when in embryo, as well as in feeding them with 'the sincere milk of the word;' which they, as 'new-born babes,' are desirous of, and with which they are nourished and brought up.

Moreover, the navel of the church is compared to a 'round goblet, bowl or bason.' I need not observe how aptly the metaphor agrees with this part of the body, it being like a bowl or bason, both round and hollow; though the mystical writers, among the Jews render it, the pit of the breast or stomach; ^{f291} a phrase which we also use, and rather seems to answer better the description given: which, in a mystical sense, may be expressive of,

1. The perfection of gospel-ministers: the round or circular form is accounted the most per-feet; these, though they are not absolutely perfect,

yet may be said to be comparatively so, having a more perfect knowledge of the gospel, and the mysteries of it, than private believers usually have; see <sup><SUB></sup>Philippians 3:15 for having a larger acquaintance with the scriptures of truth, they are thereby in a sense made perfect, and ‘thoroughly furnished Unto all good works,’ as the apostle observes, in <sup><SUB></sup>2 Timothy 3:17,

2. It may also be expressive of that workmanship which is bestowed upon them; who of themselves are not ‘sufficient for these things,’ until, by the gifts and graces of the Spirit, they are made ‘able ministers of the New Testament,’ and in some good measure qualified for the work of the ministry; and then are they like ‘a round goblet,’ turned and formed by some curious artist.

3. It may likewise serve to set forth the capacity which they are endowed withal, to hold and retain gospel-truths; they are not like colanders, which immediately let out whatever is poured into them; but like round goblets, bowls or basons, which to old and retain whatever they receive; and this is esteemed as a necessary qualification of a gospel minister, by the apostle Paul, in <sup><SUB></sup>Titus 1:9, that he be such an one as holds fast the faithful word, and does not let it slip nor go from him; but continues in the things which he has learned, knowing of whom he has learned them.

Also, it is worthy of our notice, that this navel of the church is not compared to an empty goblet, but to one that ‘wanteth not liquor:’ by which may be meant,

(1.) The grace of the blessed Spirit which is more or less in all believers; which much conduces to their healthfulness, as the moisture of the navel does to the body: it is no unusual thing in scripture for the grace of the Spirit to be compared to water, and to an abundance of it; even to rivers of living water; which are said to be in the belly of a believer, and these are never-failing ones; for grace is in them, as a ‘well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ Or,

(2.) The church’s cleanness may be intended by this expression; who being washed in Christ’s blood, and sprinkled with the clean water of the everlasting covenant, needed no other liquor to be washed with; and thus, as a navel not cut and unwashed, represents the impurity and corruption of nature, in <sup><SUB></sup>Ezekiel 16:4, so a navel cut and washed, as the church’s is here, may be expressive of her purity and cleanness,

through the blood and grace of Christ; so that she needs no other liquor to make her clean. Or rather,

(3.) It intends those large and never-failing supplies which the ministers of the gospel continually have from Christ; who is ‘ascended on high to fill all things,’ and particularly ministers; that so they may never want the liquor of gospel-truths to communicate to others; for which reason he has promised to be with them unto the end of the world; as he accordingly is, and continues filling these golden pipes, as fast as they empty the golden oil of gospel-truths out of themselves. And,

4. The Hebrew word translated *liquor*, properly signifying, a mixture, or a mixed liquor, ^{f292} may be expressive of that variety of gospel-grace and gospel-truths, which they are possessed of, and distribute to others: which is a mixture, not of human inventions, and the doctrines of the gospel together: but of wine and milk, which are joined together, in ~~2881~~ Isaiah 55:1 to which souls are invited to partake of: and which perhaps is the mingled wine, in ~~3102~~ Proverbs 9:2-5, such a mixed liquor ^{f293} being what was drank in those countries, as appears from ~~2381~~ Song of Solomon 5:1, and such a mixture as this, for thirsty, distressed and fainting souls, will never be wanting in the gospel, or with gospel-ministers.

Likewise it may be observed, that the words may be read as a wish for a continued supply of this mixed liquor in this vessel, thus, ‘Let there not want liquor’; ^{f294} and so is expressive of Christ’s strong affection to his church, and tender concern that there might be a continued supply in the ministry of the word for her nourishment; as well as implies a promise that it should be so.

II. Her *belly* is said to be as ‘an heap of wheat, set about with lilies;’ which, as the former expression sets forth the nourishment which she has through the ministry of the word, this may be expressive of her fruitfulness thereby: it was usual with the Jews to scatter wheat on the heads of married persons, at their weddings, three times, saying *Increase and multiply*; ^{f295} for the allusion seems to be to a woman with child, as one ^{f296} welt observes; she is fruitful and big, not with wind, but with wheat: by which may be meant, either,

1. The word or gospel of the grace of God, which is comparable to wheat; ‘he that hath my word,’ saith the Lord, ~~2428~~ Jeremiah 23:28, ‘let him speak my word faithfully; for what is the chaff to the wheat?’ there is as much

difference between a teller of dreams, and a faithful preacher of the gospel; or between the dreams which the one tells, and the *word* which the other preaches, as there is between the chaff and the wheat. The gospel may be compared to wheat for the excellency of it: wheat is the most excellent of grain; it is not only preferable to chaff, but to all other gram whatsoever: so the gospel is preferable to all other doctrines whatever; and ought to be valued by believers more than their necessary food seeing that those who are fed therewith, are fed with the ‘finest of the wheat;’ and therefore may not only be compared to wheat for its excellency, but also for the nourishment which it conveys. Besides, wheat is a solid, weighty, and substantial gram; as are also the doctrines of the gospel; which are not like wind, but wheat; and is a quite different food than what Ephraim fed upon; of whom it is said, ^{<BIB>}Hosea 12:1, ‘Ephraim feedeth on wind.’ Moreover, this is an heap of wheat, which the church’s belly is compared to here; such an one as is upon the corn-floor, ready threshed and winnowed, and cleared of the chaff; see ^{<BIB>}Ruth 3:7, and so may intend the purity of the gospel, and its being clear of all human inventions and mixtures; it is wheat that is clear from, and not mixed with the chaff; for as faithful ministers will not set forth such to feed upon, so neither will enlightened and experienced souls receive it: also, this heap may be expressive of the variety and multitude of soul-comforting doctrines, and exceeding great and precious promises, with which the gospel abounds; there are many of them, an heap of them. and fullness of the blessing in every one; they are full of spiritual blessings and consolations, especially when they come ‘in power and in the Holy Ghost.’ Or else,

2. By it may be meant the graces of the Spirit of God, with which she was filled; which may also be compared to wheat for the excellency of them, being more valuable than, and to be preferred unto all the desirable things of nature; and to an ‘heap of wheat’ for the variety of them, which souls receive from Christ; of whose ‘fullness they receive grace for grace,’ that is, grace in some measure answerable to the grace in Christ, or grace in abundance; ‘grace for grace,’ ^{f297} that is, heaps of grace; for there cannot be one grace, but there must be every grace, even heaps of grace: as also for the purity of them, being free from all mixtures of hypocrisy; their faith is a faith unfeigned; their hope, which is fixed on Christ’s person, blood, and righteousness, is of a different nature than that of the hypocrites; their love to God, Christ, his gospel, ordinances and people, is without dissimulation; in short, sincerity runs through all their graces; they are like an heap of

wheat, winnowed and cleared of chaff: moreover, these may be compared to wheat for their permanence; they will abide the sieve of Satan's temptations, as Peter's faith did; for though it was shaken much, it did not fail, because Christ prayed for it; and they will also abide the world's fan of persecution, and likewise the awful scrutiny and discrimination, which will be made at the clay of judgment; when the florid profession and external works and righteousness of others will be as chaff, which 'the wind shall carry away, and vanity shall take,' these will abide and appear in their greatest glory and full perfection. Though I rather think,

3. That by this heap of wheat, to which the church's belly is compared, are meant young converts; ^{f298} who are not only born in the church, but are also brought forth by her; 'for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth hot children:' and these are the wheat which Christ will gather into his garner, when he will burn up the wicked, 'the chaff, with unquenchable fire:' as wheat is the noblest of seeds, is full of meat, is solid and substantial, these are born, 'not of corruptible, but incorruptible seed,' and being full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and continually receiving from Christ's fullness, are solid and substantial believers; and will abide the force of persecution now, and stand the trying and discriminating time hereafter; 'when the ungodly shall not be so, but shall be like the chaff which the wind driveth away; for they shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;' but even then this wheat, a ill continue on the floor, and be gathered into Christ's barn. Moreover, this heap of wheat signifies the large number of souls that shall be born again in the church; and when those scriptures, in ^{<2349>} Isaiah 49:19-21 and ^{<2348>} 60:8, have had their full accomplishment, then will this description of the church be exactly answered, and appear very glorious.

Moreover this heap of wheat is said to be 'set about with lilies,' or, as in the Hebrew text, hedged with lilies; ^{f299} which would incline one to think, that not an heap of wheat upon the corn-floor, but a field of standing wheat is here intended; whose enclosure is not an hedge of thorns and briars, but of lilies: by which lilies may be meant, either the precious promises and comfortable doctrines which abound in, and encompass around the word of God, or else, the sweet odor which the graces of the Spirit emit on every side; or rather, 'the beauties of holiness,' in which men appear as soon as they are born again; and may be expressive of their secrecy and security, as well as of their beauty and glory.

There is one thing more which I would not omit the mention of., and that is, that some interpreters ^{f300} think, that by these two parts, the navel and belly, here described, are meant the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: by the former, the ordinance of baptism, which is the first ordinance administered to believers; and which none but those who are born again, receive any comfort, nourishment or benefit from: and by the latter, the Lord's supper; which, like an heap of wheat, affords solid and substantial food to believers; where Christ, who is the bread of life, whose flesh and blood are meat and drink indeed, is set forth to them; who are kindly invited, and are heartily welcome to his table; which table of his is graced and adorned, or at least should be, not with the weed; or thorns and briars of scandalous and profane sinners, who eat: and drink unworthily; but with the lilies of precious saints and true believers, who sit as olive-plants, or rather are set as lilies about it. Though I should rather think, that these are intended in the following verse.

VERSE 3.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes, that are twins.

THE breasts are the fifth part, which is here commended by Christ; what is intended by them, has been shown in chapter ²¹¹⁵4:5, where we have met with the same commendation, and that in the same words; only here is an omission of a clause which is added there, namely, 'which feed among the lilies.' The Targum here again makes mention of the two Messiahs, whom the Jews vainly expect: R. Aben Ezra expounds those words of their two laws, oral and written, as he had done in the chapter and place above-mentioned: as R. Solomon Jarchi does also of the two tables of the law; though he likewise produces another sense of the words, which is, that by the two breasts are meant the king and the high priest: but for the understanding of the words, the reader is referred to chapter ²¹¹⁵4:5, where they are more largely insisted on.

VERSE 4.

Thy neck is as a tower of ivory: thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower Ode Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.

CHRIST continues his commendation of the church's beauty; and adds, in these words, three other instance, of it to the five former, mentioned in the preceding verses. And,

I. He compares her neck to 'a tower of ivory.'

II. 'Her eyes to the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim.'

III. 'Her nose to the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.'

2. He compares her neck to a tower of ivory: Two things recommend the neck, erectness and whiteness; both are here expressed, the one by a tower, the other by ivory; hence a fine beautiful neck is called an ivory one; ^{f301} and for the same reason it sometimes has the epithet of snowy, ^{f302} and sometimes of milky, ^{f303} and sometimes of marble. ^{f304} R. Aben Ezra, by the neck, understands the King Messiah; but he is not the neck, but the head of the church; R. Solomon Jarchi interprets it of the temple and altar, or of the *lishcat gazit*, or paved chamber, in which the Sanhedrim sat: The Targum would have *abbeth din*, *the father of the house of judgment*, or chief of the Sanhedrim, intended: but it seems better by it to understand, either,

1st, The ministers of the gospel, who hold unto, bear up and exalt Christ, the head; and are instruments in bringing souls near unto him, and of conveying spiritual food to the several members of his body, the church: who are likewise beautifully adorned with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, whereby they are fitted for the work they are called unto: these may also be said to be like towers for their strength and impregnableness; they are set for the defense of the gospel, and are as immoveable as towers; they stand the battery of Satan's rage and malice, and abide the force of the world's persecutions and reproaches; and none of these things move them to desert the work they are employed in. Moreover, this neck of the church is compared to a tower of ivory: whether there was a tower built of ivory, or that was so called, we have no account in scripture; the Targum, on this place., speaks of an ivory tower, which king Solomon made, but the scripture is entirely silent about it; unless by it we understand that great throne of ivory, which is mentioned in ^{<12018>}2 Kings 10:18, and which may as well be called a tower, as the pulpit on which Ezra and others stood, is, in the Hebrew text, in ^{<14814>}Nehemiah 8:4. Now the church's neck may be said to be as a tower of ivory,

- 1.** To express the purity of gospel ministers, both in doctrine and life; who at once answer that character, of holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; and so become examples to others, both in faith and purity.
- 2.** These may be said to be as towers of ivory for their strength which they receive from Christ, to hold fast the doctrine of faith, to confirm and establish others in it, and to withstand the force and power of Satan's temptations.
- 3.** They may be compared hereunto, for the smoothness and evenness of those doctrines which they preach; by which I mean, not those smooth things, which carnal persons would have prophesied to them, such as are tickling to the carnal ear, taking to the carnal fancy, and suited to the carnal hearts of unconverted ones; but such as are agreeable to the word of God, consistent with themselves, being all of a piece, and not yea and nay, as well as suited to the experiences of God's children. Or else,

2dly, By the church's neck may be meant, the scriptures of truth; which lead and direct souls to Christ, the head; and are the means of conveying spiritual breath, life, and food to God's children; and are beautifully hung and adorned with soul-refreshing doctrines, and comfortable promises. Now this neck may be said to be as a tower which is very high: seeing that it contains things which are sublime, and out of the reach of carnal sense and reason; and is also as impregnable and immoveable as a tower; for though Satan and his emissaries have attempted to remove the scriptures out of the world; yet their efforts have hitherto, and ever will be in vain: and these may likewise be very well compared to a tower of ivory, for the purity and glory of them; for, 'the words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times,' ^{<9126>}Psalm 12:6. Or else,

3dly, By the church's neck may be meant, the grace of faith, which lays hold upon and keeps close to Christ, the head; it is that grace which exalts and glorifies him, and by which saints live upon him, and receive grace, strength and nourishment from him; and is never without the other graces of the Spirit, and the becoming fruits of righteousness, which serve to adorn it: This may be compared to a tower of ivory,

- 1.** For the strength of it; which appears both in believing the promises of God, which sometimes seem to be attended with difficulties insuperable to sense and reason, and in resisting and withstanding Satan's temptations;

this fort and tower of faith Satan could never take and demolish it: it has stood, and will stand against all the posse that he is able to collect together against it; because Christ, who is the author, will be the finisher of it; and continually prays that it fail not.

2. For the purity, beauty and glory of it; as the church's neck being compared to a tower, is expressive of its strength. So its being compared to ivory, shows its beauty and fairness: faith, that is pure and unfeigned, is a beautiful grace in the eyes of Christ; he is sometimes ravished with this neck of the church, and with one chain thereof: see chapter 4:9.

3. For the preciousness of it; as ivory is very precious and valuable, so is this grace of faith; it is called precious faith, in ^{<6006>}2 Peter 1:1, and so it is in its nature, object, and actings; it is more precious than ivory, yea, than gold; hence the trial of it is said to be 'much more precious than that of gold that perisheth,' ^{<6007>}1 Peter 1:7.

II. The eyes of the church are here compared to fish-pools: in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: in this comparison the allusion may be to the humors in the eye, one of which is called *aquea*; which are enclosed as water in a fishpool, and in which the eye seems to swim; hence the eyes are called by Virgil ^{f305} *natantia lamina*; and the same word in Hebrew, signifies both a fountain and the eye; and fishpools, in the plural number, are properly observed, because there are two eyes. Some think that Heshbon is not to be taken here as the proper name of a place, but to be read in construction with fishpools, thus, 'thine eyes are like to fishpools, artificially made;' ^{f306} that are curiously formed, and according to art; such as were about the sheep-gate, which is here called *the gate of Bathrabbim*, because it was much frequented, and through it abundance of people passed to and fro: but it seems most agreeable to understand it of the city Heshbon, which was the seat of Sihon king of the Amorites, as appears from ^{<0426>}Numbers 21:26, and Bathrabbim was one of the gates of this city; which was so called, either because it led to Rabbath, a city near unto it, and therefore are mentioned together, in ^{<2408>}Jeremiah 49:3, which, as is manifest from ^{<1027>}2 Samuel 12:27, was a city of waters: or else, because of the vast multitudes of people which went in and out thereat; for it may be rendered: 'the gate of the daughter of many, or of great ones.' Near this gate, it seems, were some very excellent and delightful fishpools, to which the eyes of the church are here compared; and by which may be meant, either,

1st, The ministers of the gospel; ^{f307} who are to the church, as eyes are to the body; for which see chapter 1:15, and these may be compared to fishpools,

1. For their clearness of sight into gospel-truths: it is true, in comparison of that light and knowledge which saints have in glory, they now ‘see but through a glass darkly ;’ but yet, with respect to the legal dispensation, in which there was much darkness and obscurity, they may be said to ‘behold with open face the glory of the Lord;’ and their light will still be considerably increased, when the ‘watchmen shall see eye to eye;’ and that will be, ‘when the Lord shall bring again Zion.’

2. Like fishpools full of water, they are filled with ‘ the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ:’ the means of grace, the ordinances of the gospel, and particularly the ministry of the word, are in scripture compared to waters; see ^{<250>}Isaiah 55:1, where souls are kindly invited, and where they often meet with that which is as refreshing as cold water to a thirsty man; and of this Christ’s ministers are full, being filled by him, who ‘fills all things;’ they are not like those, in ^{<6027>}2 Peter 2:17, who are said to be ‘wells without water,’ but are like ‘the fishpools in Heshbon,’ clear and full.

3. They may be compared to those fishpools which were ‘by the gate of Bathrabbim,’ because of the multitude of people which flock to, and attend upon their ministry, and which receive benefit more or less thereby; and then more especially will they answer this metaphor, when that prophecy, in ^{<200>}Isaiah 2:2,3, shall have its full accomplishment.

4. The word which is here translated fishpools, comes from a word which signifies to bless, because pools of water were esteemed blessings; see ^{<0015>}Judges 1:15, and so are ministers of the gospel to the churches of Christ; they are promised by God as such, ^{<2015>}Jeremiah 3:15, and he sometimes threatens to remove them as such from his churches, when they are grown carnal, lukewarm and indifferent, and do not prize and use such mercies and blessings as they should; see ^{<0015>}Revelation 2:5. Lord’s days, ordinances, and opportunities of hearing the gospel preached, are the only blessings and comforts of life that some enjoy; God gives them ‘the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction;’ this they are sure to have, with this they are fed all the week long; but on Lord’s-days, they have sweet and comfortable meals for their souls; and this great blessing God favors them with, though he denies them many temporal ones, which is, that their

teachers are not removed into corners, but their eyes behold their teachers; they have Christ's fishpools to come unto.

5. They are like fishpools, whose waters are still, quiet, invariable and constant; and are not like troubled waters, such as false teachers are, who are continually casting up the mire and dirt of their own inventions, and the divers and strange doctrines of men; but these abound with those truths, which, like Christ, the author of them, are 'the same yesterday, today, and for ever.' Or else,

2dly, By these eyes of the church, may be meant 'the eyes of her understanding,' which are enlightened by the Spirit of God, particularly those of faith and knowledge; which may be said to be as fishpools,

1. For their perspicuity: faith can behold things clearly, which are invisible to, and are out of the reach of carnal sense and reason, and therefore is called 'the evidence of things not seen;' it can look 'within the veil,' and view an unseen Christ, with all the invisible realities of another world.

2. For their steadiness and unmoveableness: the eye of faith is fixed, not upon the duties, services and performances of the creature; but upon the person, blood and righteousness of Christ; it looks off of all things else alone to him.

3. For their abounding with the tears of gospel-repentance: Jeremy wished that his 'head were waters,' and his 'eyes a fountain of tears:' the believers eyes are so; for repentance is a tear that drops from faith's eye: souls first look, and then they mourn; nor do they ever more so, nor in a better manner, than when they can view their righteousness, peace, and pardon in a bleeding Savior; it is under a sense of this, they both mourn, most and best, both for their own sins, and the sins of others; their eyes are as fishpools, abounding with these waters; 'rivers of water run down their eyes, because they keep not God's law,' ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 119:136.

4. For the modesty of them: these are not rolling waters, to which wanton and immodest eyes may be compared; but quiet, still and standing ones: faith is a very modest grace; and he that is possessed of it, and has the greatest measure thereof, is the most humble soul; it exalts Christ, magnifies his grace, and gives all the glory to him; it abases the creature, takes away all boasting from him, and ascribes nothing to him; for which

reason the church's eyes are also said to be as 'doves eyes within her locks.'

5. For their proportionable size, exact symmetry, and delightful beauty: perhaps the allusion may be to fishpools; ^{f308} which, being discerned at some distances between trees or groves, look very sparkling and dazzling; and so did the church's eyes to Christ; with which he seems to be ravished, as he says he was, in chapter ~~200~~ 4:9 and ~~206~~ 6:5.

III. Her nose is said to be 'as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus:' Very properly is the nose mentioned next to the eyes; since, as Cicero ^{f309} says, it is so placed, as that it seems to be as a wall between the eyes; and here it is compared to a tower, not for the largeness of it, which is not reckoned comely, but for its position and use: though it may be rendered, 'thy face;' ^{f310} and may denote her aspect, bold and courageous. This tower of Lebanon seems to be one that was built in or near the forest of Lebanon; and was a frontier tower for that part of the country which lay towards Damascus: it was a tower on that part of mount Lebanon which fronted Damascus, that lay in a valley; and so open to view, as well as exposed to winds, hence called by Lucan, ^{f311} *ventosa Damascus*; which tower was so high, as Adrichomius ^{f312} says, that from thence might be seen and numbered the houses in Damascus: Vitringa ^{f313} observes, that many travelers relate that, on the extreme part of this mountain, in a craggy place, to which the plain of Damascus is subject, is a small building; which, though it is of an Arabic original, as is said, yet he thinks it is the place where a tower formerly was, looking to Damascus, to which Solomon here alludes. To this the church's nose is compared: by which may be meant, 1. either,

1. The ministers of Christ, as before; for it need not be thought strange, that one and the same thing should be expressed by different metaphors for different reasons, especially this: seeing there are different parts and branches of the work and office of ministers; who are not only eyes to see, but as the nose to smell; having a spiritual discerning into gospel-truths beyond others, they not only savor them themselves, but diffuse the savor of them to others, and are themselves to many 'the savor of life unto life:' they are, in some measure; both the ornament and the defense of the church; the former is intended by their being compared to the nose, which is the ornament of the face, as well as the seat of smelling; and the latter, by 'the tower of Lebanon;' and this as 'looking towards Damascus,' the

inhabitants of which were always enemies to the people of Israel: and so it denotes the courage and vigilance of faithful ministers; who continually have their eye upon the church's enemies, watch all their motions, observe all their steps, and, with a manful courage, face and attack them. Or,

2. By this part thus described, may be intended in general, the stateliness and majesty, courage and magnanimity of the church; her stateliness and majesty by her nose, which, when of a good size and well-proportioned, adds much grace and majesty to the countenance; her magnanimity and courage, by its being compared to the invincible and impregnable tower of Lebanon, which looks towards Damascus; intimating, that she was not afraid to look her worst enemies in the face; and so answers the character which is given of her, both by Christ and by the daughters, in chapter 6:4,10, which is, that she was 'terrible as an army with banners.' Or else,

3. It is expressive of her prudence and discretion in spiritual things which she is capable of discerning from carnal; she can distinguish truth from error, and can espy dangers afar off, and so guard against them; for which her nose may be compared to this tower which was thus situated.

VERSE 5. FORMER PART.

*Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
and the hair of thine head like purple —*

THESE words contain the two last, which are the ninth and tenth instances of the church's beauty.

I. Her head upon her is said to be like Carmel.

II. The hair of her head like purple.

I. Her head is compared to Carmel. And it will be proper to inquire,

First, What is the church's head.

Secondly, Why it is thus compared.

First, I shall inquire what the church's head is; which is not the civil magistrate; he may indeed be a member of the church, but not the head of it: The princes and great men of the world may be of much service to the church; as in the latter day, kings shall be her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers; but then they shall be so far from being her head, that

they shall bow down unto tier, and lick up the dust of her feet: The Targum indeed understands it of the king who is set over the people.

Some ^{f314} think, that by the head, is meant the soul or mind; which is indeed the chief part in man; and being filled with the graces of the Spirit, and the precious fruits of righteousness, may much resemble the top of Carmel, covered with pleasant plants and fruitful trees: but it seems better to understand it of Christ, who only is the head of the church; she is compared to a body, because consisting of various members, of which body he is the head; see ^{<5018>}Colossians 1:18. 'And he is the head of the body, the church.' Christ is,

1st, A representative head of his church; as such he acted in the everlasting covenant of grace; where what he did he did in her name, and what he received he received for her; hence the elect are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings, and grace is said to be given to them in him before the foundation of the world: thus also he acted as their representative, when he was crucified, buried, rose again, and entered into heaven; they were then crucified, buried and raised, and are now made to sit together in heavenly places in him.

2dly, He is a political head; in the same sense as a king is the head of his people, Christ is the head of his church; and this regards his kingly office, as the other did his suretyship engagements: Christ is given to be 'an head over all things to the church;' and he is head over the church, thine head, **dyl** [which is over thee and above thee; and which may be understood in the same sense, and may be interpreted by his Father's setting him as king over his holy hill of Zion.; which office he execrates, by enacting laws for the good of his people, which are written, not upon tables of stone, but upon 'the fleshly tables of the heart;' by subduing their enemies, protecting their persons, and supplying them with all necessaries, as an head and common parent to them.

3dly, He is an economical head: He is an head to his church, in the same sense as an husband is to his wife, ^{<4123>}Ephesians 5:23, she being espoused and married to him, ought to be subject to him, as her head; and in the same sense as a father is to his children. Christ is the everlasting Father saints are his children, which God has given him, and are born unto him in his church; and him they ought to honor, as their head. Also he is so in the same sense as a master is to his servants; and it is under this consideration

that Christ becomes the head of angels, who are servants in his family: he is not indeed the redeemer of angels, because they never were in a state of slavery and captivity; nor is he the mediator of them, they having never been at variance with God, nor rebelled against him; but yet he is the head of them, according to ⁵¹²¹⁰Colossians 2:10, 'which is the head of all principality and power.'

4thly, He is a natural head; even as an human head is to an human body; and it is in allusion to this that he is often called the head; of which many things may be said: as,

1. That he is a true and proper head; and that which is so, must,

(1.) Be of the same nature with the body; so is Christ; he has partaken of the same flesh and blood, and has been in all things made like unto his church, sin excepted; hence arise that strong affection to her, sympathy with her, and care of her.

(2.) It must be united to it; an head separate from the body, cannot be a proper head, nor do the service of one to the body; there is a spiritual and indissoluble union between Christ and his church; which is represented by that conjugal union there is between a man and his wife, by which, they become one flesh; and also by that natural one, of the vine and branches; but nothing does more express it to the life, than that of head and members; for 'we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.'

(3.) It must be superior to the body, as well as of the same nature with it, and united to it: so is Christ: and that not only in his highest nature, as he is God, and in his office, grace and power: but even in our nature, being 'crowned with honor and glory,' and set at his Father's right-hand in it, 'far above all principality and power.'

(4.) It must be a living head, and endued with the same vital spirit as the body is: such an one is Christ: he and his church live one and the same life: he is the believer's life: he lives, but it is Christ that lives in him: one and the same vital spirit actuates both head and members, and that is the Spirit of God, which is in Christ, the head, without measure, but in his members in measure; 'for he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.'

2. Christ is a perfect head; there is no deficiency in him, nor any thing wanting that may render him a suitable one to his church.

(1.) Here are no part nor sense wanting; he has eyes to see with, which are continually fixed upon his people; he sees their persons and their circumstances, and accordingly relieves them; his ears are open to their cries, which are not disregarded by him; and he has a tongue to speak a word in season, both to them and for them; he smells a sweet savor in the persons, garments and graces of his people, and has tasted death for them all.

(2.) Here are no vicious humors which fall from hence to infect the body: Adam was a federal head to all his seed; but nothing is derived from him but sin, corruption, and death, and such vicious humors, which have infected all human nature; but from Christ is nothing derived, but holiness, grace and life; for he himself is 'holy, harmless, and undefiled.'

(3.) Here is no deformity at all; but every part is in its proper place and just proportion; there is a surpassing beauty in all: 'he is fairer than the children of men;' there is none to be compared to him; 'he is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.'

(4.) Here is a fullness of every thing to supply his body with; 'he is full of grace and truth;' there is a fullness of justifying and sanctifying grace in him; all our righteousness, holiness, grace, strength, life and nourishment, come from Christ, our head; 'it is in him we live, and move, and have our being;' and he has a sufficiency of all grace to supply his members with.

3. Christ is the only head of his church; there is no other; if the church had more heads than one, she would be a monster: The civil magistrate is no head of the church; neither the pope of Rome; Christ only is. As there is but one body, though consisting of various members; and one spirit, which actuates them all; and one faith, by which they hold to the head; and one baptism, in which they make a profession of him; and one God and father of us all, who, by adopting grace, has made and owned them for his children; so there is but one Lord and head unto them, 'who is over all, God blessed for ever.'

4. He is an everlasting head: The church never was, nor never will be without an head; she has a living one, and one that lives for ever; and this is matter of joy and consolation to God's people; hence they need not fear a suitable supply of all grace, life and strength; for, because he lives as their head, they, his members, shall live also. But,

Secondly, I shall now consider why Christ, who is the church's head, is compared to Carmel; that is, mount Carmel, as the Arabic version expressly renders it. And,

1. This was a mountain in the land of Judea, where Elijah contended with and slew the prophets of Baal; and which the Targum on this text takes notice of: and for the height of it, Christ, the church's head, may be compared unto it; 'who is higher than the kings of the earth,' nay, than the angels in heaven; for he is 'set far above all principality and power;' nay, he is 'higher than the heavens themselves.'

2. This was a very fruitful mountain; whose top was covered with vines, com-fields, and fruitful trees; see ^{<338D>}Isaiah 35:2 and ^{<310E>}Amos 1:2. The word is sometimes used for green ears of corn, as in ^{<R24>}Leviticus 2:14 and 23:14 and is sometimes rendered, by our Translators, a fruitful field, as in ^{<3305>}Isaiah 32:15. A bushy, well-set head of hair, which may be here referred to, since hair is mentioned in the next clause, may be fitly compared to a mountain or to a field, covered with trees and grass, and such to an head of hair: ^{f315} and this may be expressive of Christ, the church's head, on whom her hair grows; and who is her green fir-tree, from whom all her fruit is found.

3. The word by some, ^{f316} rendered crimson; and the rather; it may seem to be so taken here, because purple is made use of in the next description; and which go together, and are thus rendered, in ^{<407>}2 Chronicles 2:7 and 3:14, And this may serve to set forth,

(1.) The royal dignity and majesty of Christ; this being a color usually worn by the kings and great men of the earth; tree of Christ's titles, is 'the Prince of the kings of the earth,' ^{<605>}Revelation 1:5.

(2.) His ardent love to his church; whose flaming affection to her may be very well represented by this color. Or,

(3.) His passion and bloody suffering for his church and people; by which their sins, though like scarlet, become as snow; and though red

like crimson, are as wool: so that here is a crimson Savior for crimson sinners. Thus may Christ, the church's head, be compared to Carmel.

Though some think, that not the head, but some covering of the head, is intended here: R. Solomon Jarchi thinks, that the *tephillin* or phylacteries, which the Jews wore about their heads, are here meant; but this is not probable: rather, with others, ^{f317} the allusion is to the nuptial crown or garland, made of flowers, etc., which was wore by the bride on the marriage-day: and this may denote the graces of the blessed Spirit, which are 'an ornament of grace to the head, and chains about the neck;' which may very well be thought to resemble the fruitful top of mount Carmel': and as one ^{f318} well observes, by this covering of the head, more particularly may be meant, the grace of hope, which is the believer's head-piece, ^{³¹⁸1 Thessalonians 5:8, as Christ, who is our head, is called our hope; so our hope, which is our head-piece, by a figure which is not unusual, may be called the head; it is supported and sustained by faith, which is the neck; and has its life and liveliness from the death, sufferings and resurrection of Christ; and therefore may be compared to crimson.}

II. The *hair* of her head is said to be like *purple*: purple-colored hair was in great esteem; of this color was the hair of king Nysus, according to the fable; ^{f319} and so the hair of Evadne and of the muses were of a violet color; ^{f320} the hair of Ulysses is said to be like to the hyacinth flower, ^{f321} which is of a purple or violet color; and Milton ^{f322} calls the first Adam's hair, hyacinthine locks; and here in a figurative sense, the second Adam's hair is said to be like purple. By which may be meant, either the thoughts of her heart, which are many and numerous, and which proceed from thence; as the hair does from the head; and when these are fixed upon, and are employed in the contemplation of a crucified Christ, then may they be said to be like purple; and then are they taken notice of by Christ, and are exceeding delightful to him. Though I rather think, that believers are here meant, as I have observed on chapter ^{²⁰⁴4:1 and ^{²¹⁵5:11, who grow on Christ, the head, and receive their strength and nourishment from him; and these may be said to be like purple,}}

1. Because of that royal and princely dignity they axe advanced to by Christ; who has made them 'kings and priests to God and his father;' for this is a color that is usually worn by great personages, ^{f323} such as all believers are.

2. Because of their being washed in Christ's purple blood; for so are both their persons and their garments; they are tintured with it, and are of this dye.

3. Because of the sufferings which they undergo for the sake of Christ and his gospel; and especially such dear and precious servants of Christ may be said to be as purple, who have spilled their blood, and laid down their lives on his account.

Though some ^{f324} think, that not the hair, but either the hair-lace, or the pins, or some such small things, by which the hair is tied and dressed up in a beautiful order, are intended; and indeed the word is never used elsewhere for hair, and it properly signifies something small, thin and tender: and this may teach us what notice Christ takes of the meanest grace and performance of believers; every little thing that is in, or is done by a believer, looks very beautiful in Christ's eye; so far is he from despising the day of small things.

VERSE 5. LATTER PART

— *The king is held in the galleries.*

VERSE 6.

How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights?

CHRIST, having given a description of the church's beauty, in ten particular instances of it, does here,

I. In the latter part of the fifth verse, discover his great love and affection to her, though in a very abrupt manner; 'the king is held in the galleries.'

II. Gives a general and comprehensive summary of her whole beauty, in verse 6 thus; 'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights.' And,

I. I shall consider this abrupt expression, 'the king is held in the galleries:' which seems to have no dependence upon or connection with, either the preceding or subsequent words, but only with the affections of Christ's heart; who being as it were surprised and astonished at, captivated and ravished with the church's beauty, breaks out in these words, even before

he had well finished the account he was giving. And it may be here inquired,

1st, Who is meant by the king.

2dly, What those galleries are in which he is said to be held. And,

3dly, What by being held in them.

1st, By the king, we are to understand the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; who is the governor of the whole universe, has a sovereign dominion over all creatures, is the prince of the kings of the earth; who sets up and pulls down at pleasure, and exercises an uncontrollable power over all created beings: and who is in an especial manner the king of saints; who are committed to him as mediator by his Father, to rule and govern; whom he has purchased by his own blood, and conquered by the mighty power of his grace; in whose hearts he reigns, by putting his Spirit, implanting his grace, and writing his laws there; whom he continually protects, subdues their enemies, and supplies with all things necessary: this kingdom of his is not of this world; it is not supported by worldly power; nor carried on with worldly interest; nor does it appear in worldly pomp and splendor; but is of an invisible and spiritual nature; it is managed according to the strictest rules of justice and equity, and is upon such a foundation as will last for ever.

2dly, By the galleries, in which this great king is held, we are to understand the ordinances of the gospel: the same word, which is here rendered galleries, is, in chapter ^{<2017>}1:17 translated *rafters*; which are of much use for the strength and support of buildings: as the ordinances are for the strengthening of weak hands, and confirming of feeble knees: the word is also by some, here rendered *canals*, ^{f325} as it is *gutters*, in ^{<0188>}Genesis 30:38,41. And *troughs* to water cattle in ^{<0126>}Exodus 2:16 which also is applicable to the ordinances of the gospel through which, as through so many canals, conduit-pipes or gutters, is conveyed to souls the grace of the Spirit, which is in scripture frequently compared to water: but we render the word *galleries*; as does R. David Kimchi, ^{f326} and after him Junius and Tremellius. In the eastern countries, galleries ran along by the sides of great houses, and were a common passage to the rooms in them; ^{f327} and which will well suit with the ordinances, which are those galleries where Christ and believers walk and converse together; where he discovers the secrets of his love, and leads them into a farther acquaintance with his

covenant grace; from whence they have delightful views of his precious person; who having been some time absent from them, they now from hence behold him coming towards them, ‘leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills;’ here they are oftentimes indulged with Pisgah views; and not only see the king in his beauty, but also beheld the good land which is very far off. But,

3dly, I shall next consider what is meant by this great person’s being held there. The word signifies a being *bound*, as a prisoner, with chains and fetters: R. Aben Ezra and Al-shech acknowledge, that the Messiah is here intended; and tell us, that it was the opinion of their ancient Rabbins, that he was born the day that Jerusalem was destroyed: and if yea ask the modern Jews, why then they are so unbelieving concerning him? they will tell you, that though he was then born, he is not yet revealed; and if you ask where he now is, some of them will tell you, that he is in paradise, where he lies tied and bound with the locks of womens hair, which are like to the frizzles and curls of water in canals; to support which whim of theirs, they torture this text of ours, and read it thus; ;the hair of thine head is like purple, with which the king is tied or hound in the walks or canals; ^{f328} that is, in paradise. But though the king Messiah is here represented as one bound as a prisoner, yet not in this ridiculous sense; but his being held or bound in the galleries or ordinances of his house, shows,

- 1.** How much his heart was ravished and captivated with the beauty of his church; it struck him with so much wonder, and filled him with so much pleasure, that he was like one bound in chains, and could, not stir hand nor foot; had, no power to move along, nor could he take his eye off her; but stood and gazed upon her, as one surprised and astonished at her. Or,
- 2.** It is expressive of Christ’s fixed habitation in his house and ordinances: for though believers do not always perceive him, yet he always is there; he has promised so to be, and he is as good as his word; nay, he takes delight and pleasure in being there, and that, as much as any man can, to be in his own house, and to walk in the galleries of it; ‘This is my rest for ever,’ says he, ^{<D214>}Psalm 132:14, ‘here will I dwell, for I have desired it:’ he is, as it were, tied and fastened to its rafters, and bound in its galleries. Or,

3. It may be meant of any earthly king or prince whatever; and then the sense is as Junius gives it: There is no king so great and glorious, if he should behold thy beauty and glory, but would stand amazed at it; and would be held with a perpetual desire of seeing it, esteeming it far above

his own or the glory of the whole world: and indeed, the earthly glory and grandeur of the greatest prince and monarch in the universe, is far inferior to that of Christ's church; if Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field, much less is any king or prince to be compared with Christ's lily, the church: but, though this sense serves much to set off the church's glory and beauty; yet I rather choose the other, which best expresses the affection of Christ, and the astonishing beauty of his church.

II. In verse 6, Christ gives a general and comprehensive summary of his church's beauty; and at the same time expresses the strongest affection for her, saying, 'How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights.' Where may be observed,

1st, The title he gives her, 'O love.' The church is Christ's love, both objectively and subjectively; she is the object of his love, who he loved from all eternity; loves in time without any change or variation, and will love to all eternity, without the least interruption: she is also one who dearly loves Christ, in whose heart that grace dwells and reigns; which she discovers by her regard to his person, value for his ordinances, and respect to his commands: of this title, see more on chapter ^{<2100>}1:9, though indeed a different word is here made use of, and that more full and expressive, both of Christ's love to her, and hers to Christ, than is there; she is called love in the abstract; as being all over love, love itself, nothing else but love, and altogether lovely in his esteem.

2dly, The commendations that are given of her are,

1. That she is fair; and so she is, not in herself, but in Christ; not in her own nature and righteousness, which are unclean, but in his own person and righteousness, which are without spot and blemish; not as she is now considered in this imperfect state, but as she shall be hereafter, when she shall be presented 'a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;' though now; in Christ's eye; she is all fair, and there is no spot in her; but this commendation we have frequently met with.

2. She is also said to be pleasant; which epithet is by her given to Christ, in chapter 1:16, which he here returns to her; it being usual in this song for these two excellent lovers so to do. The church now was pleasant to Christ, and that for delights; he having loved her, not only with a love of benevolence, but with a love of complacency and delight; and that before the foundation of the world, as appears from ^{<2083>}Proverbs 8:31. The

church, I say, is pleasant to him, as she is his spouse and bride; for though she is as the loving hind, and pleasant roe unto him; and as she is the portion and inheritance, of which he says, ‘ the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;’ and also as she is his friend and intimate acquaintance, she is pleasant to him, as Jonathan was to David. Moreover, she is so as she is clothed with his righteousness, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit; her countenance is comely; her voice, both in prayer and praise, is sweet; her faith and love are ravishing, and her company delightful; in short, he takes abundance of satisfaction and pleasure in her: she was all delight ^{f329} to him; her countenance, her actions, and gesture. And therefore,

3dly, Expresses it after the manner he does, ‘ How fair and how pleasant art thou!’ that is, thou art incomparably and inexpressibly so; none can tell how fair thou art in my eye, and how pleasant and delightful thou art unto me; it is beyond all human thought and expression: What astonishing love and grace now appears in all this, that one so great and glorious, as this royal person is, should be so much in love and pleasure in such poor, vile, with, and take so much much delight and sinful creatures, as we are!

VERSE 7.

*This thy stature is like to a palm-tree,
and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*

CHRIST, having gone through the ten particular instances of his church’s beauty, in the five first verses of this chapter, and given a comprehensive summary of the whole, in verse 6, one would have thought he had done; but as not satisfied with the commendations he had given, and as not knowing when nor how to give over, the subject being so delightful to him, begins anew in these words; where he,

I. In general commends her stature, by comparing it to a palm-tree.

II. Her breasts in particular, which are likened to ‘clusters of grapes.’

I. He compares her stature to a ‘palm-tree.’ Her stature is what arises from and is made up of the above said parts, which he had commended, as is manifest from the relative *this*; which being all set in their proper place, and in a just proportion, as the members of the church are by God, see ^{412D-1} 1 Corinthians 12:12-18, look very beautiful and comely: the word properly signifies height, tallness, and straightness: to be of a tall stature, was

accounted very honorable, and an indication of majesty; such an one was fit to be chosen a king, as Saul was, who ‘was higher than any of the people; from his shoulders and upwards;’ and when Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, as king in his stead, the first-born, Eliab, was presented to him; who, when he saw his comely countenance, and the height of his stature, judged him to be the Lord’s anointed; but the Lord bid him not look on these things, nor judge according to them as man does, for he was not the person he had his eye upon. As the tallness of men is expressed by the palm-tree; thus Moses is said to be admired by the Ethiopians for his beautiful stature, like the palm-tree; ^{f330} so the simile of a tree, as here of a palm-tree, is not an improper one to express the tall stature of women; so Galatea is, for height and tallness, compared to an alder and to a plane-tree; ^{f331} and Helena, to a cypress-tree in a garden, ^{f332} on the same account: and if Solomon here has any reference to Pharaoh’s daughter, his wife, since the Egyptian palm-tree is said to be the best, ^{f333} he might think of that, which is described ‘of body straight, high, round and slender;’ ^{f334} and fitly expresses a good shape and stature, which recommended a person to their lovers. ^{f335} Now the church being here represented as tall of stature, may be expressive of her royal majesty and greatness; and so the Septuagint render the words, ‘This thy greatness is like to the palm-tree’.

^{f336} Moreover, tallness of stature was ever accounted no small addition to beauty; and therefore women have, in former as well as in latter ages, wore ornaments upon the very top of their heads, as well as high shoes on their feet, to make them appear the taller and perhaps this was the reason why the Jewish women walked ‘with stretched-forth necks,’ as is observed in ^{<3316>} Isaiah 3:16, so that this may be taken notice of by Christ, as a commendation of the church’s beauty. The palm-tree is a beautiful tree; and some have been compared to it for their beauty; thus Homer ^{f337} compares the beauty of Nausicaa to the tender branch of a palm-tree; here the church is compared to it for her stature: and to be of a tall stature, is in many cases useful; and such, in many instances, have the advantage of others; Zaccheus, because he was low of stature, was obliged to climb a sycamore-tree, or he had lost the sight of Christ, which he was so desirous of gratifying his curiosity with, But to proceed: by the church’s stature, is meant no other than that ‘measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?’ mentioned in ^{<4043>} Ephesians 4:13, which the church and all true believers are growing up to, and shall arrive at; for which reason the means of grace, the ministry of the word, and the ordinances of the gospel, are instituted and continued: and then will the church have arrived to this stature, when all

the elect are gathered in, and every member joined to the body; and these all filled with the several gifts and graces of the Spirit designed for them; and are all grown up to a just proportion in the body: and in this state and condition Christ seems to view his church here; and therefore gives her this commendation. Now to this stature no addition can be made, but by the grace and Spirit of God; as no man, ‘by taking thought’ or projecting ever so many ways and methods, ‘can add one cubit unto his bodily stature;’ so none can, by any methods of their own, add to their spiritual stature, nor to the stature of the church of Christ: it is the Spirit of God that convinces and converts sinners; he works upon their wills and affections, and powerfully inclines their hearts to give themselves first to the Lord, and then to the churches; and when they are planted there, it is he that, by the effusions and influences of his grace, makes them grow up as ‘willows by the water-courses.’

Now this stature of the church, is by Christ compared to a palm-tree: a tree well known in Judea, where great plenty of them grew; and as Pliny ^{f338} says, the noblest and best of this sort of trees, and especially about Jericho; which is frequently in scripture called ‘the city of palm trees;’ as is Engedi sometimes called Hazazon-tamar, from the palm-trees which grew there: and some ^{f339} have observed that this tree, in future times, became an emblem of that country; and therefore the coin of several of the Roman princes had the figure of a palm-tree upon them, and particularly Vespasian’s and the medal of the emperor Titus was struck with the figure of a captive woman, sitting under a palm tree, with this inscription on it, *Judaea capta*, ‘Judaea is taken:’ the metaphor is taken, as are usually all the metaphors, similies and comparisons in this book, from what was well known in this country; and it is no unusual thing in scripture for saints to be compared to palm-trees; in ^{<1922>}Psalm 92:12, it is said ‘the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree;’ and in Solomon’s temple, which was a figure of the church of Christ, were palm-trees carved upon all the wails of the house round about, and upon the doors of the oracle; to teach us, that none but saints ought to have a place in God’s house below, or shall be admitted into heaven above, signified by the oracle, or holy of holies: also in Ezekiel’s temple, which was shown him in a vision, were palm-trees and cherubim; between every cherub and cherub was a palm-tree; which temple was either a figure of the gospel-church, or of the church-triumphant in glory; and if that is true as some ^{f340} have thought, that the places of the fallen angels are filled up with men redeemed by Christ; that the same

number are redeemed among the one, as fell among the other; this description would give a beautiful illustration of it; for as a cherub and a palm-tree, a cherub and a palm-tree, were placed in this order throughout the house; so an angel and a saint, an angel and a saint, an equal number of each according to this notion, will be in the heavenly glory. *But*, to consider a little particularly why the church, and all true believers, may be compared to palm-trees: and they may, for these following reasons:

1. The palm-tree grows up very tall, straight and upright; ^{f341} and therefore the idols of the Gentiles are compared unto it, in ²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 10:5, ‘they are upright as the palm-tree:’ and saints may be said to be so in a spiritual sense; and that if we consider them either in the exercise of their faith, or in the motions of their affections, or in the tendency of their desires, or agreeableness of their conversations; their faith looks straight upwards to a Christ above, and fixes its eye upon his person, blood, and righteousness; and does not look downwards to its frames, duties, services or performances: their affections move heavenwards, and are set on things above, and not on things on earth; and therefore are Compared to pillars of smoke, which move straight upwards, and which rise up in the form of palm-trees, as has been observed on chapter ²¹⁸⁶3:6, their desires also steer the same course, and move after Christ; they want to have a larger knowledge of him, mote communion with him, and a neater conformity to him; they are breathing after the heavenly joys; and having seen the vanity and emptiness of this world, and the things of it, desire the better country and continuing city, which God is the builder and maker of; and long to be unclothed of this mortal body, that they might be clothed with their house from. heaven: thus, like the palm-tree, their souls move upward in their faith in, love to, and desires after Christ, and those unseen glories which he is preparing for his people: and as they are upright in their hearts, so they are in their conversations, which are often in heaven, and employed about heavenly things, even whilst they are here on earth, which renders them becoming the gospel of Christ Jesus.

2. The palm-tree will grow straight and upright, even though many weights are hung upon it: ^{f342} saints have many weights and pressures upon them; the apostle says, ⁸⁵⁰⁶Hebrews 12:1, ‘let us lay aside every weight;’ which shows that they have more than one; they have a body of sin and death, which presses them hard, and makes them groan, being burdened with it; as also a variety of afflictions which attend them; as well as a load of reproaches and censures thrown upon them by the world, which often fall

very hard and heavy; besides the many persecutions of various sorts which they endure; and yet, as the apostle says, ^{<4048>}2 Corinthians 4:8,9, though they ‘are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;’ they ‘are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, hut not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;” they are supported under all, and still grow upright like the palm-tree; ‘none of these things move’ them, to turn or bend either one way or another; nor tempt them to desert the cause they have espoused; but continue in it with an unshaken mind, and a courageous and magnanimous spirit; so R. Solomon Jarchi applies this to the Jewish church, which stood as upright, as the palm-tree, refusing to be guilty of idolatry, in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, when other nations bowed and fell down before his golden image: nay, saints not only bear up under all these weights and pressures, but oftentimes grow the more in their faith, love, knowledge and experience, under them; as the children of Israel, who the more they were afflicted, the more they grew and multiplied.

3. The palm-tree is a fruit-bearing tree; it bears the fruit which is called dates, which is not only of a beautiful aspect, but of a delightful taste, and it is fit both for food and drink; ^{f343} and this perhaps was the reason why the children of Israel pitched their camp at Elim, ^{<0830>}Numbers 33:9, because there were not only ‘twelve fountains of water’ there, but also ‘threescore and ten palm-trees:’ the saints, being implanted and engrafted in Christ Jesus, and abiding in him, bring forth fruit; they are laden with all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, the graces of the Spirit, and the precious fruits of righteousness; all which fruit they have from Christ, who is their ‘green fir-tree.’

4. Naturalists ^{f344} tell us, that the vital force or power of the palm-tree is not in its root, as in other trees, but in its top, which they call the cerebrum, or brain; and that if its top is lopped off, it immediately becomes barren: ^{f345} the saints life is not in themselves, but in their head, Christ Jesus; it is from him they receive all their grace and strength, their life and nourishment, their fruit and fruitfulness; and it was possible that any separation could be made between them and their head, they would not only become barren and unfruitful, but entirely dead and lifeless.

5. The leaves of the palm-tree are always green; it has on the top of it a tuft of leaves four feet long, which never fall off, but always continue upon it in the same verdure; it is a tree which never rots: ^{f346} the saints are frequently compared to trees in scripture, and that to such whose leaves do not

wither, as in ^{<500B>}Psalm 1:3; ^{<247B>}Jeremiah 17:8, when hypocrites and carnal professors are called **δενδρα φθινσπιρινα**, ‘trees that are withered in autumn;’ ^{f347} at which time not only the fruit is gone but the leaves fall: but saints being engrafted in Christ, and planted by the rivers of divine love and grace, continually retain their verdure, shall never perish, but persevere for ever.

6. The palm-tree is very long-lived, ^{f348} and continues flourishing a long time; it is, as Dr Shaw ^{f349} was informed, in its greatest vigor about thirty years after it is planted, and continues in full vigor seventy years more, bearing all this while every year about three or four hundred pounds weight of dates; and Symmachus renders the words here; ‘this thine’ age is like unto the palm-tree: hence the flourishing of the righteous is compared unto it, in ^{<492>}Psalm 92:12, in opposition to that of the wicked, in 5:7, which is said to be as the flourishing of grass, which is soon over, and continues but a short time; but the palm-tree abides so for many years, as before observed: ^{f350} and this may be expressive of the perseverance of the saints, whose grace is immortal and incorruptible; whose persons shall never perish, nor ever be subject to the second death, but shall live for evermore.

7. The palm-tree grows and flourishes best in hot and sunny places; ^{f351} it will not grow in cold countries, and therefore we have it not here: so saints, being ‘planted in the house of the Lord,’ where in the ordinances, they sitting under the warm and quickening beams of the ‘sun of righteousness,’ Christ Jesus, ‘flourish in the courts of our God;’ these are the best places for them, namely, the house and ordinances of God; here thy delight to be, and here they thrive most, because here ‘the Lord is a sun and a shield’ unto them.

8. Branches of the palm-tree have been used as tokens of joy and emblems of victory; the Jews had a feast of tabernacles, which they kept as a time of rejoicing; and among other demonstrations of joy, this was only to carry palm-tree branches in their hands, ^{<824>}Leviticus 23:40, as did also much people of the Jews, when Christ rode in triumph to Jerusalem, as an indication of the joy they were filled with at his coming, and to welcome him into their city; ^{<613>}John 12:13, so likewise the saints are described, who were come out of great tribulations, and had got the victory over all their enemies, as ‘clothed with white robes, and palms or palm-tree branches in their hands,’ ^{<607>}Revelation 7:9, saints, of all persons in the world, have reason to rejoice in the views of an atoning sacrifice, a justifying

righteousness, and peace and pardon by Christ Jesus, through whom they are made ‘more than conquerors’ over sin, Satan, and the world; and a number of these, with palm-tree branches in their hands, will look like so many palm-trees. But,

II. The church’s breasts in particular are commended by Christ, and compared to ‘clusters of grapes:’ this part has been already commended in chapter ^{<246>}4:5, and is repeated in verse 3 of this chapter; but here a different metaphor is made use of; there they are compared to ‘two young roes that are twins,’ here to ‘clusters of grapes; The word *grapes* is not in the Hebrew text; though the Targum supplies it, as our Translators do: R. Ahen Ezra thinks, that clusters of the vine are meant, which might be planted by, and run up upon the palm-tree; though I should rather think, that ‘clusters of dates,’ the fruit of the palm-tree itself, are here intended; especially seeing this fruit, as Pliny ^{f352} observes, grows in clusters, hanging upon the shoots, like bunches of grapes: moreover, her breasts are compared to: clusters of the vine,’ in the following verse; and it does not appear so probable, that Christ should use the same metaphor, to commend the same part in two verses together. What we are to understand by the church’s breasts, has been shown on chapter 4:5, but seeing a different metaphor is made use of here, it may not be improper to observe the agreement between them, And,

1st, By her breasts may be meant the ministers of the gospel. R. Solomon Jarchi would have Daniel, Hananiah, Misheel and Azariah, here understood who were as breasts to others in captivity: but it is much better to understand them of gospel-ministers; who not only direct men where they may have food, invite them to it, and dissuade them from every thing that would be pernicious to them; but also feed them themselves, with ‘the sincere milk of the word, and bread of life; they rightly divide ‘or cut the word of truth’ and, as wise and faithful stewards, give to every one their portion of meat in due season. These may be compared to clusters, either of grapes or dates,

1. Because of their number: it is a great mercy to the churches of Christ, when there are plenty of gospel-ministers; Christ advised his disciples to pray for it, because the ‘harvest was plenteous,’ and laborers were but few, ^{<408>}Matthew 9:37,38.

2. Because of their unity, likeness and agreement; for though they have gifts and grace differing from each other, one has more than another has; yet they have one and the same commission, and preach one and the same Christ as the only way of salvation, though they may not be attended with equal success.

3. Like dusters of dates, the fruit of the palm-tree, they are the fruit of the church; and such are the best ministers, who are educated and brought up in churches, and approved and sent out by them. Or else,

2dly, By the church's breasts may be meant, the Old and New Testaments; which, like breasts, are full of the 'milk of the word;' than which, no two breasts are more like one another; like the two cherubim upon the mercy-seat, they look towards each other: these may be compared to clusters, because there are in them clusters of excellent doctrines and precious promises; there are not only here and there a berry, but clusters of them; which being pressed and squeezed by hearing, reading, meditation and prayer, yield both delight and nourishment to men. Or else,

3dly, By them may be meant the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are 'breasts of consolation' to believers; and when they have the presence of Christ in them, and the discoveries of his love to them, then they are not 'dry breasts;' they cannot say, they have 'no cluster to eat;' but as when there is 'new wine found in the cluster, and one saith, 'destroy it not, for a blessing is in it,' ²⁴¹⁸Isaiah 65:8, so have they much pleasure, satisfaction and delight therein: and the church's breasts being thus like clusters full in themselves are also delightful and beautiful in Christ's eye, and therefore are thus commended by him.

VERSE 8.

I said I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples.

CHRIST having compared the church to a palm-tree and her breasts to 'clusters of dates,' the fruit thereof, does here,

I. Make a resolution or promise to go up into its and 'take hold of the boughs thereof.'

II. Mentions several effects following upon his putting this resolution into practice, or fulfilling this promise; two of which we have an account of in these words: as,

1st, That her breasts should be filled, and become like ‘clusters of the vine.’

2dly, ‘The smell of her nose’ should be ‘like apples.’

I. We have in these words Christ’s resolution or promise which consists of two parts:

1st, He resolves to ‘go up to the palm-tree.’

2dly, When there, to ‘take hold of the boughs thereof.’

1st, He signifies it as his will, to ‘go up to the palm-tree.’ Some popish ^{f353} writers have fancied that the cross of Christ, or at least some part of *it*, was made of the wood of the palm-tree; to support which they have no sufficient proof or evidence; though it is not very unlikely, seeing there was such plenty of those sort of trees in Judea, as has been observed on the former verse: and therefore, some ^{f354} have thought, that by Christ’s going up to the palm-tree, is meant his crucifixion, which he expresses by being lifted up, in ^{<B129>} John 12:32. Moreover, his going up to it may signify his voluntary submission unto death, even the ‘death of the cross:’ besides, the palm-tree being an emblem of victory, may represent the conquest which Christ has obtained over all his and our enemies; he has destroyed sin, overcome the world, abolished death, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them, openly triumphing over them on the cross.

Though others ^{f355} have thought, that by Christ’s going up to the palm-tree, are meant his ascension into heaven, his conjunction with his church there, and that unspeakable pleasure which he will take in her for evermore: it is true, Christ not only ascended to his God and our God, to his Father and our Father; but also went up to the church triumphant, which may very fitly be compared to a palm-tree; the saints there appearing with ‘white robes and palms, palm-tree-branches in their hands;’ as a token of that joy they are possessed of, and of that victory over all their enemies, which they are sharers in, through Christ Jesus: and it was the delightful company of these persons, which Christ had in view in becoming a surety for them, assuming their nature, and dying in their room and stead; it was this ‘joy that was set before him,’ which caused him so patiently to ‘endure the cross, despising

the shame' which attended it. Though I am rather inclined to think, that by the palm-tree here, we are to understand the church militant, as in the foregoing verse; and Christ's going up into it; is expressive,

1. Of his right unto, and property in his church: she is his by the gift of the Father, and by the purchase of his own blood, as well as by the conquest of his powerful and efficacious grace; on which account he claims an interest in her, and says, 'I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine;' and she is very free to own and acknowledge this rightful claim unto her, as it is her honor, interest, and duty so to do: this palm-tree is of his own planting; he waters it every moment; he keeps it night and day; he prunes it, and makes it fruitful; and therefore has a right to go up into it when he pleases.

2. Of his presence with her, so Christ is said to be 'among the myrtle-trees,' in ^{<3008>}Zechariah 1:8, as he is here said to go up into the palm-tree: and this is the grand reason why the church is at any time in a flourishing condition, and like the palm-tree, grows, though never such weights and pressures are upon it; because Christ is in the midst of her, and grants his gracious and supporting presence to her.

3. Of his delight in her: he loves to be in her presence and company, as men do to go up into their trees, and handle the boughs thereof. His saints are 'the excellent in the earth,' in whom his delight was before the world began, and now is and ever will be: the mutual delight which appears in the bride and bridegroom, falls short of expressing that which Christ takes in his church; he 'rejoices over her with joy; he rests in his love towards her, and joys over her with singing,' ^{<300E>}Zechariah 3:17.

Now from Christ's going up into his palm-tree, the church, we are not to imagine that the church is higher than Christ, for he is far superior to her; and it is an instance of his grace and condescension, that he will take notice of her, and grant his presence to her; he is her head and husband, her Lord and king, and therefore she is inferior, and ought to be in subjection to him; and though he was in our nature, and that by reason of suffering in it, made 'a little lower than the angels;' yet he is vastly higher than they, yea, higher than the heavens themselves. But this expression here is suited, and is very agreeable to the metaphor here made use of. The palm-tree is a very tall tree; and its boughs and branches do not grow out of the sides, as in many other trees, but only on the top of it; so that whosoever would lay hold upon them, and gather the fruit, must go up into it: moreover, the trunk

and body of it is made with rings in the bark of it, like steps; so that it may be very easily climbed, which is done by the eastern people, with an incredible swiftness: ^{f356} these steps are made of the knots or polices, as Dr Shaw ^{f357} calls them, being gradually left upon the trunk of the tree, serve, like so many rounds of a ladder, to climb up the tree, either to fecundate it, or to lop it, or to gather the fruit: Lucian ^{f358} observes that ‘those who have seen how men get up into palm-trees, in Arabia, Egypt, and other places, must needs understand what he says, about climbing the Phalli in the temple of Hyrapolis in Syria, he is describing.’

2dly, Going up into the palm-tree, is in order to take hold on the boughs of it. The palm-tree has no boughs nor branches growing out of the sides of the trunk of it, as before observed, but shoots upon the top of it, on which its fruit hangs; and the Septuagint renders it, ‘I will take hold of the heights of it ;’ some render it, the *fruit* of it, as the Vulgate Latin version; to which Kircher inclines: and this ascent to the top of it was, either to gather the fruit, or to crop the shoots themselves, and eat them; for the tops of them, which are of the first year’s growth, are very tender and sweet, and may be eaten; ^{f359} so the top of the palm-tree, which some call the cerebrum, or brain, is very sweet; ^{f360} and is spoken of as very pleasant and nourishing. ^{f361} Christ’s end in doing this may be twofold:

1. To gather the fruits of it; which he has an undoubted right unto; they are his: whether we understand by them the blessings of grace, which believers are possessed of; or the graces of the Spirit, which are implanted in them; or the good works which they are enabled to perform; these all come from him; he is the ‘green fir-tree,’ from whom all the believers ‘fruit is found;’ therefore he may lay hold on the boughs, and gather the fruit when he pleases; in doing which, he takes much delight and pleasure, and is kindly invited by his church thereunto: see chapter 4:16.

2. His other end in laying hold on the boughs, may be to prune them, that they may bring forth more fruit; this he does sometimes by his word, and the preaching of it: by which sin is corrected, error refuted, and sharp reproofs and admonitions given on the account of both; for as the word is as an ax to cut down sturdy and obstinate sinners; so it is as a pruning knife in Christ’s hand, to remove all ‘superfluity of naughtiness,’ which hinders the growth of his trees and plants: sometimes also Christ prunes his churches by the ordinance of excommunication; by which he lops off unfruitful branches, such who are unfit for communion in his churches;

which awful sentence is executed sometimes more mildly, and sometimes more severely, according to the nature of the offense; sometimes it is expressed in scripture by a withdrawing from disorderly persons; at other times, by a rejecting of heretics; as also, by putting away such who are notoriously vile and wicked: again, Christ prunes his people likewise by afflictive providences, by which their iniquity is purged, their graces are tried and exercised, and they made under those sharp trials, to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness: moreover Christ sometimes effects this work by suffering persecution to befall his churches; this sun scorches up those plants, which are not of Christ's planting, and are not rooted in his person and grace; this is the fan which Christ sometimes takes in his hand, and 'thoroughly purges his floor,' the church, of hypocrites and formal professors; this is his pruning-knife, with which he lops off those fruitless and withered branches. This is an awful way of pruning the boughs of his palm-tree.

It may be observed, that these words are delivered in the form of a purpose or promise, 'I said I will go up,' etc. Christ thinks, and then resolves, before he acts; he does all things deliberately, and according to the counsel of his own will, and always for his own glory and his church's good: moreover, this being a promise of Christ's, the performances of it may be expected by his people; for 'he is faithful who hath promised;' it may also be pleaded by them: Has he promised to go up into his palm-tree, or grant his presence in his church? He will be as good as his word; his people may expect his presence there; and they are allowed to put him in mind of such a promise, which they need not doubt the fulfillment of. But,

II. Let us now consider the effects of Christ's going up into his palm-tree: and we find two of them mentioned in this verse, and a third in the following one:

1st, The church's breasts become like 'clusters of the vine;' that is, of grapes which grow in clusters on the vine: ^{f362} which words may be considered, either as a wish, and be read thus, 'and now let thy breasts be as the clusters of the vine;' ^{f363} or else, as a promise that they should be so; which accordingly was effected by his granting his presence to her, which filled her breasts, and made them like clusters of the vine. By which may be meant, either,

1. The ministers of the gospel; who not only direct men where the wine and milk of gospel-grace may be had, and invite them to it, but do also themselves feed them with ‘the sincere milk of the word;’ with which they are filled, by Christ’s granting his presence to them in their studies and meditations; and are brought forth by him at proper opportunities, laden with ‘the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ;’ so that these breasts look like clusters of the vine. Or,

2. By them may be meant the ordinances; which are ‘breasts of consolation’ to God’s people, When they have the presence of Christ in them, otherwise they are but dry breasts; it is that which fills them with milk for nourishment, and with wine for refreshment. Or,

3. The two Testaments, with those dusters of excellent doctrines and precious promises that are in them; which, when men have the presence of Christ, either in the hearing or reading of them, yield them much delight and comfort, though at other times they are but as a dead letter. Though,

4. This may in general intend that influence, which Christ’s presence has on the fruitfulness of his people; it is this which makes them fat and flourishing, brisk, and lively in the exercise of grace, fruitful in every good word and work; so that they grow and thrive in every grace, and are not barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

2dly, Another effect of Christ’s going up into his palm-tree, or of his presence in his church, is, that ‘the smell of her nose’ thereby becomes like that of apples. Formerly it was usual to anoint the nostrils, ^{f364} which was reckoned very healthful and refreshing to the head; as well as was done, that they might give the more agreeable smell: and some sort of ointments, it seems, gave a smell like that of apples, which in some is very grateful and delightful; and Cicero ^{f365} observes, that the plenty and variety of apples, their pleasant taste and smell, show that they were only made for men: and indeed there was an ointment made of them, called melinum; so that the nostrils being anointed with it, might well be said to smell like apples; and which was accounted one of the best. ^{f366} By which apples may be meant, either,

1. The refreshing doctrines of the gospel from Christ’s ministers; who are the church’s nose, and are capable of distinguishing truth from error: these doctrines which they preach, when fitly spoken, seasonably applied, and attended with the power and presence of Christ to poor souls, are like

‘apples of gold in pictures of silver;’ nay, not only like apples for sight, being beautiful to look upon, but also for smell; for these diffuse a sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ in the souls of his people. Or else,

2. The fame and report of the church’s faith, piety and courage, which was spread far and near; her faith, for its strength and purity, is compared in verse 4 to ‘a tower of ivory;’ and her courage and magnanimity in defending, this faith against all opposition, is expressed by her nose, being ‘as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh towards Damascus:’ now the smell, fame or report of all this, like the smell of apples, was diffused abroad, and gained her credit and reputation, even from others; she having, like those heroes, in Hebrews 11, ‘obtained a good report through faith.’ Or,

3. It may be expressive both of her outward conversation and inward constitution, which were both sound and healthful; she had an inward principle of grace, from whence proceeded a savory conversation without; the hidden man of her heart, was that which is not corruptible, which sent forth, not a nauseous, but a grateful odor; no rotten nor corrupt communication proceeds from hence, but what is not only edifying to others, but grateful to Christ; and nothing has a greater influence than the presence of Christ, to make her inward constitution and outward conversation so. Though,

4. This may intend the savoriness of those things which she smelt, which were as grateful to her as the smell of apples: thus spiritual and heavenly truths, the divine truths and excellent doctrines of the gospel, are exceeding savory to believers, especially when they have the presence of Christ, the discoveries of his love, and the quickening influences of his Spirit. The third effect follows in the next verse.

VERSE 9.

*And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, for my beloved,
that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep, to speak.*

THESE words contain the third effect of Christ’s going up into his palm-tree, or granting his presence to his church: in which may be considered,

I. What is meant by the ‘roof of her month.’

II. Why it is compared to ‘the best wine.’

III. The commendations of this best wine, to which it is compared; which,

1st, Is commended from the person, for whose use it is: ‘for my beloved.’

2dly, From the property of it; ‘it goeth down sweetly.’

3dly, From its effect; ‘causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.’

I. It will be proper to inquire what we are to understand by the roof of the church’s mouth. And,

1. By it may be meant her taste; the same word is so rendered in chapter ^{<2018>}2:3. The church’s taste is good, and not like that of unconverted persons; whose taste remains in them, as it is vitiated and corrupted by sin; so that they are not capable of discerning the difference of things; and therefore call evil good, and good evil; put bitter for sweet; and sweet for bitter; but so is not the church’s taste; she can discern perverse things; her taste is like the best wine, she can tell whether it is good or no: tho’ perhaps this expression is not so much intended to signify the goodness of her sense of tasting, as the things which she tastes of, which are the person of Christ, and the words of his mouth; tastes that the Lord is good in his person, grace and office; and finds the doctrines which proceed out of his mouth, and the fruit which drops from him. sweeter to her taste than the honey or the honey-comb.

2. R. Aben Ezra thinks that the saliva, or spittle under the tongue, is here meant; and what may be intended by that, may be learnt from chapter ^{<2018>}4:11, where it is said, that ‘honey and milk are under her tongue;’ that is, the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, which she lays and keeps there, and rolls them as a sweet morsel in her mouth, having tasted the goodness of them; herein she appears to be exceeding different from carnal and unconverted persons, under whose lips the poison of asps is said to be, ^{<8183>}Romans 3:13.

3. Others ^{f367} think, that by the roof of her mouth, is meant her breath; which proceeds from thence, Was, sweet and of good smell, like the best wine; and not like the breath of carnal persons, whose throats are like an open sepulcher; from whence are daily belched out horrid oaths, dreadful curses and imprecations upon themselves and others, with cruelty and

threatenings to the saints and people of God; but as for the church's breath, it is of a different nature; no rotten communication proceeds out of her mouth, but what may be for the use of edifying; she breathes out nothing but peace and love among her members, and also to others: and as for her prayers to God, which may be justly called the breathings of her soul; these are as sweet odors, being perfumed with the incense of Christ's mediation. Though,

4. I rather think, that by the roof of her mouth, is meant her speech, or the words of her mouth; for the roof of the mouth is an instrument of speech, as well as of tasting; and the same word is frequently rendered the mouth, as in chapter ^{<21616>}5:16; ^{<21813>}Proverbs 5:3 and ^{<21817>}8:7, which may either intend her speech in common conversation; which, like the best wine, is warming, comforting, and refreshing to souls, as well as grateful to Christ: How many have been cold, dull, and lifeless, when they have first come into the conversation of the saints; and by it have been warmed, quickened, and refreshed, so that they have gone away With joy and tom-fret, blessing and praising God for such opportunities! Or else, by it may be meant the speech of the church in prayer or praise, which are both delightful and well-pleasing to Christ; her voice in either is sweet unto him, makes delightful music in his ears; though the prayers of the saints are but like the chatterings of a crane or swallow, yet they are gratefully received by him; as are also their praises, which are more esteemed by him, than the sacrifices of an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs: though I am most inclined to think that the gospel, which proceeds out of Christ's mouth, and is put into the mouth of his church, which is preached in the midst of her, and by her ministering servants; is here intended. Which brings us to consider,

II. Why this is compared to the best wine: Perhaps the wine of Sharon may be referred to, which was so strong, that they mixed it two parts water and one wine; ^{f368} tho' there were other places in Judea that had the first name for wine ^{f369}; the wine of Lebanon was very grateful for taste and smell, ^{<31417>}Hosea 14:7, where was a city, called Ampeloessa, ^{f370} from the excellency of its wine.

1. That is the best wine which is pure and free from dregs and mixtures; that Which is upon the lees, well refined: such is the gospel, as preached by the faithful ministers of it, who are not as some, which corrupt the word of

God; they do not mix it with their own inventions, but deliver out this wine of the gospel, neat and clean, as they have received it.

2. Wine that has age, is also accounted the best: thus saith Christ, ^{<REF>}Luke 5:39. 'No man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better:' the gospel is no novel doctrine; for though it is more clearly made known under the New Testament dispensation, than it was under the Old, yet it was known then; it was wrapped up in the types, shadows and sacrifices of the old law; it was preached before unto Abraham, nay, to our first parents in the garden; and was spoken of more or less, ever since, by the mouth of God's holy prophets, which have been since the world began.
3. The best wine is that which is of a good flavour, and delightful to the taste, as well as that which is of a good color: such is the gospel; it is like milk for nourishment, and like wine for pleasantness; nay, like Ezekiel's roll, as honey for sweetness; yea, the psalmist says, ^{<REF>}Psalm 119:103, that the words of God's mouth were sweeter than honey to his mouth.
4. Wine is of a cheering and reviving nature; it is what makes glad the heart of man; and therefore is proper to be given to those that be of heavy hearts, that they may drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more of such a nature is the gospel; it being received by persons in distress, like the best wine; it cheers and revives their spirits, it makes them forget their spiritual poverty, and puts out of their minds their former misery and distress; whilst they behold what riches of grace are treasured up in Christ, and what ample provisions are there made for them; nay, it not only revives distressed and drooping souls, but such is the virtue and efficacy of it, that it will bring dead sinners to life; for it is the savor of life unto life to many.
5. The best wine is very refreshing to weary persons, who have been fatigued with labor and travel: the gospel is a word in season to him that is weary; it not only directs the weary soul where it may have rest, kindly invites unto it, but is also the instrument of bringing him into it.
6. Wine is reckoned a comforter and strengthener of the stomach; therefore the apostle Paul advised Timothy, ^{<REF>}1 Timothy 5:23, to use a little wine for his stomach sake; and his often infirmities: the doctrines of the gospel have a tendency to comfort souls; they are often blessed for that purpose; the ministers of it are employed herein on that account; and the Spirit of God does his work, and executes, his office as a comforter by them. Thus

the gospel, the word; which is in and proceeds out of the church's mouth, may be compared to the best wine.

III. I shall now consider the commendations given of this best wine of the gospel. And,

1st, It is commended from the persons for whose use it is, for my beloved; and therefore must needs be the best: it is such wine as a man would give to his friend, whom he dearly loves; who, when he pays a visit to him, if he has any wine in the house, he shall be sure to have it; and if he has any better than the rest, it shall be at his service. But who are we to understand by this beloved, for whose use this wine is? And,

1. We may understand these words as the words of Christ, speaking to and of his church and people, whom, in chapter ^{<218>}5:1, he calls his beloved, and his friends; and these he treats as such, with his best wine; the gospel, which is chiefly designed for their good, comfort, and establishment,

2. If we take these words to be the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, as some do, and that not only these, but all that is Spoken in the preceding verses; then the beloved is Christi whom they call their own; having now arrived to a greater knowledge of him, and acquaintance with him, than they formerly had; see chapter ^{<218>}5:9 and ^{<218>}6:1, nor need it be wondered at, that it should be expressed in the singular number, my beloved; seeing it may well be supposed, that but one of them spoke, and delivered these commendations of the church. Though;

3. I rather take them to be the words of the church, speaking to and of Christ; who, hearing such great things spoken in the commendations of herself, could hold no longer; but, as one ^{f371} expresses it, snatches the word out of Christ's mouth, breaks in upon his discourse before he had done, and thrusts in these words, referring all the glory to him: it is as if she should say, Is the roof of my mouth like the best wine? it is for my beloved; it is of his making and providing, and in which his glory is much concerned, as well as my comfort; 'for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;' he is the subject, the sum and substance of the gospel; it is designed for the manifestation of his grace; and the advancement of his glory; and its being so, makes it so comfortable and delightful to souls. Junius and Piscator render the word, *most lovingly* or *most lovelily*: and so understand it of the manner of this best wine, going down and being

received by persons; but this is sufficiently expressed in the next clause, which I shall now consider.

2dly, This wine of the gospel, is commended from the property of it, which is here mentioned; it goeth down sweetly, which words may be differently rendered, and as differently understood. And,

1. They may be translated thus, *that walketh or moveth aright*; as they are in ^{<1231>}Proverbs 23:31, where wine is also spoken of, and denotes its sparkling in the cup; which shows it to be a generous wine, of a good body, and that it has life and spirit in it; therefore the wise man, in the fore-mentioned place, advises not to look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright, because when it is so, it is very ensnaring: but here is no such danger in this wine of the gospel; the pleasantness of which, both in the eyes of Christ .and of his church, may be here intended.

2. The words may be rendered thus, *which goeth to my beloved straightway or directly*; ^{f372} and so may denote the direct tendency of the gospel to lead souls to Christ, and to advance his honor and glory; for the whole of it consists in this, Christ in us the hope of glory. Or,

3. Thus, it goeth or leadeth to righteousnesses; ^{f373} for it is one principal part of the gospel to lead souls to the righteousness of Christ, which is clearly revealed therein; that, disclaiming all pretences to their own righteousness for justification, they may wholly and alone look unto, and depend upon that tot their acceptance with God, and justification in his sight: moreover, it also teaches them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Or,

4. They may be thus rendered, that goeth or walketh to upright persons; ^{f374} for so the word is rendered in chapter ^{<2004>}1:4, and indeed it is to such persons that the gospel is of real service and advantage; to them that believe, it is the power of God unto salvation; it works effectually in their hearts; these receive it in the love of it; by them it is highly valued and esteemed; and to them it yields much solid comfort, pleasure and satisfaction. For with such,

4. It goeth down sweetly, as our translators have rendered the words: This wine of the gospel is received and taken down with all readiness by all

those who have once tasted the sweetness, and felt the power of it; with them the gospel is no hard saying, and who can bear it? but, like the best wine that is very delightful: with some persons, the doctrines of the gospel, such as those of an eternal, personal election, particular redemption, powerful and efficacious grace in conversion, final perseverance, etc. are very disagreeable; but to believers in Christ, they are like wine that goeth down sweetly.

3dly, This wine is commended, from the effect it has upon those who drink of it; it ‘causeth, the lips of those that are asleep to speak.’ In which may be considered,

1st, The persons on whom it has this effect, ‘those that are asleep.’

2dly, The effect itself, which it has upon them, ‘it causeth their lips to speak.’

1st, The persons on whom this wine of the gospel has this effect; and they are such who are asleep. The Hebrew word, ^{f375} here used, is by some rendered ancient persons; for persons, when they are grown old, have not their senses so quick, nor are they so full of talk, but are more slow of speech, than when they were in their youthful days; yet Cicero ^{f376} says, *senectus est natura loquacior*; and therefore this serves much for the commendation of this wine, that it should have such an effect upon such persons; for that must be noble and generous wine that invigorates old men, and fills them with a juvenile heat, warmth and sprightliness: it makes them loquacious, ^{f377} which is one effect of wine, when freely drank; ^{f378} and it softens the moroseness of ancient men; ^{f379} wine is even said to make an ancient man dance. ^{f380} But the word may very well, and perhaps better, be rendered as it is, ‘those that are asleep;’ by which may be meant, either,

1. Sinners, who are in the dead and deep sleep of sin. These,

(1.) As persons asleep, have not the free exercise of their senses; they do not see their lost, miserable and undone state by nature, nor their need of Christ, and the value of him: their ears are stopped, that they cannot hear, so as to understand the joyful sound; they have no taste nor savor of divine things; and many have arrived to such a prodigious pitch of wickedness, as to be past feeling, having their ‘consciences seared with an hot iron:’ nay, in this they exceed persons that are asleep who, though they have not the free exercise of their senses

whilst asleep, yet are not destitute of them; but these have no spiritual sense at all, but are ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’

(2.) Like persons asleep,, they are strengthless, and are not in a capacity to do any thing that is spiritually good of themselves: they cannot redeem themselves from destruction; they cannot fulfill the righteous law of God, nor satisfy divine justice; they have not power to begin, nor carry on a work of grace upon their souls; they cannot subdue their corruptions, nor withstand Satan’s temptations, nor perform the duties of religion; these things are not effected by the might and power of man.

(3.) Like persons asleep, they are inactive; ‘their strength is to sit still;’ they have neither power nor will to do that which is good; ‘there is none that doeth good, no, not one;’ they have no true knowledge of what is good; for though ‘they are wise to do evil, yet to do good they have no knowledge;’ and if they had knowledge, they have no inclination; and if they had that, yet still they have no power; ‘for the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good that are accustomed to do evil.

(4.) Like persons asleep, they are subject to illusions and mistakes; they are mistaken about the nature of the divine Being, whom they dither imagine to be such an one as themselves, who will either connive at sinful actions, or take little or no notice of them; or else, presume upon his absolute mercy, to go on in sin: and they are as much deceived about the nature of sin itself, which they now roll as a sweet morsel in their mouths, but will ere long find to be as gravel-stones: and so they are like-wise with respect to the ways of God, and people of Christ; in the former of which they suppose there is no true pleasure; and in the latter, no enjoyment of true felicity; but in nothing are they more mistaken than in themselves and their state; which they imagine to be good, when at the same time they are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked,

(5.) Like persons asleep, they insensible of danger; they are walking in the broad road to destruction, and are upon the brink of it, and yet know it not; they are crying, Peace, peace, when sudden destruction is at hand. Or else,

2. By. those that are asleep, may be meant drowsy professors: the wise as well as the foolish virgins slept; Christ's church may sometimes be in such a condition, as she was in chapter ~~2ND~~ 5:2, this sleep is not a dead sleep, as the former; there may be life notwithstanding this, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh:' this consists in a non-exercise of grace, an indifference to religious duties, a lukewarmness and want of zeal for the glory of Christ and his gospel, occasioned by the prevailings of sin and corruption; see more on chapter 5:2. But,

2dly, Let us consider what effect the wine of the everlasting gospel has upon the above said persons; when it comes in power, and is received in the love of it, it causes their lips to speak. In the former of these persons, that is, in carnal and Christless sinners, it produces humble confessions of sin: it makes them speak in the praise of Christ and his grace, whereby salvation is procured for such lost and perishing creatures, as they by nature were; it brings them to the gates of Zion, there to declare to the saints the great things which God has done for them: it makes the tongue of the dumb to sing, who before had not one word to say for Christ, and of his grace; and those who were stammerers at these things, it makes them ready to speak plainly: as for the latter sort of persons, that is, sleepy and drowsy professors, it makes them speak-meanly and modestly of themselves, and very highly of Christ and his grace; for such souls who have drank the largest draughts of this wine, and have the greatest share of knowledge in gospel-truths, are the most humble; they are ready to acknowledge themselves the least of saints, and the chief of sinners: and none more frequent than they in magnifying Christ, and exalting the riches of his grace.

VERSE 10.

I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me.

CHRIST having spoken largely in the commendation of his church's beauty, vouchsafed his presence to her, and made her drink of his best wine, which causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak: she, after a long silence breaks forth, as an effect of it. And,

I. Claims her interest in him: 'I am my beloved's.'

II. Takes notice of his love and affection to her: 'and his desire is towards me.'

I. She signifies the satisfaction which she had in her soul, with respect to her being Christ's; which is an affair of the utmost concern; about which saints have often a great many doubts and fears; and a satisfaction in which he is exceeding desirable to them. The church has expressed herself in the same words twice before in this song; see chapter ²¹²⁶2:16 and ²¹⁸⁸6:3, therefore less will be required in the explication of them here. However, some things respecting the present frame and disposition of her, the agreement of these words with the context; and what has not been so carefully observed in the former texts, may be taken notice of here. And,

1st, These words may be considered as expressive of that assurance of faith, which the church had of her union to and in Christ; it is as if she should say, After all these expressions of love unto me, and the sweet enjoyment of his presence which he has indulged me with, surely I may venture to say, that *I am his*; nay, I am sure that I am. From hence may be observed,

1. That the grace of assurance is attainable in this life; instances of which we have, not only in the New Testament saints, such as the apostle Paul, and others, who knew that Christ had loved him, and had given himself for him: was well satisfied both in his ability and fidelity, to keep what he had committed to him against another day, and was persuaded that there never would be a separation from his love; but also in Old Testament saints, as David, who could claim his interest in an everlasting covenant, and was assured of it, even in his dying moments and that in the prospect of the present and future ill state of his family; and Job, who knew that his redeemer lived, and that for him, even when he was under the most severe, afflictive dispensations of providence; as also Habakkuk, who discovered the strength of his faith in God, as his salvation, even when all outward and temporal enjoyments failed him.

2. That there may be a continuation of the exercise of this grace; a person may not only be able to express his satisfaction as to his interest in Christ once, but also to repeat it, as the church does in this song; this is the third time she expresses her assurance in this very form of words, and oftener still in other language: nay, this grace is often exercised by believers, after much sleepiness and drowsiness, many slips and falls, great weakness and infirmities, as may be observed in the church's case frequently in this book; and it is likewise worthy of remark, that those persons who have been the greatest sinners before conversion, and have been suffered to fall the

foulest after, have been blessed with this grace of assurance, as David, Paul, Peter, etc.,

3. That the exercise of this grace often follows upon the enjoyment of Christ's presence; the church had been lately indulged with it; Christ went up into his palm-tree, the church, filled her breasts, the ordinances, with his grace and presence, and had made her drink of the wine of his consolation, which occasioned these expressions of hers.

4. Her frequent repetition of these words shows, that much of her comfort depended upon the knowledge she had of her interest in Christ; for, though assurance is not of the essence of faith, there may be true saving faith, where there is not the assurance of faith; yet to have it, makes much for the comfort of a believer: for if a glimmering sight of Christ fills the soul with so much joy, what must a full view do? if only an hope of interest gives much satisfaction, certainly a full assurance of it must give much more,

5. It may also be observed, that this grace has no tendency to promote or encourage licentiousness: that is the sealing word of the Spirit, who performs it as the holy spirit of promise; and at the same time he seals, he leaves a greater impress of holiness upon the soul: this does not make persons careless, indolent, and inactive as to duty; but rather excites and stirs them up to be more careful and constant in it; of which here is an instance in the church in the following verses; 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages,' etc.

2dly, These words may be considered as a modest acknowledgement of the church's, that all she was and had were Christ's; 'I am my beloved's,' and it is 'by his grace I am what I am:' all that he had said of her in the former verses, she does in this one expression return to him again; she acknowledges that all her beauty, which he had so much commended, was his, and not her own; that she was by nature black, and only comely through that comeliness which he had put upon her; that those several graces, with which she was adorned, and which he might have a regard unto in the several parts described, were his; he was the object, author, owner and preserver of them: that particularly it was owing to grace and strength received from him, that her walk, her outward conversation, was in any measure agreeable, and was so beautiful as he was pleased to declare, in verse

1. That all her fruitfulness, either in the exercise of grace, or in the performance of good works, or in having many souls born again in the midst of her, which may be intended in verse 2 were all from him, and to be referred to his mighty grace and divine blessing: That her ministers and ordinances were of his providing, appointing and filling, expressed by her breasts, in verse 3. That all her strength, which appeared in the exercise of her faith on him, and in the discharge of her duty to God; her light and knowledge in divine truths, the savor and relish which she had of them, together with her zeal, courage and magnanimity to keep and defend them, signified by her neck, her eyes and nose, in verse 4 were all communicated to her from him: as also that he was her only head, both of eminence and influence; and that it was owing to that grace, life, strength and nourishment, which he afforded, that her hair, true believers, grew so well, and appeared so beautiful as they did, in verse 5. Moreover, that she was his palm-tree, which he might go up into, and gather the fruit of, when he pleased; and that it was his grace which caused her to grow so straight and upright, and made her so fruitful as she was, in verses 7-9, wherefore she concludes in this verse, saying, 'I am my beloved's;' that is, the glory of all this is to be referred to him, and not to myself.

3dly, These words may also contain in them a voluntary surrender of herself, and all she had, into Christ's hands. This is what he requires of us; 'my son,' says he, ^{<123>}Proverbs 23:26, 'give me thine heart:' but this we are unwilling to do, until the day of his power passes upon us; and then we are made willing to give ourselves unto the Lord, and all we have, that we may therewith serve and glorify his name: This the church was enabled to do, knowing that she was not her own, but his; and therefore was desirous to glorify him with her body and spirit, which were his.

4thly, They are likewise expressive of that open profession she made of Christ before others; she was not ashamed to tell whose she was, and to whom she belonged. It is our duty to make a public profession of Christ, as well as to believe in his name; 'for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,' ^{<510>}Romans 10:10, a believing in Christ may be sufficient for our everlasting security; but a profession of that is necessary and requisite to show forth a Redeemer's glory, which we ought to be concerned for; and when we have made a profession of Christ, we ought to hold it fast, without wavering, and adorn it by a suitable conversation. But,

II. The church in these words takes notice also of the love and affection of Christ towards her; and his desire is towards me. The words may be rendered, thus, because or seeing his desire is towards me; so Junius reads them; and then they may be considered as a reason of the former expression of her faith in Christ, acknowledgment of his grace, and profession of his name; for Christ's love manifested to us, is a considerable evidence of our interest in him, and in his everlasting love; this will make us free and ready to acknowledge that we have nothing but what we have received from him; it is this which fills us with love to him, constrains us to obey him, encourages us to make a profession of him, and to maintain it, notwithstanding all discouragements thrown in our way, or opposition made against us. But let us consider a little the import of this phrase, and what is intended by it: it seems to be very much like, and perhaps the allusion is unto those words, in ^{<01016>}Genesis 3:16, 'and thy desire shall be to thy husband;' but here the husband's desire is towards his wife; so that what was inflicted by way of punishment upon the woman, being inverted, is a blessing of grace unto the church. The phrase may be expressive,

1st, Of Christ's love and affection to his church: his desire was towards her,

1. From everlasting; for having loved her, he desired her of his Father for his spouse and bride, which was granted him; for God gave him his heart's desire in this thing, and did not withhold the request of his lips from him.

2. His desire was towards her in time, that he might procure everlasting salvation for her; as an instance of his love, he undertook it; in the fullness of time assumed her nature, in order to effect it; was straitened in his mind, and as it were uneasy until it was accomplished; so great was his desire after it: hence he expressed himself thus to his disciples, at his eating the last passover, 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer,' ^{<02215>}Luke 22:15, the chief reason was, because the time was at hand, the hour was now come, so much desired by him, when he should give the strongest evidence of his love to his church, in laying down his life for her.

3. His desire is towards his people, even before conversion, though dead in trespasses and sins; that they may be quickened, called by grace, and brought to the knowledge of himself; and, notwithstanding all their backslidings and revoltings from him, still his desire is after them, to do

them good; neither will he turn away from them, but rests in his love towards them.

4. His desire is continually after his peoples company, grace and beauty; they are the excellent in the earth; in whom is all his delight; he is well pleased with that beauty which he himself has put upon them, and his desire is after it; ‘so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty,’ ^{<B51>}Psalm 45:11, he is ravished with those graces which he has implanted in them; he is exceedingly delighted with their looks and words; and therefore says, ^{<B14>}Song of Solomon 2:14, ‘let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely:’ nay, he has signified his desire that his church and people may be the place of his residence and habitation, and that for ever; ‘for the Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation,’ ^{<B13>}Psalm 132:13,14. Hence,

5. He will not be satisfied until he has the whole church with him in glory; this was the joy that was set before him in his sufferings; what he is now making preparation for in heaven, and what he is continually pleading for, as being exceedingly desirous of, saying, ^{<B72>}John 17:24. ‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, where I am, that they may behold nay glory.’ Thus Christ’s desire is towards his church.

2dly, This phrase may be expressive of that power which the church has over Christ, so that she can have any thing of him, when she pleases; he is so kind and indulgent an husband, that he will not deny his spouse any thing that may be for her good and his glory. The strength of faith in prayer is very great; an instance of this we have in Jacob, who had power with God, and prevailed: and it is upon this score that God said to Moses, let me alone; knowing what interest Moses had in him, and how prevalent his petitions were with him; so that speaking after the manner of men, he could scarcely deny him any thing; ‘the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,’ ^{<B16>}James 5:16.

3dly, The import of this expression may be, that Christ was her husband; ‘I am my beloved’s, and his desire is towards me;’ that is, he is my husband, I am his, and he is mine: so the wife is called ‘the desire of the eyes,’ ^{<B16>}Ezekiel 24:16,18, and this was a very great blessing that she was favored with, and an unspeakable comfort, that she could claim her interest in Christ, under this sweet and endearing character and relation. Or,

4thly, It may be expressive of the whole care and concern of Christ for her, as her husband; ^{f381} who as such bears and sympathizes with her under all her weaknesses and infirmities; protects from all dangers and enemies; and provides every thing for her, as food and raiment, grace and glory, all things necessary for her, both for time and eternity; whatever may conduce to her comfort here, and eternal happiness hereafter as a loving husband, he has given himself for her, rescued her from slavery and thralldom, procured an inheritance for her; and is now preparing that for her, and her for that, and will ere long put her into the possession of it. All which manifestly make appear, how much his desire has been and is towards her; which she having had some knowledge and experience of, ventures to invite him, as in the following words, saying.

VERSE 11.

*Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field:
let us lodge in the villages.*

VERSE 12.

Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish; whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

IN these words are,

I. A general invitation given by the church to Christ, to go along with her; ‘Come, my beloved.’

II. Some particular things mentioned which she invites him to:

1st, ‘To go forth into the field.’

2dly, ‘To lodge in the villages.’

3dly, ‘To get up early to the vineyards.’

III. The things she had in view in so doing:

1st. To see whether ‘the vine flourished.’

2dly, Whether ‘the tender grape appeared.’

3dly, Whether ‘the pomegranates budded forth.’

IV. A motive which she makes use of to prevail upon him; ‘there will I give thee my loves.’

I. In these words is a general invitation given by the church to Christ to go along with her, ‘Come, my beloved;’ on which may be made the following remarks:

1. That this word, *come*, is by the church taken out of Christ’s mouth it is a word much used by them, not only with reference to themselves, but to others also; see chapter ~~200~~2:10,13 and ~~2008~~4:8; ~~627~~Revelation 22:17 and is expressive of much familiarity, hearty desire, and tender affection.

2. We must not suppose that Christ needed stirring up, or was unwilling to go along with her, but he sometimes stays until he is asked: not only to make his church sensible of her duty, and that she may prize his presence the more; but also because he loves to hear her ask for his company, and say, ‘come, my beloved,’ let us walk together into the fields; let me there enjoy thy company, and let us take our fill of love.

3. These words may be considered as the church’s calling upon Christ, to make good his promise, in verse 8 where he had given her reason to expect his presence; ‘I said I will go up to the palm-tree;’ that is, I will grant my presence to my church and people, which are comparable to the palm-tree; I will be in the midst of them; she now says to him, ‘come, my beloved,’ do as thou hast said: though none of Christ’s promises shall ever fail, yet they may not be immediately fulfilled; and it very much becomes believers to plead them with him in prayer, and not let them lie long by them; they ought to put Christ in remembrance of them, as they are allowed, that he would remember to them the word upon which he has caused them to hope.

4. They also contain an earnest desire after the presence of Christ, and the manifestations of his love unto her; nothing is more desirable to believers than Christ’s presence; and there is a great deal of reason for it; for this only makes their lives comfortable whilst here fills them with true solid joy and pleasure, makes a heaven upon earth, supports them under all their trials, carries them through all their difficulties, and gives them pleasing prospects of death and eternity.

5. They show the sense she had of her own insufficiency for the work she was going about, without the presence of Christ; for without him we can

do nothing: hence says Moses, ^{<02315>}Exodus 33:15, ‘If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence:’ the church here knew full well that her visiting the several congregations of the saints, to see in what condition they were, would be to little purpose, unless Christ went with her, and therefore she requests the favor of him.

6. It may be farther observed, that the clearer views a soul has of its interest in Christ, the more desirous it is of communion with him: this may easily be observed in the church’s case, by comparing these words with the preceding verse: some, the more they are known, the less their company is desired; but the more and better a soul knows Christ, the more desirable his company is; and when they once have it, would never part with it; but say, with Peter, ^{<01704>}Matthew 17:4. ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here:’ hence it is that they often long to depart out of this life, that they might be with Christ; which to them is far better than this life, and all the enjoyments of it.

7. The church’s affixing this endearing character, ‘my beloved,’ to the invitation *come*, thereby signifying her affection to him, as well as her interest in him, may be considered as a powerful argument to induce him to go along with her; for with whom should, or indeed will loving husbands go, but with their wives and especially when their company is importunately desired? one saint cannot tell how to deny another, when their company and conversation is desired on spiritual accounts; so engaging is it to each other; much less can Christ deny his church, when she entreats him after this sort.

II. The particular things she invites him to, are now to be considered. And,

1st, She desires him to ‘forth into the field with her:’ which may be expressive,

1. Of her desire after Christ’s presence, both at home and abroad; she would not stir out of doors without him; when at home, nothing so delightful as his presence; and, having some business in the field, she is loth to go without him; O happy soul, that is thus blessed! of such an one it may be truly said, ^{<02313>}Deuteronomy 28:3-6. ‘Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field; blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.’

2. Of her desire after solitariness, or of being alone with Christ: thus, ^{<02463>}Genesis 24:63, ‘Isaac went out to meditate in the field;’ where he could

be retired, and have his thoughts more free, composed, and fit for such an employment: the field is also a place of more secrecy, as well as retiredness; and therefore, ^{<0911>}1 Samuel 20:11, ‘Jonathan said to David, come, let us go into the field;’ that they might more freely tell their minds, and impart their loves to each other; thus the church desired Christ to go with her into the field; that there being alone with him, she might tell him all her heart, and let him know how much she loved him; which she could not so freely do in company.

3. She might design some recreation by it; it may be an allusion to persons who keep their country-houses, who, being retired from the city, take their walks in the fields, to see how the fruits of the earth grow, as well as to enjoy the benefit of the country air: so the church, she is for going abroad into the fields; but then she would have Christ go with her; for no recreation is so, unless he be with her; walking abroad in the fields will yield her no pleasure, unless Christ be there.

4. It may signify her desire to have the gospel spread in the world, especially in those parts of it, in which it had not been as yet preached; and which looked very much like an uncultivated field: thus the field in the parable, ^{<0138>}Matthew 13:38, is said to be the world; which, being overrun with the thorns and briars of sin and corruption, moves her pity and compassion, and excites desire in her to have the gospel planted there, that so it might become a fruitful field; and therefore she is desirous to have her husband, and the true husbandman, go along with her, to manure, cultivate, and plant it; and perhaps the Gentile world may be particularly intended.

2dly, She farther invites him to lodge in the villages with her. There is a manifest gradation in these words of hers, which shows her end and design in all; she first invites him to go forth into the field with her, and that is in order to lodge with her in the villages; and their lodging there, is in order to get up early next morning to the vineyards; Junius and Tremellius read the words thus, ‘let us lodge by the cyprus-trees;’ ^{f382} for the Hebrew word **פּוּרְפִּק** *cepharim*, signifies both *villages* and *cyprus-trees*; see chapter ^{<0113>}1:13 and ^{<0114>}4:14, by which may be meant the saints; who may be compared thereunto, for their excellency, fragrancy, and fruitfulness; and an invitation to lodge by or with these, could not be unwelcome to Christ; seeing they are with him, ‘the excellent in the earth, in whom is all his delight:’ though the word may as well be rendered villages, as it is by the Septuagint and others. From whence may be observed,

1. The villages being places of mean entertainment, both for food and lodging; that a mean condition of life, with Christ, is more eligible and much preferable to the greatest affluence of the good things of this world without him: the church had rather have hard lodgings in a country village with Christ, than to dwell in a city, have her lodgings in a king's palace, or lie upon a bed of down without him: as one, ^{f383} once said. 'Brown bread and the gospel are good fare;' so it may be also said, 'A country lodging with Christ is good lodging.'
2. Villages being places of retirement, and free from the noise and hurry of the city, might occasion her desire to lodge there; she wanted to be at liberty from the world, that she might have some solitary communion with Christ; so David, being almost worn out with the fatigues of the camp, the hurries of the court, thus passionately wishes, saving, ^{<4516>} Psalm 55:6,7, 'O! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest; lo, then would I wander far off, and remain,' or as in the Hebrew text, 'lodge in the wilderness, Selah.' The cares of this life, and the hurrying employments of it, do much interrupt and break in upon a believer's comfortable communion with Christ; and therefore, with the church, he desires sometimes to be retired from them, and lodge with him in the villages.
3. She desires not only communion with Christ, but that it might be continued: she would lodge with him all night, as she says, in chapter ^{<2013>} 1:13, 'He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts,' it is not merely for an hour or two, that she would have his company, but all night: believers, who have got some knowledge of Christ's pet son, and have tasted the sweetness of communion with him, are like the Samaritans, ^{<4040>} John 4:40, who 'besought him that he would tarry with them;' they are never weary of his company, and do not care how much they have of it. Though,
4. These words may signify her desire to have the gospel preached in the villages, as well as in the cities: thus our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, 'went about all the cities and villages, preaching the gospel of the kingdom,' ^{<4025>} Matthew 9:35, as did also his disciples after him; though, as one ^{f384} well observes, the gospel was first preached in cities mostly, and from thence spread itself in time into the neighboring villages, where the heathen idolatry lasted longer than in cities; from whence it had the name of paganism, *pagus* signifying a village; which the church here observing, desires Christ to go along with her, and spread the gospel there. ^{f385}

3dly, She signifies her desire also to ‘get up early to the vineyards: for which reason she thought at most proper to lodge in the villages, and not in the city; from whence she could not have been so early at the vineyards, as she desired to be. By the vineyards, the Targum, R. Solomon Jarchi and Alshech understand the synagogues and schools of the Jews and so it is explained in the Talmud: ^{f386} though it seems much more probable, that by them are meant, the several particular churches and congregations of the saints; which are distinguished by sovereign grace, planted with a variety of fruitful vines, watered every moment by Christ, and fenced about with his almighty power; and by her getting up unto them, may be meant her visiting of them; which is much such an act of kindness and friendship as that of Paul’s, who said to Barnabas, ⁴¹⁵⁶ Acts 15:36. ‘Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.’ And what still more shows how intent she was upon it, and how much her heart was in it, she is for getting up early; that is, betimes in the morning, or in the most seasonable time, as the word early is sometimes used: she is for losing no opportunity, and making use of the most suitable one to visit the churches; and that her visit may not be in vain, she is for taking Christ along with her; she is not willing to go alone; she knew of what service Christ’s presence would be to the churches, and to what little purpose hers would be without him; and therefore she says, ‘let us get up early,’ etc. But,

III. She mentions the several things she had in view in giving this invitation to Christ, or the several ends of it. And,

1st, It was to ‘see if the vine flourished;’ and she might well think that this and what follows would take with Christ, and go a great way to prevail upon him to go along with her; seeing her ends here are much the same with his in going down into his nut-garden, chapter ²²¹ 6:11, and which, no doubt, she had some reference to. By the vine, the Targum understands the Israelites, who may be compared thereunto; and I think, true believers in Christ, who are Israelites indeed, may very well be meant. These indeed, like vines, are weak and worthless creatures of themselves: yet being engrafted in Christ, the true vine, and growing upon him, they bring forth fruit, and are exceeding valuable and precious: and by their flourishing may be meant, both their fruitfulness in the exercise of grace, and in the performance of good works: and though the believer is not always in a flourishing condition; there is sometimes but a small appearance of fruit upon him; his life, his grace is hid unto him; and his fruitfulness does not

appear to others; yet he shall flourish again, because he is planted in a fruitful soil, by the rivers of divine love and grace; is well rooted in Christ Jesus, and whom he takes care of, waters every moment, and purges and prunes, that he may bring forth more fruit; this the church was sensible of, and therefore is desirous that Christ would go along with her.

2dly, Another end she had in inviting Christ to, go with her into the field, villages and vineyards, is, to see ‘whether the tender grape appear, or whether the flower of the grape opened itself.’ ^{f387} By which may be meant young converts; who are weak and tender, have but little knowledge, a small degree of faith, and have not arrived to that solidity and establishment, as many others have; and are therefore compared to newborn babes, lambs, and kids of the flock: as also to a bruised reed, and to the smoking flax; but as Christ does not despise the day of small things, so neither does the church overlook them, but shows a very great concern for them; she is very desirous of seeing these appear in churches: this is a very great encouragement to churches, when souls are born again among them; it is a sign that the Lord designs to continue them, and to make them yet more flourishing and fruitful.

3dly, Her other end is to see whether ‘the pomegranates budded.’ By pomegranates, may be meant stronger believers, who are taller and more fruitful than the former; why they are so compared, may be seen in chap. ~~2013~~4:13, and by the braidings of them, may be meant the actings and exercise of grace in them. We may observe that the church is concerned for the comfortable well-being and good estate of believers of all ranks and sizes; of the vines and pomegranates, as well as of the tender grapes; and of the buddings of the one, as well as of the blossoming or opening of the other.

IV. The motive which she makes use of to prevail upon Christ to comply with her invitation, is, ‘for there will I give thee my loves;’ that is, when we are alone in the field, or at our lodgings in the villages, or when we are together in the vineyards, visiting the vines and pomegranates, I will show thee my love; I will open all my heart to thee, and thou shalt know how much I love thee. And,

1. We are not to suppose that this is the first time of her loving Christ, or of her manifesting it to him, for she loved him long before; but she mentions this now to gain her end; for she knew very well what would take

with Christ's heart, what was grateful to him, and that nothing was more so than expressions of her love to him, and this she had learned from his own words, in chapter ~~2040~~4:10, 'How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!' Christ knew very well she loved him; but yet he loved to hear her say she did. What made Christ ask Peter so often whether he loved him or no? it was not because he doubted of it, but because he loved to hear him express it.

2. By her loves, may be meant the manifestations of her love to him, in the observance of his commands; the offering up the sacrifices of prayer and praise unto him; as well as all other branches of religious worship and service in his house, which she promises to him there; and this sense the Targum inclines unto.

3. This, being expressed in the plural number, may intend not only the excellency of her love to Christ, and the various ways of manifesting it to him, but also the abundance of it: here was an overflow of it in her soul; her heart was brimful of it, and she seems to want an opportunity of venting it; for which purpose she desires to be alone with Christ, as Joseph did with his brethren, that so she might, with the greater freedom, let out her affections to him.

4. Communion with Christ, and the flourishing condition of his churches, tend much to enlarge a believer's heart with love to Christ, and to draw out his affections towards him, 'we love him, because he first loved us,' ~~6449~~1 John 4:19, I see not why the word for loves, may not be rendered, my lovely flowers; as a word nearly the same, in the following verse, is by some rendered, 'those lovely flowers give a good smell, as Junius and Tremellius;' which seem to refer to the flowers here; such as were to be met with in plenty in fields and vineyards, and among vines and pomegranates, as lilies, violets, etc. and may be an allusion to lovers, who used to give to those they loved, sweet smelling flowers; ^{f388} and here may signify the graces of the Spirit, and the actings of them, which are fragrant and acceptable to Christ.

VERSE 13.

The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old; which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

IN these words the church makes use of another motive or argument to prevail upon Christ to grant her his presence and company, taken from the variety of fragrant flowers and pleasant fruits, which she abounded with, and had ready at hand, and which she had carefully laid up and reserved for his use and service; all which are commended,

I. From the fragraney of them; ‘the mandrakes give a smell.’

II. From the comprehensiveness of them; ‘all manner of pleasant fruits.’

III. These are said to be ‘new and old.’

IV. Not afar off, but at the very door; ‘at our gates.’

V. They are all for his use and service; ‘which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.’

I. The fragraney of those flowers or fruits with which she abounds, is here expressed; ‘the mandrakes give a smell.’ The Hebrew word **uyawdd** *dudaim*, translated mandrakes, is only found in this place, and in ~~Gen~~ Genesis 30:14-16, in this sense; but what plant or herb is intended by it, is not very easy to determine: Junius and Tremellius have rendered it, in both places, by ‘flores amabiles, lovely flowers;’ which they think best agrees with the etymology of the word: others ^{f389} render it, Jessamin; others, ^{f390} lilies; others, violets: R. Solomon Jarchi would have it rendered baskets here, and refers to ~~Jer~~ Jeremiah 24:1, where the people of Israel are represented by two baskets of figs; where a word derived from the same root, and of the same form is used; and that both sorts of people, there represented, may be here said to give a good smell, because now they all sought the face of the Lord. Ludolphus, in his Ethiopic history, ^{f391} takes it to be the fruit which the Arabians call *mauz* or *muza*, (called, by some, the Indian fig) which, in the Abyssine country, is as big as a cucumber, and of the same form and shape; fifty of which grow upon one and the same stalk, and are of a very sweet taste and smell; from which cognation of a great many upon the same stalk, he thinks it took the name of *dudaim*. Some think, the fruit of the lote-tree is here intended; which, according to Homer, ^{f392} Herodotus, ^{f393} Ovid, ^{f394} and others, ^{f395} was a very sweet and delicious fruit; sweet apples, as some call them: there were a people in Africa, called Lotophagi, who lived upon it, as observed by the same authors: the mandrake of the Chinese is the famous root they call *ginseng*;

which, with them, is a sovereign remedy for all weaknesses of body or mind; a preservative of health; and they call it the plant that gives immortality. Ravius, in his dissertation concerning the *dudaim*, thinks the words should be rendered, ‘the branches put forth their sweet-smelling flowers;’ and that the branches of fig-trees are meant, which give a good smell, agreeable to chapter ^{<0113>}2:13, and which, he supposes, to be the use of the word, in ^{<001>}Jeremiah 24:1, and to his sense Heidegger ^{f396} agrees; only he thinks the word branches, is not to be restrained to a particular species, but may signify branches of sweet-smelling flowers and fruits in general. But the generality of Translators and Interpreters render it, mandrakes; as do the Septuagint, both the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, on ^{<0014>}Genesis 30:14, though the Targum on this place renders it, balsam: but then it is questionable whether the same plant, which is known among us by the name of mandrakes, is here meant, because of its strong smell; but of this more hereafter. Let us consider what may be intended hereby. And,

1st, By these mandrakes may be meant, the saints and people of God; who are plants of God’s right hand planting, are both fragrant and fruitful; and may be compared unto them,

1. Because the mandrake is a cold plant, and therefore used for the assuaging inflammations, and healing ulcers: ^{f397} the people of God, though they ought not to be cold in divine things, nor lukewarm in the cause of Christ, and vindication of his truths and ordinances; yet are, or at least should be, of cooling spirits, to allay those heats, and heal those divisions which too often appear in the churches of Christ; which they may be instrumental in, by a prudent carriage, a moderate temper, and by using soft and ‘pleasant words;’ which, as Solomon says, ^{<0151>}Proverbs 15:1 and ^{<0164>}16:24, ‘turn away wrath’ and are ‘sweet to the soul, and health to the bones:’ and when they appear to be of hot and fiery tempers and dispositions, it is what is opposite to the principle which is wrought in them and that profession which they make.

2. Because the mandrake is supposed to excite love; hence the apples of it are called ‘apples of love;’ and the Hebrew word here used comes from a root which signifies love: the saints may well be represented by them on this account; for they do not provoke Christ to love them, by the love they show him, or the obedience they perform unto him; yet these often draw out Christ’s affections to them; and what he himself has wrought in

them, and put upon them, render them lovely in his eye; besides, it is their incumbent duty, and should be the great employment of their lives, to provoke one another ‘to love and good works.’

3. They have been also thought to help barrenness, ^{f398} and to make fruitful; which some have imagined to be the reason of that great contention between Rachel and Leah concerning them; and the same opinion of their prolific virtue remains in those eastern parts still, and they are applied for that purpose; and the plant is described as having a large leaf, bearing a certain sort of fruit, in shape resembling an apple, growing ripe in harvest, but of an ill savor, and not wholesome: ^{f399} hence the phrase here may intend the fruitfulness of the church in the first times of the gospel, through the vast numbers of souls which were born again therein, when that prophecy was fulfilled, ^{<250>} Isaiah 54:1, ‘Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord:’ which fruitfulness of the church may be considered as a very good argument used by her here, to prevail on Christ to grant her his presence and company.

4. The mandrake is a narcotic, has a sleepy virtue in it, as Pliny ^{f400} observes, and much inclines thereunto; Levinus Lemnius ^{f401} writes of himself, that being in his study, he was suddenly taken with a sleepy fit, which he could by no means account for, until he espied a mandrake-apple upon one of the shelves, to which he ascribed it; and Plutarch ^{f402} relates, that mandrakes, which grow by vines, give the wine made of them such a virtue, that those who drink of it sleep mope sweetly: the saints are often in sleepy frames themselves; the wise virgins slept as well as the foolish; and conversation with sleepy professors makes others so likewise.

5. It not only inclines to sleep, but makes persons sluggish and slothful; hence those phrases, ‘to drink the mendrake, and to sleep under a mandrake, ^{f403} are proverbially used of persons who are sluggish and inactive in the discharge of their office: the saints are too often so themselves, and the cause thereof in others; being ‘slothful in business, and not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,’ as they ought to be.

6. The apples of the mandrake are very delightful to look upon, being of a yellow or golden color; and so are the saints in Christ’s eye; to them he looks, and with them he is well pleased, they being beautified with the garments of his salvation, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit.

7. These mandrakes are said to ‘give a smell:’ it is true, it is not said that they give a good smell; but it may be reasonably supposed that such an one is intended, because their commendation is designed; and they are taken notice of by the church, as what might be inviting to Christ; and so no doubt Reuben’s mandrakes, which Rachel took such a fancy to, were fragrant, and of a sweet smell; or we may reasonably suppose the boy would not have gathered them, nor Rachel have took such a liking to them, no more than Leah would have contended with her about them, unless it was for a reason before given. But then the difficulty is to know what plant is intended, seeing our present mandrakes are of an ill and offensive smell; and so is the plant now shewn for it, as before observed; and such an account also Pliny^{f404} gives of it; though Dioscorides, Levinus Lemnius^{f405} and Augustine,^{f406} who says, he saw the plant, and examined it, say, that it is of a very sweet smell; which though it does not agree with the plant which now bears the name, suits well with that intended here; for which reason the saints may be compared unto it, whose persons are of a sweet smell, being clothed with Christ’s garments, which ‘smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia,’ and anointed with the savory ointments of the Spirit’s grace; whose prayers are so, being perfumed with Christ’s mediation; and their good works being accepted, with their persons, ‘in the beloved :’ so the Jews^{f407} interpret the mandrakes, of the young men of Israel; who have not tasted the taste of sin, pure and. holy persons, free from vicious habits. Or,

2dly, By these mandrakes, which give a good smell, may be meant the doctrines and promises of the gospel; which,

1. Like mandrakes, are of a healing and cooling nature: the law is a fiery law; and when it works, in a sinner’s conscience, it makes fiery work there; it worketh wrath, which is only assuaged through the application of gospel doctrines and promises, by the blessed Spirit.

2. Like mandrakes, these excite love; for though it is the law which enjoins and requires love both to God and to our neighbor; yet it is the gospel which moves and presses us to it, with the noblest motives and most powerful arguments; such as those which are taken from the love of God and Christ to us.

3. Like mandrakes; are the means of fruitfulness: it is by the gospel, as the instrumental means, that souls are begotten again to Christ; for though they are born of an incorruptible seed, and are begot-. ten again according to

the sovereign will of God, and as an instance of his abundant mercy, yet it is by the word of truth, which liveth and abideth for ever;

4. As the mandrake apples are delightful, so are the doctrines and promises of the gospel; which words being ‘fitly spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’

5. As the mandrakes give a good smell, so do these; for to them that are saved, they are ‘the savor of life unto life.’

3dly, By these dudaim or lovely flowers, as Junius translates the word, may be meant the graces of the Spirit; such as faith, repentance, love, thankfulness, hope, humility, etc.

1. Faith may be one of those lovely flowers which give a good smell: this is a flower that does not grow in nature’s garden; but is sown and raised in the Believer’s heart, by the power and Spirit of God; which at first is but like a grain of mustard-seed, that is the least of all seeds; but afterwards grows in some more, is others less; but in all it is ‘alike precious faith,’ which emits a sweet fragraney to God and Christ.

2. Repentance may be another of those lovely flowers; this grows in the same garden as faith does; they are sown and raised up together, and that by one and the same hand; and when attended with fruits becoming it, is highly valued by Christ Jesus.

3. Love may be another of those lovely flowers; this precious flower springs from, is raised up and influenced by, as well as scented with the love of Christ: and of all the flowers in the believer’s garden, none is fairer in Christ’s eye, or gives trim, with its smell, more pleasure and delight; for of this he says, in chapter ²⁰¹⁰4:10, ‘How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! etc.,’

4. The grace of thankfulness is another of these flowers; nay, a certain Expositor ^{f408} thinks, that it is chiefly intended: the exercise of this grace is required of us, for every mercy, both spiritual and temporal; and in every condition, state, and circumstance of life: this is more pleasing to God; and he smells a sweeter savor of rest in it, than in all burnt-offerings; and a contrary disposition is highly, resented by him, as appears from the case of the ten lepers that were cleansed, of which but one returned to give God thanks.

5. The grace of hope may be another of those lovely flowers: this is none of the meanest flowers which grow in the believer's garden; this is raised by powerful efficacious grace; is watered with divine love; is made to abound through the power of the Holy Ghost; and in which Christ takes no small pleasure and delight 'for the Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.'

6. The grace of humility is another precious flower; 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price;' this grace so much adorns believers, that Christ says, 'to this man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit;' neither can he take his eye off them, nor will he remove from them, but dwell with them for evermore. I might have mentioned many more of those lovely and sweet-smelling flowers, as patience, self-denial, etc, but these may suffice.

II. The church's fruits are commended from the comprehensiveness of them; she is possessed of 'all manner of pleasant fruits.' Which may denote,

1. The plenty of them: believers have not only abundance of grace in Christ,, but also abundance in themselves; for 'where sin abounded, grace does much more abound;' they have also a fullness of all spiritual blessings in Christ, as well as a plenty of gospel-doctrines, and exceeding great and precious promises.

2. This may likewise denote the variety of them: the graces of the Spirit are many and various; as are the blessings of the gospel, such as redemption through Christ's blood, pardon of sin, justification by his righteousness, adoption, sanctification, etc. so are the doctrines and promises of the gospel, which are all suited to the several cases and circumstances of believers.

3. It also denotes the excellency of them; for here are not only plenty and variety of all manner of fruits, but all manner of pleasant fruits; such as do not grow every where, nor in any garden, but only in the garden of the church; whose 'plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, etc.' The allusion, no doubt, is to the most excellent fruits, with which the land of Judea abounded, as apples, figs, dates, pomegranates, etc. the word used includes every precious thing; not fruits only, but gold, silver, jewels, garments, etc. ^{f409}

III. These fruits are said to be both new and old, which still heightens and increases the commendation of them; there is such plenty and fullness of them, as that the former year's produce is not gone, when the new is gathered in; here is some of both years increase, which is an indication of great plenty, as well as of the goodness of the fruit that will keep so long. By these fruits new and old,

1. Some ^{f410} understand the gifts of the Spirit; which Christ, after his ascension, received for his church, and bestowed on it; together with those temporal blessings which she enjoyed before. Though,
2. Others think that by them are intended moral and natural virtues, which may be found in an unconverted man; and the graces of the Spirit, which are only in renewed souls. But,
3. It seems much better to understand them of those fresh supplies of grace which believers have from Christ; for they cannot live upon their old stock, but must have a new supply; which they are graciously indulged with from Christ, from whose fullness they continually 'receive grace for grace.' Though,
4. I am rather inclined to think, that the doctrines of the Old and New Testament, which, for matter and substance are one and the same, are here meant with which; the church, and particularly her scribes and faithful ministers are furnished, so as they can 'bring forth out of their treasure things new and old,' ^{<415>}Matthew 13:52.

IV. These fruits are also said to be at their gates; which is mentioned,

1. In opposition to the mandrakes which grew in the field; which appears to be a field-plant, from ^{<0314>}Genesis 30:14, where it is said, that 'Reuben went in the days of wheat-harvest, and found mandrakes in the field;' but these fruits here grew at their very doors.
2. It may be an allusion to a custom of the eastern countries, in garnishing the doors of new-married persons with fruits and flowers; and not only at nuptial feasts, but at other festivals also; ^{f411} which made it very inviting to go within.
3. It may also signify, that these fruits were near at hand; there was no occasion to go far for them; they were even at the door, as the judge is said to be, ^{<019>}James 5:9,

4. It may denote the publicness of them: they are not hid in secret, but exposed to public view; as the graces and good works of the saints should be; ‘Let your light,’ says our Lord, ^{<41516>} Matthew 5:16, ‘shine before men,’ etc. as well as the doctrines of the gospel, which are not to be spoken in a corner, but to be divulged upon the house-top.

5. By these gates may be meant, the means and ordinances of the gospel, where those fruits may be had; and it is therefore an encouragement to souls to ‘watch daily at wisdom’s gates, waiting at the posts of her door:’ so some Jewish ^{f412} writers interpret them of their synagogues and schools.

V. All this plenty and variety of pleasant fruits which were just at hand, the church declares were all laid up for Christ; ‘which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved:’ respect may be had to a custom with lovers, to lay up fruits for those they love; at least such a custom may be compared with this. ^{f413} Christ had bestowed a large store and great plenty of fruit upon the church, which she had carefully reserved for him; she laid it up in her heart; she bore it in remembrance, which this phrase is sometimes expressive of: thus it is said, ^{<4166>} Luke 1:66, that all that heard of the surprising circumstances which attended the birth of John the Baptist, ‘laid them up in their hearts,’ that is, bore them in remembrance; so should we lay up the word of God, and the doctrines of it in our minds, and not forget them: thus David said, ^{<4911>} Psalm 119:11, he did ‘Thy word,’ says he, ‘have I hid or laid up,’ it is the same word that is here used, ‘in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee:’ so likewise should we treasure up in our minds all the instances of God’s grace and favor to us, and record the several experiences of his loving kindness; not as a stock to live upon, but to be brought out at proper times, to magnify the grace of Christ and to advance his glory; ‘for of him, and thro’ him, and to him, are all things. Now this appears to be a very great attainment and. a mighty instance of grace in the church, to have a stock of promises and experiences, and yet not live upon them herself, but upon Christ the author and donor of them; to lay them up for his service, and lay them out for his honor and glory: and her adding this endearing character, ‘O my beloved,’ shows not only the strength of her affection to him, but may also serve to assure him of the truth of what she said; as well as be an inducement to him to comply with her request, which she passionately renews in the beginning of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8.

This chapter begins with an ardent wish of the church, for a free and intimate converse with Christ; declaring what she would do to him. and, for him, should she have an interview with him, verse 1. 2. what familiarity should be between them, verse 3, charging the daughters of Jerusalem not to give him any disturbance, verse 4. Upon which they inquire who she was, that was in such a posture as they saw her in, verse 5, when the church, instead of giving them an answer, says some things concerning her beloved, on whom they saw her leaning; and makes some requests to him, for more nearness to him, and manifestations of his love to her; urged from the strength of her love and affections to him, which were invincible, ²¹⁸⁶ Song of Solomon 5:6,7. Next follows a speech of the church about her little sister: expressing a concern for her, and what she would do to her, and with her, verse 8,9, and the answer of the little sister, declaring what she was, and what she enjoyed, verse 10, then the words of the church again, concerning her husband's vineyard, the place, keepers, and profits of it, verse 11,12. And the chapter, and with it the Song, is concluded with a request of Christ to the church, that he might hear her voice, verse 13, and with a petition of hers to him, that he would come quickly to her, verse 14.

VERSE 1.

O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee: yea, I should not be despised.

THESE words are a continuation, or rather a renewal of the church's desire after communion with Christ; they contain these three things:

I. An ardent wish for a free and familiar converse with Christ; that he would show himself to her as her brother, and act the part of one unto her; 'O that thou wert as my brother:' and her meaning herein is more strongly expressed, by adding, 'that sucked the breasts of my mother.'

II. A resolution of hers to kiss him when she found him without; ‘when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee.’

III. The opinion which she entertained, that she should not be despised for such an action; ‘yea, I should not be despised.’

I. These words contain an hearty wish of the church’s: the words may be read thus, ‘Who will give thee as a brother to me?’ ^{f414} Such forms of wishing may be seen in many places; see ^{<2340>}Isaiah 14:7; ^{<823D>}Job 23:2, and the meaning is, that Christ would show himself to her in the relation of a brother; act the part of one towards her; and that she might as freely converse with him, as a brother and sister may and use to do. Several Jewish ^{f415} writers acknowledge, that the King Messiah is intended by the brother here: in what sense Christ stands in such a relation to his church and to all true believers; as also what this wish of hers is expressive of, I shall now consider. And,

1. Christ is the Church’s brother by virtue of his incarnation, or the assumption of her nature; they are nearly allied in the bonds of consanguinity; he is of the same flesh and blood with her; and she is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; there is a very great nearness, affinity and likeness Between them, for ‘in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren;’ and it is upon this score that he becomes a brother to them; the words may be considered as the wish of the old church for Christ’s incarnation.

2. Christ and believers are of one and the same Father: God is the Father of Christ, and so he is of all his covenant-people; of whom he says, ^{<408>}2 Corinthians 6:18. ‘I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters;’ which is an instance of his boundless and amazing grace: hence because Christ and believers are sons of the same father, though not in the same way of dilation, he bid Mary Magdalene go to his brethren: and as an evidence of their standing in that relation to him, say unto them, ^{<4317>}John 20:17, ‘I ascend unto my father and your father, and to my God and your God:’ it is also upon this account that saints become ‘heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;’ they are heirs of God, because his children; and joint heirs with Christ, because they are his brethren, he being the firstborn among them.

3. Persons may be said to be brethren, by being concerned in one and the same covenant: thus there was a brotherhood between Judah and Israel,

which was dissolved by God's breaking his covenant with them, ^{<8110>}Zechariah 11:10,14. Christ and his people are in one and the same covenant, and in such an one as can never be broken; though as he has the preeminence in all things, as he ought to have, so he has in this; for he is the mediator, surety, and messenger of the covenant; nay he is the covenant itself; he is the foundation on which it stands, and the matter of which it consists; he is the saints representative in it; and because it is made with him, their elder brother, in their name, room and stead, therefore it is said to be made with them, and they share in all the blessings and comforts of it,

4. Persons that are of like nature, temper, dispositions and practices, are said to be brethren: thus Simeon and Levi are said ^{<1405>}Genesis 49:5, to be brethren; not because of their natural relation, but because of their agreement in their tempers and practices: Christ and believers are brethren in this sense; they are much of the same nature; Christ has assumed their nature, and they are in some measure made partakers of his; principles of grace and holiness from him are wrought in them; nay, he is formed in their hearts; his image is enstamped, and his features are drawn there; there is a very great likeness between them; they are conformed to the image of him who is the first-born among many brethren; hence it is said, ^{<8211>}Hebrews 2:11, that 'he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren;' and to the same purpose those words of Christ might be produced, in ^{<1023>}Matthew 12:50, 'for whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'

3. Those who are partners and companions in afflictions, may be also called brethren; hence Job says, chapter ^{<8319>}30:29, on the account of his sorrowful and afflicted condition, that he was a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls: Christ and believers are brethren in sufferings; though it is true, they were not companions with him in his sufferings, yet he is in theirs the afflictions of the churches are the afflictions of Christ; he bears the heaviest part of them: for what is done to his people he takes as done to himself; and as they suffer with him, so they shall reign with him hereafter in glory, and that for ever.

6. Persons may be called brethren on the score of friendship: thus David, in ^{<1026>}2 Samuel 1:26, calls Jonathan his brother; not so much because he had married his sister, but on the account of the mutual friendship that had been

between them: in this sense Christ and believers are brethren; he is a friend to them, and such a ‘friend that sticks closer than a brother;’ of which friendship of his towards them, he has given many open and undeniable proofs; he accounts them as his friends, and therefore treats them as such, by frequent visiting of them, disclosing of his secret’s to them, and making noble entertainments for them.

7. The church might wish that Christ would manifest himself to her, under this relation of a brother, because of that intimacy, freedom and familiarity, which she might use with him as such; she would kiss him in the open street, take him by the hand, and lead him into her mother’s house, and there keep a free conversation with him; as a sister might do with an own brother, and not be reproached for it.

8. Her meaning also may be, that he would act the part of a brother to her that is, that he would be pitiful and compassionate to her, and sympathize with her under all her exercises, as a tender-hearted brother would; and such an one is Christ; he has a fellow-feeling with his people in all their temptations, and gives them all needful succor and relief; in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and has bowels of compassion for them in all their distresses.

9. A brother not only sympathizes with, but condescends to the weaknesses and infirmities of his brethren, it is a wonderful condescension in Christ to stand in this relation to his people, as also not to be ashamed to own it; and being in it, he is capable of showing a great deal of condescension to them in many instances; which the superiority of a father, in which relation he also stands, would not admit of; to which the church might have regard in this wish of hers.

10. The love and affection of a brother is very great, and much to be valued, as Christ’s is by the church; for ‘his loving-kindness is better than life,’ and all the comforts of it; the manifestations of which the church may well be supposed to desire here, as she did in chapter ~~xxv~~1:2, where she says, and what is much the same with this request here; ‘Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine.’

Again, the church’s meaning, in this ardent and pathetic wish of hers, is more strongly expressed by adding, that it was such a brother she wished for, ‘that sucked the breasts of her mother;’ in which may be considered,

1st, What this phrase in general intends.

2dly, Who is meant by her mother.

3dly, What by sucking of her mother's breasts.

1st, This phrase in general may intend either,

1. The truth of Christ's human nature; she wishes for his incarnation in the former phrase, and in this, that it might appear to be true and real; of which his conception and birth, his being the child born, and the infant of days, his eating butter and honey, and sucking the breasts of his mother, were sufficient indications. Or,

2. The near relation Christ stands in to his church, being a brother by the mother's side; which relation is accounted the nearest, and the affection of such an one is also the strongest; of which we have an instance in the case of Joseph, to whom Reuben, Judah, Simeon, etc., were brethren, though only by his father's side; and to whom he had a brotherly love, but not so strong an affection as he had to Benjamin, his mother's son; who was such a brother that had sucked the breasts of his mother, as may be seen in ^{<443>}Genesis 43:29,30,34, such a brother, so nearly related, and of such an affection, the church wisheth for.

2dly, It may also be inquired who is meant by her mother: and this may be, either the church, who may be called so, on the account of the many converts which are born in her: thus Zion is said to travail in birth, and bring forth children, ^{<243>}Isaiah 66:8, and the Gentile church is said to be the mother of many, ^{<250>}Isaiah 54:1, and regenerate souls are Frequently called the church's children, in that prophecy: or else, by her mother, we are to understand the covenant of graces 'the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all,' ^{<405>}Galatians 4:26, for every converted soul is the birth of an everlasting covenant; hence such are called, in ^{<508>}Romans 9:8, the children of the promise; and it is no unusual phrase with the Jews, to call themselves the children of the covenant.

3dly, By sucking the breasts of her mother, may be meant, either,

1. The enjoyment of the grace and blessings of the everlasting covenant; so this phrase of sucking the breasts is used for the enjoyment of blessings, ^{<306>}Isaiah 60:16, and in this sense Christ may be truly said to suck the breasts of her mother; for all grace is in his hands; every blessing of the

covenant he is in possession of; we have all our grace from him, and are blessed with all spiritual blessings only in him. Or else,

2. By these breasts may be meant the word and ordinances; which are breasts of consolation to believers, in whose hearts Christ is formed; so that when they suck the breasts, and are nourished with the sincere milk of the word, and grow thereby, Christ may be said to suck of them, and be nourished by them. Or else,

3. This phrase may be expressive of that familiar intercourse and delightful communion which is between Christ and his church; which is frequently expressed by eating, feasting, and supping together; see chapter ^{<2>}5:1 and ^{<10>}Revelation 3:20.

II. The next thing in the words, is the church's resolution to kiss Christ, whenever she found him without: in which may be observed,

1st, The resolution itself, to kiss him.

2dly, The time when she would put this into practice, 'when I should find thee.'

3dly, The place where she would do this, and that is, without.

1st, We may consider the resolution itself, which is to kiss him; which is no other than what was her duty to do, and what is enjoined all believers; ^{<10>}Psalm 2:12. 'Kiss the son, lest he be angry.' Which may be understood these several ways:

1. There is a kiss of approbation; in this sense the word is used, ^{<10>}Proverbs 24:26. 'Every man shall kiss his lips, that giveth a right answer;' that is, shall approve his sayings, and highly extol and commend him for them: Christ is a person to be liked and approved, being 'altogether lovely, and the chiefest among tea thousands;' and so he is by every believer there is none in heaven or earth, that is so much valued by them as he is; they count all things but loss and dung, in comparison of him; they approve of him as their surety and savior, and esteem him in every character and relation he stands in to them.

2. There is a kiss of love and affection, which is used by friends and relations, and that either at meeting or parting thus the prodigal's father fell on his neck and kissed him, when he met him; as did Paul's friends, at parting with him; which kiss of charity, or love, was much used among the

primitive saints; and with such a kiss as this, the church kisses Christ, whom she dearly loves, and has the strongest affection for, arising from his love and loveliness: as Christ's kisses, in chapter ^{<200P>}1:2, are the lettings out and manifestations of his love to the church; so the church's lips are the lettings forth and manifestations of her love to him: with such a kiss as this, the poor woman kissed Christ, in ^{<407B>}Luke 7:38, who 'began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment; for she loved much,' much being forgiven her.

3. There is also a kiss of faith and dependence; and then may souls be said to kiss Christ, when they, as perishing creatures, come and venture their all upon him, give up themselves to him, resolving to have no other savior but him; when they can roll themselves on him, relying on his grace, trusting to his righteousness, when, whilst they are coming out of the wilderness, are leaning upon their beloved; and more especially when they embrace him in the arms of faith, and say, with Thomas, My Lord, and my God.

4. There is a kiss of homage and subjection; so kissing the king's hand, as it is an instance of his grace and favor to his subjects to permit them to do it, so it is a token of their subjection to him; thus Samuel anointed Saul, and kissed him, ^{<090E>}1 Samuel 10:1, which former act was a declaring him king, the latter an instance of his subjection to him: thus souls may be said to kiss Christ, when they acknowledge him to be their Lord and King, and submit to his laws and ordinances refusing subjection to sin, Satan, and the world.

5. There is a kiss of worship and adoration: the custom of kissing idols very early prevailed among idolatrous people; thus Baal's worshippers kissed him, ^{<119J8>}1 Kings 19:18, as did also the worshippers of Jeroboam's calves, Hoses 13:2, so kissing the hand at the sight of the sun or moon, was esteemed an act of adoration of them in Job's time, chapter ^{<489D6>}31:26,27, in the same sense it may be used here; for as Christ is the believer's Lord, he ought to worship him; and that not with a mere civil worship, which may be given to creatures, but with that religious adoration which ought to be given to the most high God; for 'all men should honor the son, as they honor the father.' When therefore the church or any believer signify their love and liking to Christ, exercise faith upon him, subject themselves unto him, and give him all due worship and adoration,

as well as make an open profession of him, then may they be said to kiss him. But,

2dly, She declares the time when she would do this; and that is when she found him: From whence may be observed,

- 1.** That Christ may be sometimes absent from his church and people, which is a very great affliction to them.
- 2.** That they cannot be easy without him, but will be earnestly desirous of his company, and seek for him until they find him, as may be learned from the case of the church, in chapter 3:1-3.
- 3.** That finding Christ, is the comfortable enjoyment of his presence; it is the soul's having nearness to him, and sensible communion with him; which is the time that they can come so near to him as to kiss him.

3dly, The place where she would do this, and that is, without: by which may be meant, either,

- 1.** The Gentile world, which was without the land of Judea; the inhabitants of which are said to be 'without, afar off aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, and without hope, and God and Christ in the world;' so that it may be expressive of her desire to find Christ in the Gentile world, and how much her love and affections would be drawn out to him on that account. Or,
- 2.** By without, or in the street, ^{f416} as it may be rendered, may be meant the public ordinances, where wisdom cries, ^{<2122>}Proverbs 1:20, and where the church sought Christ, chapter ^{<2122>}3:2, and where finding him, she owns him, gives him homage and adoration, and lets out her affection to him. Or,
- 3.** It may point out the way, and manner in which she sought him, as well as the place where, which was by going out of herself: Christ is not to be found within but without; believers 'go in and out,' and so find pasture, food and comfort. Or,
- 4.** By it may be meant any open or public place, where she should not be ashamed to own his person, gospel, ordinances, cause and interest; for those who are ashamed of him and his words before men, he will be ashamed of before his Father and his angels, ^{<4138>}Mark 8:38. Or,

5. By her finding him and kissing him without, may be meant her going forth to meet him, claiming her interest in him, and signifying her affection to him, before men and angels, at his second coming; see ^{<4136>} Matthew 25:6.

III. The opinion which she had entertained, that she should not be despised and reproached for such an act as this; yea, 'I should not be despised; or, they would not despise me;' ^{f417} that is, the people of the land, as the Targum paraphrases it. Now this opinion of hers might arise,

1. From the relation Christ stood into her as a brother; for how unseemly and immodest soever it might be for a maiden in the streets to kiss a stranger, or one not related to her; yet nobody would reproach her for using this freedom with an own brother; which would be accounted as chaste and harmless an action in her, as if she had took a sucking child out of the nurse's arms, and kissed it; no more immodest and unbecoming is this act of the church's; and therefore she concludes, that she should not be despised for it.

2. From the reception she believed that she should meet with from Christ; who would not turn away his face from her, when she made such an offer to him; which would occasion shame and blushing in her, and others to laugh at her; but she was well assured of the contrary, and that it would be kindly accepted by him.

3. From her having so good an husband as Christ; which might be known by this familiarity between them; and whom she had no reason to be ashamed of, nor others to despise her for having none; not to have a husband, being matter of reproach in those days; see ^{<2001>} Isaiah 4:1 and ^{<2504>} 54:4,5.

4. From her prospect of future fruitfulness she doubted not but that by being married to such an husband, she should bring forth fruit unto God, and so not be despised for being barren and unfruitful; it being accounted reproachful to be so; see ^{<6006>} 1 Samuel 1:6.

5. It may be expressive of her great love to Christ, and of her boldness and confidence in owning and professing him, without either fear or shame, ^{f418} before men and angels; she knew that she could not be justly despised and reproached for it; and if she was, she did not value it.

6. She may have respect to those apprehensions which the wicked will have of the saints in the last day; however mean and despicable the saints may appear to the wicked now, being in a state of imperfection, loaded with reproaches, and attended with a variety of sorrows; yet they will appear otherwise, and that in their apprehensions too another day, when they would be glad to change places and conditions with them; though Lazarus 'was despised when he lay in his sores at the rich man's gate, yet he was not when in Abraham's bosom. Thus the church might conclude that how much soever she may be despised now for owning and professing Christ, yet she should not, when she should go forth to meet him at his second coming, and he set at his right-hand in gold of Ophir.

VERSE 2.

I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.

THESE are still the words of the church, discovering the resolutions and desires of her heart after communion with Christ, and a discharge of her duty to him: in which may be observed,

I. Her resolution to 'lead and bring him into her mother's house.'

II. Her expectation of receiving instruction there; 'who would instruct me.'

III. The entertainment she promises to give him; 'I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.'

I. She resolves to lead and bring him into her 'mother's house:' wherein may be considered,

1st, What may be intended in those acts of leading and bringing.

2dly, What by, her 'mother's house,' whither she should lead him, and into which she would introduce him.

1st, It will be proper to consider what those acts of leading and bringing intend. We frequently read of Christ's leading his church and people; but never, as I remember, but in this place, of the church's leading Christ: Christ leads his church as a king does his subjects, or as a general does his

army; for he is given to be a leader and a commander to the people; which he performs, by ruling them with wholesome laws, and protecting them in their rights and liberties from all their enemies: thus, ^{<1622>}Deuteronomy 32:12. ‘the Lord alone did lead Israel of old, and there was no strange God with them;’ thus David, ^{<1622>}Psalms 78:72, the type of Christ, fed the same people, ‘according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.’ He leads them also as a shepherd does his flock, gently, as they are able to bear it to suitable pastures, and proper resting-places; and likewise as a master does his scholars, leading them by his Spirit into all truth, and showing them the fullness and glory of the everlasting covenant: moreover, Christ leads his people, as a guide does a stranger; for they know not the way everlasting themselves, and therefore commit themselves to his guidance and conduct; who, though he leads often in rough paths, yet always in a right way, to the city of their habitation: likewise he leads them, as a nurse does her child; taking them by the hand, he teaches them to walk by faith, and leads them into their Father’s presence; and also as an husband leads his wife, when he brings her home, introduces her into his house, consummates the marriage, and makes her a partner of all his goods; hence the phrase, *ducere uxorem, to lead a wife*, is used to express the act of marriage: thus it appears to be no very difficult matter to understand how Christ may be said to lead his church; but how she may be said to lead him, does not appear so manifest and easy. The act seems to import these following things:

- 1.** That she used much familiarity with Christ; for, for one person to take another by the hand and lead along, discovers this: Christ allows his church much freedom with him; which she may make much use of, without incurring the reproach and scandal of forwardness or immodesty; seeing it is her own brother, nay, her own husband, whom she thus treats.
- 2.** It shows much tender love, affection, and respect to Christ; as also a welcome of him to her mother’s house: thus friends and relations show their respect and affection to each other and a hearty reception of them into their houses, by taking them by the hand, and leading them in.
- 3.** It also denotes honor given to Christ by her, becoming his stateliness and majesty; thus kings and great persons are usually led: she treats him according to high station, as she is in ^{<1654>}Psalms 45:14,15, and leads him along, as kings and conquerors are led when they’ march in triumph,

4. All this is done by prayer and entreaty in the exercise of faith: Christ is easily prevailed upon by his church, through the exercise of faith in prayer; he is, if I may be allowed the expression, to be led any way by believers, in things which are consistent with his revealed will, and what will make for their good and his glory.

Much in the same sense are we to understand the other act of bringing; which,

(1.) On her part may denote the strength of faith in prayer; which held him, and would not let him go, until she had brought him into her ‘mother’s house:’ like Jacob of old, who, when the angel said to him, ^{<01326>}Genesis 32:26. ‘let me go, for the day breaketh,’ answered, ‘I will not let thee go, except thou bless me:’ thus, ^{<01516>}James 5:16, ‘the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much?’

(2.) On his part much condescension, in allowing such mean and worthless creatures, as believers in themselves are, to take him by the hand, lead him along, and bring him where they would have him.

2dly, The next thing to be inquired into, is, what is meant by her ‘mother’s house,’ where she desired to bring him: which may be expressive,

1. Of her desire to have the marriage consummated; the introduction of the bride and bridegroom into their house, being the last and finishing ceremony of marriage; thus it is said of Isaac, ^{<01247>}Genesis 24:67, that ‘he brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife:’ agreeable to this ceremony, the church expresses herself here; only here is this difference, that it was usual for the bridegroom to lead and bring his bride into his ‘mother’s house;’ but here the church promises to lead Christ to her mother’s house; Christ and the church’s mother being one and the same.

2. Of her desire to have the knowledge of Christ spread among her near relations, those of her mother’s house; for nothing is more common than for persons, when they are converted themselves, to desire the conversation of their near relatives; an instance of which may be observed in the apostle Paul, ^{<01100>}Romans 11:1-3.

3. Of her desire to enjoy his presence in the church, which may be meant by her ‘mother’s house;’ for the catholic and invisible church, or ‘the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven,’ may be

said to be the mother to the visible church on earth in any age of the world; for this is ‘the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all;’ as may also the visible church on earth be to the several particular and congregated churches; and every particular and congregated church may be said to be the mother of particular believers, or converted persons: so that,

(1.) The church is their mother’s house, where they are begotten and born again; for ‘of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her,’ ^{<9876>}Psalm 87:5.

(2.) Where they are educated and brought up; for Zion’s children, as they are born in her, so they are nursed at her side, ^{<2304>}Isaiah 60:4.

(3.) For which they have a great deal of zeal and affection, as persons usually have for the place of their nativity and education; and this in imitation of, and conformity to Christ; of whom it is said, that ‘the zeal of God’s house had eaten him up,’ ^{<9809>}Psalm 69:9.

(4.) Where they take much pleasure and delight to be; are glad when asked to go up unto it; because there they meet with the presence of Christ, receive instructions from him, and are employed in delightful service by him.

(5.) This is not only the church’s mother’s house, but also Christ’s Father’s house; nay, his own house; which might be an inducement to him to go along with her; see ^{<4216>}John 2:16; ^{<886>}Hebrews 3:6.

The reasons which might induce her to desire and endeavor the introduction of him into her mother’s house, may’ be such as these:

1. That she might enjoy free and uninterrupted communion with him; which end was attained by her, as appears from the following verse.

2. That others, even those of her mother’s house, might have the benefit of Christ’s presence and company, as well as herself; which shows her to be of tree, noble and public spirit: like those saints, in ^{<6103>}1 John 1:3, who were concerned for the comfortable well-being of others, as well as of themselves.

3. That the ordinances of her mother’s house might be blessed unto her; for she knew full well that those breasts of consolation would be but dry breasts without his presence; and, like the mantle of Elijah, he of little service and usefulness, without the Lord God himself.

4. That she might be assisted by him in the service of the house: there are a great many works of faith and holiness to be performed herein, which she knew she was not able to do of herself; but that through Christ strengthening her, she could do all things.

II. She expected instruction in her mother's house, upon the bringing of him there; and this she expected either from her, or else from him; for the word in the Hebrew text will bear a reading which will suit either sense.

1st, They may be read, 'who teacheth me;' ^{f419} referring it to her mother, who would do so; so Junius and Tremellius read them, to which our version agrees, and which is also favored by R. Aben Ezra. From whence may be observed,

1. That the church is a school of instruction, where souls are instructed in the ways of Christ, in the doctrines of the gospel, and in all the duties of religion; both how to carry themselves in the church, and how to behave themselves agreeably to Christ, in all acts of love and obedience to him; which she may here have chiefly a regard unto: it seems to be an allusion to a grave and prudent woman, who, taking her new-married daughter apart by herself, teaches her how to behave herself towards her husband, that so she may have his affections, and live comfortably and happily with him: some such instructions the church expected from her mother.

2. That the greatest believers are not above instruction, and the means of it; but count it a mercy to have both the one and the other; some persons who know nothing as they ought to know, think they know every thing better than others; and therefore are above ordinances, despise instruction, and condemn the ministry of the word; but those who know most of themselves and of Christ Jesus, desire to know more, value the means of instruction, and make use of the ordinances of the gospel to improve therein: the difference of these two sorts of persons may be seen in ³⁰⁹⁸Proverbs 9:8,9.

2dly, The words may be rendered, 'thou shalt instruct me,' ^{f420} meaning Christ; and this sense is favored by the Targum upon the place, and is followed by many interpreters; for though the church is the school, and ordinances are the means of instruction; yet Christ is the teacher, who teacheth as none else can: this the church knew, and therefore expected instruction from him in her mother's house; being there in the way of her duty, where persons may more reasonably look for it. Now when Christ and the church are in their mother's house together, he instructs her, and

shows her her interest in all the goods of the house; acquaints her with her work and duty, and how she ought to behave herself towards him; he gives some such marriage-precepts as those in ^{<4950>}Psalm 45:10,11.

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; he is thy Lord, and worship thou him:' He informs her what respect and affection, homage and obedience; he expected from her; and that she should not now hanker after her own kindred and relations, being married unto him.

Now Christ teaches and instructs his church and people many ways: as,

- 1.** By his Spirit; who being sent by him, teaches them all things, goes before them, and leads them into all truth, as it is in Jesus, ^{<8145>}John 14:26 and 16:13,
- 2.** By his ministers; who are both fathers and instructors to Christ's babes, and therefore are called 'pastors and teachers:' pastors, as they have the oversight of the flock; and teachers, as they are the instructors in Christ's school.
- 3.** By the scriptures; which 'are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;' for there is nothing written there, whether promises or doctrines, words of advice and direction, or of exhortation and comfort, but what is 'written for our learning; that we thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope,' ^{<8116>}2 Timothy 3:16, ^{<6154>}Romans 15:4.
- 4.** By his ordinances; for as in his church he teaches men his ways, so he teaches them by them, and in their waiting and attending on them.
- 5.** By afflictive providences; he sometimes takes the rod, and makes use of that to promote his people's learning, when need requires; and 'blessed is the man whom he chasteneth,' and thereby teacheth out of his law, ^{<4942>}Psalm 94:12.

III. She promises him a noble entertainment; I 'would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate:' some think, here is an allusion to a custom at marriage; when a cup of wine, after a benediction of it, was given to the new-married couple, who both drank of it, ^{f421} and in some places, the custom was ^{f422} for a young woman to bring in a cup of

wine, all her lovers being present, and deliver it into the hand of him she fixed on to be her bridegroom; and by this action declared him to be so: and so here the church, by proposing to give to Christ a cup of her spiced wine, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it, declared him, and acknowledged him to be her husband. This is a different kind of entertainment, than what the old synagogue gave Christ; who, when she found him in the street, did not kiss him, showed no respect to him, made no profession of him, nor did she exercise any faith upon him, nay, despised those who dig so; she was so far from leading and bringing him into the temple, which the Jews ^{f423} here understand by her mother's house, that she thrust him out of it, and gave him gall for his meat, and in his thirst gave him vinegar to drink; or, as one of the evangelists says, ^{<4152>}Mark 15:23. 'wine mingled with myrrh; which, though it is of a sweet smell, yet is of a bitter taste: but the church here promises him spiced wine, such as was accounted the most pleasant and agreeable; and 'the juice of her pomegranate, for her plants were an orchard of pomegranates; from the fruit of which a delightful juice is squeezed, of which is made a pleasant wine; and the word which is here translated juice, signifies must, ^{f424} sweet or new wine; and so it is rendered in ^{<2426>}Isaiah 49:26; ^{<2005>}Joel 1:5; ^{<4093>}Amos 9:13; and Pliny ^{f425} speaks of a wine made of pomegranates, which he calls rhoites; mention is also made of it in the Talmud ^{f426} and by Maimonides: ^{f427} there was a city in the tribe of Dan, called Gathrimmon, ^{<6224>}Joshua 21:24, 'the winepress of the pomegranate,' or where they made pomegranate-wine; and the word here used comes from one which signifies to force, squeeze, or trade under; see ^{<3003>}Malachi 4:3, spiced wine was much used by the ancients; it was thought less inebriating; ^{f428} and therefore they sometimes put into their wine myrrh and calamus, and other spices; ^{f429} sometimes it was a mixture of old wine, water and balsam, and of wine, honey and pepper; ^{f430} sometimes wine and honey. ^{f431} These sorts of wine were no doubt accounted the best, and therefore she resolves to treat Christ with them: by which may be intended,

1. The richness and plenty of this entertainment; a banquet of wine being accounted the richest banquet: hence the provisions of grace under the gospel, are represented by it, ^{<2316>}Isaiah 25:6, as are also the joys of heaven, ^{<4089>}Matthew 26:29. But here these metaphorical phrases intend the graces of God's people; which, when in exercise, are preferred by Christ to the richest wine.

2. The variety of it; here are spiced wine, and wine of pomegranates, different sorts of wine; which are expressive of the various graces of the Spirit, which are implanted in the hearts of Christ's people.
3. The delight and pleasure which Christ takes therein: for even one single grace, even that of love, is said to be 'better than wine, and the smell' of such ointments than all spices; which delight and pleasure is expressed by his drinking of it; see chapter 4:10 and 5:1. With the Hebrew writers, ^{f432} pomegranates are said to be a symbol of concord: the tree was sacred to love. ^{f433}

VERSE 3.

*His left hand should be under my head,
and his right hand should embrace me.*

THESE words may be considered, either,

1. As a petition that it might be so, and be read thus, 'let his left hand be under my head, ^{f434} etc., a phrase used by lovers, ^{f435} and here repeated in this song. Or,
2. As expressing her faith, that it should be so; which sense is favored by our version. Or,
3. As declaring her present enjoyment of the mercy which she had been seeking for, and had faith in; and so be read, as in chapter 2:6, where they are more largely explained.

VERSE 4.

*I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.*

THESE words are either the words of Christ or of his church; who, having the presence and company of, and enjoying communion with each other, forbid all interruption, as has been observed on chapter ²¹¹⁷2:7, where the same words are used, as they are also in chapter ²¹¹⁸3:5, but with this difference:

1. The phrase, 'by the roes and by the hinds of the field,' which is used in the two former texts, is here omitted; not because there is less vehemency and earnestness in this charge than in the former: for,

2. There is also a difference in the form of expostulation, which seems rather to express her earnestness the more; for the words may be rendered thus, ‘Why will ye stir up, and why will ye awake;?’ ^{f436} etc., which seems to imply as if she was apprehensive that they were about to do it; and that there was no danger of it; as also that it was an unreasonable thing in them to do it; and what would be every way as prejudicial to them as it would be to her; and therefore they ought to be careful, as well as herself, not to disturb him, nor provoke him to depart: the allusions is to virgins, that sung songs at marriages; one in the evening, lulling to sleep; and another in the morning, awaked and stirring up from it: ^{f437} the church would not have her beloved awaked by them in such a manner.

VERSE 5.

(Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?) I raised thee up under the apple-tree; there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee,

IN these words are,

I. A question put by way of admiration, concerning the church who is here described:

1st, By her ascent out of the wilderness.

2dly, By her posture in coming up from thence; ‘leaning upon her beloved.’

II. Some things asserted, either by Christ or by his church; ‘I raised thee up,’ etc.

I. Here is a question put by way of admiration, ‘Who is this,’ etc. Not by the angels, as some ^{f438} think; though it is true, they admire the grace that is bestowed upon mortal men, and rejoice at the faith and conversion of sinners: but it is much more likely that these are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem; who being strictly charged, in the former verse, to give no disturbance to Christ and his church, who were enjoying communion and fellowship with each other; look more earnestly at her, whom Christ had so much honored and indulged with such earnestness to himself, at which they seem astonished and surprised. Though others ^{f439} have considered them as the words of the Jewish church, wondering at the conversion of the

Gentiles, and their sudden reception into the embraces of Christ. Others ^{f440} have taken them to be the words of the bride herself, declaring what Christ said to her when he first met her, as she was coming up from the wilderness; or else, expressing her great love and affections to Christ, which appeared by her coming out of the wilderness, forsaking all for him, encountering with all difficulties, running all risks, that she might enjoy his company; and therefore says, ‘Who is this,’ etc., or where is there another that has done the like, or shown the like love to him as I have done? which is not to be understood as though she boasted in herself; for she acknowledges, that it was by his grace and strength that she had been enabled to do this, which is expressed in the very next words, ‘leaning upon her beloved;’ for she could never have been able to come up from the wilderness had she not had his arm to lean upon. Though they seem rather to be the words of Christ himself; not as being ignorant of her, or as not knowing who she was; but as admiring at the graces of his Spirit in her, and especially that of faith, signified by her ‘leaning on her beloved;’ as he had admired her love and affections to him, in a like form of speech, in chapter ²¹⁸⁶3:6, which are there compared to ‘pillars of smoke.’

The person who is here inquired of and wondered at, is either the Gentile church, which, before the gospel was brought thither, was much like a desert and wilderness; to which it is frequently compared in the prophecies of Isaiah; see chapter ²³⁰⁵32:15,16 and 35:1,6 and her coming out of the wilderness, may signify her conversion to the faith of Christ: or else, the springing up of a new church may be here intended; and, because an Arabic word is here made use of, Brightman thinks it intends the conversion of the eastern part of the world, Arabia, Persia, Egypt, Assyria, and refers it to the prophecy in ²³⁰³Isaiah 19:23-25, though rather the bride, who is all along spoken of in this song, is here meant; who had attained to a greater degree of faith, and had larger experiences of Christ’s love, and was allowed a more intimate communion with him; and is described here,

1st, By her ascent from the wilderness, The Septuagint read the words thus, ‘Who is this that cometh up in white, ^{f441} or clothed in white?’ though there is nothing in the Hebrew text to favor such a version; yet this appears to be the apparel of the church in other places, especially in the book of the Revelation, chapter ⁶⁶⁰⁴3:4,5 and ⁶⁶⁰⁸19:8, where she is said to be ‘arrayed in fine linen, clean and white;’ which fine linen is said to be ‘the righteousness of the saints,’ etc. that which Christ has wrought out for them, and is by an act of God’s grace imputed to them; for their own

righteousness doth not deserve the name of ‘fine linen, clean and white;’ that being at best but as ‘filthy rags, and as an unclean thing.’ But the words are better rendered, ‘Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?’ by which may be intended, either, her conversion from a state of nature, her being called and chosen out of the world: or her deliverance out of some great affliction as the saints are said to ‘come out of great tribulation,’ ^{<4074>} Revelation 7:14. But of all this, see more on chapter 3:6.

2dly, She is described by her posture, in this her ascent out of the wilderness, ‘leaning upon her beloved;’ which is expressive of much confidence in him, and familiarity with him which she was allowed by him to use, and which she might, without justly incurring either shame or reproach; for he, on whose arm she leaned, stood in a near relation to her, being both her husband and her brother. The word translated *leaning*, is only used in this place, and is differently rendered:

1. Some, among which are Many Jewish interpreters, ^{f442} from the use of the word in the Arabic language render it, joining or associating, or cleaving to her beloved: the church had given up herself to Christ, to be his for ever; was resolved, through grace to abide with him, and to go with him, whithersoever he went; that act of faith in God’s people, which, in the New Testament, ^{<4085>} 2 Corinthians 8:5, is expressed by a giving up of themselves to the Lord, to serve, honor, and glorify his name, is frequently expressed in the Old Testament, ^{<2503>} Isaiah 56:3,6; ^{<2515>} Jeremiah 50:5, by a joining of themselves unto him; which, when they have done, they cleave unto him with full ‘purpose of heart;’ resolving, with Ruth, that where he goes, they will go; where he lodges, they will lodge; that his people shall be their people, and his God their God; nay, that in the strength of his grace, they will abide with him, and by his interest even unto death.

2. Others read the words thus, rejoicing or delighting herself ‘in her beloved;’ ^{f443} which sense the Vulgate Latin seems to have a regard to, as well as expresses the sense of our version, by reading the words thus, *deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum*, ‘flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved;’ as does also the Targum, which thus paraphrases the words, and they shall delight themselves in the mercy of the Lord.’ Christ and his church take mutual delight and pleasure in each other; as she is fair and pleasant for delights in his esteem, so he is in hers: saints delight themselves much in taking a view of his personal glory, in his comparable beauty, transcendent excellencies, inexhaustible fullness, and

unsearchable riches; it is not only their duty to ‘rejoice in the Lord always;’ but this interwoven in the very make, frame, and constitution of their souls, as renewed by grace: hence they are said to be ‘the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,’ ^{<30RB>}Philippians 3:3.

3. The Septuagint render it, ‘strengthening herself upon her beloved,’ that is, being conscious of her own weakness and ability to perform the duties of religion, withstand the temptations of Satan, escape the snares of this world, and hold on and continue in her Christian race, she applied herself to Christ; in whom she saw both ‘righteousness and strength’ for her; and from whom she received both; the one as her clothing, the other as her armor; the one as her title for glory, the other to enable her to hold out until she arrived thither.

4. Others translate the words thus, ‘casting herself upon her beloved’: ^{f444}sensible souls will cast themselves at the feet of Christ for mercy, and into the arms of Christ for safety, shelter and security; they will cast their burdens upon the Lord, to be eased from them by him, who has promised to sustain them; and they will cast their care upon him, knowing that he careth for them; nay, they will venture their souls upon him, and commit the whole affair of their salvation to him; as undoubtedly the church did here.

5. Our version reads it, leaning on her beloved’; ^{f445} which is the use of the word in the Ethiopic language: ^{f446} confidence and trust in our own strength; wisdom and righteousness, is sometimes expressed by leaning thereunto, as in ^{<3885>}Job 18:15; ^{<30RB>}Proverbs 3:5; and so is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, by leaning on him; see ^{<2800>}Isaiah 50:10. By faith believers lean upon Christ’s person, for their acceptance with God; upon his righteousness, for their justification before him; upon his fullness, for every day’s supply; and unto his blood, for pardon and cleansing: who is such a staff or prop as will never deceive them; upon which they may venture to lay the whole stress of their Salvation, as it seems the church did here. The attitude in which the church was seen, seems to be this: she appeared coming up from the wilderness, arm in arm with her beloved, her arm under his armhole: for a word from this here used, signifies ‘the arm-hole’; ^{f447} which was expressive of great freedom, familiarity and fellowship with her beloved, and of her close affection to him, firm trust in him, and dependence on him.

II. In the following part of this text are some things asserted; either by Christ concerning his church, or else by the church concerning Christ; 'I raised thee up under the apple-tree,' etc. These words may be considered as the words of Christ; ^{f448} showing by whom and by what means the church was raised out of her former mean condition, and was brought to that honor and dignity which she now enjoyed.

1st, Says he, I raised thee up under the apple-tree: which may either intend the work of faith and conversion, which is the quickening or raising up a soul that is dead in trespasses and sins unto a newness of life; or else, the awakening of a sleepy and drowsy saint. If we consider the words in the former sense, they will lead us to observe,

1. The state and condition that the church was in before conversion; which Christ, it may be, remarks unto her, to teach her humility, that she might not be puffed up with spiritual pride, and forget what she once was; she was dead in sin, and must have continued so, had not Christ raised her up; she was like the wretched infant, in ^{<B616>}Ezekiel 16:6, which was 'cast out in the open field, to the lothing of us person in the day that it was born;' in which condition Christ found her, being like a new-born infant, thrown under an apple-tree, and there left naked and helpless; where he took compassion upon her, and said unto her, whilst in her blood, live: moreover, some regard may be had in this place unto the manner how she came to be in this condition; which was through Adam and Eve's eating the forbidden fruit, which some have thought to be the apple; whereby 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned,' ^{<B512>}Romans 5:12.

2. That the work of faith and conversion is a resurrection from the dead; which for ever secures persons from being hurt by the second death; see ^{<B125>}John 5:25; ^{<B211>}Revelation 2:11.

3. That this work belongs to Christ, is performed by him, and the glory of it to be given to him; 'I raised thee up, etc.' this work cannot be effected by the free-will and power of man, but by the mighty and efficacious grace of Christ; hence he is said to be the resurrection and the life, ^{<B125>}John 11:25. No less a person than he, who said to Lazarus, come forth, can raise a dead sinner; and no less a power must be exerted in doing this work, than was in the resurrection of Christ's dead body; see ^{<B119>}Ephesians 1:19.

4. Christ's doing of this work upon the hearts of his people, is a very great indication of his love to them; he speaks of it here as a peculiar favor done to his church; see ~~<BIB>~~Ephesians 2:4; ~~<BIB>~~Jeremiah 31:3. But,

If we understand these words of the awakening of her when asleep, they may teach us the following things:

- 1.** That she was fallen asleep; which is sometimes the case of God's own people, as in chapter 5:2.
- 2.** That this befell her when she was under the ordinances, under the shadow of the apple-tree, chapter 2:3.
- 3.** That Christ will not suffer his people to continue so; but will, by some means or other, awake them out of it.

2dly, He says, that there her mother brought her forth, ^{f449} etc. Here he expresses her conversion by a regeneration, as he had before by a resurrection; by both which names it is very well known in the New Testament; which work, though it is effected by the grace and Spirit of God, yet the ministry of the word and ordinances are the instrumental means thereof which Christ has placed, continues, and blesses in his church for that end.

But the words seem rather to be the words of the church, ^{f450} speaking these things concerning Christ; for though there is nothing in our version to determine the sense this way; yet the suffixes in the Hebrew text being of the masculine gender, manifestly show that they are spoken of a man, and not of a woman. And,

1st, The church says, that she raised Christ up under the apple-tree; that is, she sitting under the ordinances of the gospel, which are the shadow of the apple-tree, to which Christ is compared in chapter ~~<BIB>~~2:3, and finding no communion with him, he being as it were asleep all the while, did, by earnest prayer and entreaty, at length raise him up; so that she enjoyed a large degree of nearness to him, and familiarity with him.

2dly, That there his mother, which is the church and every true believer; see chapter ~~<BIB>~~3:11; and ~~<BIB>~~Matthew 12:50, brought him forth: as did,

1. The Old Testament-church, who long waited for him, and was often in pain, as a woman with child, on that account, until this man-child was born;

which was at length accomplished, to the joy of all those who waited for the consolation of Israel.

2. With much pain did the apostles bring Christ forth into the Gentile world, by professing, him, preaching his gospel, and suffering for his sake: thus did they travail in birth, until Christ was formed in the hearts of men.

3. It is with much pain, even like that of a woman in travail, that the new birth, or the work of regeneration on the heart, which is no other than Christ formed there, is wrought; all, more or less, who are called by grace, pass under a work of the law, which is a killing letter; which puts the soul to a great deal of pain; pricks it to the heart, and makes it cry out, What shall I do to be saved?

4. The New Testament church, which is also Christ's mother, in the exercise of faith and prayer, is waiting for his second coming; nay, is not only looking for it, but is hastening to it; is uneasy, and as it were like a woman in travail, until he makes his appearance; which he will shortly do, through the incessant and continued cries and entreaties of his people: and this may be the reason why the phrase is doubled; there thy mother brought thee forth; that is, the Old Testament church, who waited for his manifestation in the flesh; 'there she brought thee forth that bare thee;' that is the New Testament church, which looks for his second appearance. K. Aben Ezra interprets these words of the raising, loosing, and bringing forth of the King Messiah, through the prayers and entreaties of the Jews; who fancy that he now lies bound and fast asleep, but will ere long be awaked and loosed through their prayers, and appear for their deliver, ance from present exile, and captivity; which is all vain and delusive.

VERSE 6.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

THESE words may be considered either as the words of Christ, or of his church. Some ^{f451} think that they are the words of Christ expressing his desire to be set as a seal upon the heart and arm of his church; and the argument, reason, or motive, which he makes use of to prevail upon her to grant him this request, is taken from the exceeding greatness of his

affection to her; which is compared to the strength of death, the cruelty of the grave, and the vehemency of flaming coals of fire.

I. He makes a request to her, that he might be ‘set as a seal,’ both upon her heart and arm: by which he may intend,

1. An inward and abiding principle of love and affection in her towards him: the church’s love to Christ is highly valued by him, especially when it comes from the heart; for mere expressions of love, without an inward principle of it in the heart, are not satisfying to him; for what he requires, is, to ‘love him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: let us love therefore, not in word, neither in tongue,’ that is, only, ‘but in deed and in truth;’ for this is what he seeks for, and is highly esteemed of by him.

2. A manifestation of this affection to him outwardly; it should not only have a place in our hearts, but also be shown by our actions, which should be in conformity to his will; ‘for if ye love me,’ says he, ^{<B145>}John 14:15, ‘keep my commandments. Christ should have both our hearts and our hands.

3. A constant remembrance of him, and continual looking to him: as seals worn upon the arm, or in a ring upon the finger, are continually in sight, and put in remembrance whose they are, or whose image they bear; so would Christ be always in his church’s sight and mind; for we should, as David did, ‘set the Lord always before us,’ and continually look unto him, which is both pleasant and profitable; pleasant, because we behold him ‘full of grace and truth;’ and profitable, because we receive from him ‘grace for grace.’

4. A greater likeness to him: conformity to Christ’s image is one great end of predestination; which is begun in the hearts of his people by his Spirit; is increased by those transforming views he gives them of the glory of Christ’s person; and will be completed in heaven, when they ‘shall be like him, and see him as he is:’ believers have the image of Christ enstamped upon them; for as they ‘have borne the image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly;’ which is, to have Christ set as a seal upon the heart and arm, so as that he leaves an impress of his image there; which conforms both heart and life unto him, and cannot but be desired by him; for every like loves its like.

5. A close adherence to his person, gospel, cause and interest; having made an open and public profession of him, we should ‘cleave to him with full purpose of heart,’ as Ruth did to Naomi; or as a signet does to a man’s right hand on which it is worn,

6. and lastly, In this request of Christ to the church, his design may be, that she might appear to be his, and only for his use and service; as things are known to be such a man’s property by his mark or seal being upon them; so the church is known to be Christ’s, by his seal being upon both her heart and arm; which is himself; who is inwardly received, and outwardly professed by her; for whose use and service all she is and has are; being ‘a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.’

II. The argument, reason or motive, which he makes use of to induce her to take notice of his request, is taken from the ardency of his love and affection to her, which is signified by those several following expressions:

1st, He declares that that his love to her was strong as death: he loved her so, that he died for her; he preferred her to his own life, and chose death rather than to go without her; which is a full proof and evidence of his love to her, and shews the exceeding greatness of it; for, as in ^{<B15>}John 15:13. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;’ which may very well be improved by him, as an argument or reason why she should love him again; manifest that love, bear him continually upon her mind, cleave close unto his cause and interest, seek after a nearer conformity to him, as well as reserve herself and all she had for his use and service.

2dly, He asserts his ‘jealousy to be cruel as the grave:’ by which may be meant, either,

1. His zeal for his church’s good and his Father’s glory; so this word is sometimes rendered; see ^{<206>}Isaiah 9:6 and ^{<265>}63:15, which zeal of Christ’s, like the inexorable, cruel and devouring grave, consumed his time and strength, and at last his life; as appears from his own words, ‘the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,’ ^{<360>}Psalms 69:9. He, as the great prophet in Israel, showed a becoming zeal for the gospel; which appeared by his warm and lively preaching of it; his assiduity and constancy in it, the frequent and wearisome journeys he took to do it; the risks and dangers he ran upon that account; as well as the many miracles he wrought to confirm it, and the care he took to free it from calumnies, aspersions and

prejudices: He likewise showed the like zeal for the discipline of his Father's house; as is manifest from his severe reflections on human traditions; his asserting the purity of worship to be in Spirit and in truth; as also his frequent inveighings against the vice of professors; as well as his great courage in clearing the temple from the defilers of it; which heroic action of his is particularly recorded in ^{<2814>}John 2:14-17, which put the disciples in mind of what was before written of him: moreover, his zeal was no less fervent for the salvation of his people, and the glory of his Father, concerned therein; which plainly discovered itself in his voluntary assumption of human nature, and cheerful submission to the death of the cross on their account. Or else,

2. By it may be meant his vengeance on his and their enemies; and in this sense the word is used, ^{<2820>}Deuteronomy 29:20; ^{<2897>}Isaiah 59:17, what was a day of grace and salvation to his people, was a day of vengeance to his enemies; for no sooner was the year of his redeemed come, but the day of vengeance was in his heart; which he executed upon them without any mercy, pity, or compassion; his jealousy or vengeance was cruel as the grave; he spared them not; he made an end of sin, abolished death, destroyed Satan, and spoiled principalities and powers. Or else,

3. By it may be meant, the jealousy which he justly entertains of his people's faith in him, love and duty to him who frequently turn aside from him to other lovers, of which he often complains, being jealous over them with a godly jealousy; which is no other than the height of his love and affection to them; there being nothing that he is more anxiously concerned for and jealous of, than the faith, love and obedience of his people, lest they should be given to any other.

3dly, This strong affection of his to his church, he compares to coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame; by which he would signify the ardency and vehemency of his love; how tottering it was to him, and how uneasy he was until he had given it vent; thus the prophet Jeremiah, chapter ^{<2819>}20:9, being reviled and reproached for prophesying in the name of God, made a resolution not to make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name; but, says he, his word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay: so Christ's love was like burning coals of fire in his bosom, which gave him much uneasiness until he had given it vent; as appears from ^{<2823>}Luke 12:50. I have, says he, a baptism, meaning his death and sufferings, to be baptized

with, and holy am I straitened, distressed, tortured and uneasy, till it be accomplished? And now this zeal of Christ's for the salvation of his church, his vengeance upon her enemies, his anxious concern that her faith, love, and obedience, might not be alienated from him; as also his uneasiness until her salvation was accomplished; may well be used by him, as so many arguments, to prevail upon her to grant him the abovesaid request. Thus much for the first sense of the words, as they may be considered as the words of Christ to the church; but the generality of interpreters understand them as the words of the church, requesting of Christ that he would set her as a seal, both upon his heart and arm, because of the greatness of that love which she bore to him; which she compares to death, the grave, and coals of fire: and this I take to be the most genuine sense of them, as being most agreeable to the suffixes in the Hebrew text; I shall consider it much in the same method as I did the former. And.

First, The church requests of Christ that he would set her as a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm: in which she may desire,

1. Nearness to him; as a seal must be near, that is worn next the heart or upon the arm: the saints are a people near unto the Lord; with respect to union, they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones: Christ and believers are like the old primitive Christians, of one heart and of one soul; and they would be near to him with respect to communion; they would not only, with Job, come even to his seat, but also into his arms; would lie in his bosom; nay, are not content without a place in his heart.

2. She seems to be desirous of abiding in Christ's heart, and that she might be as a signet upon his arm; from whence she might never be removed, but there always continue; of which believers may be assured, though they are often attended with fears about it; for, as in ^{<3457B>}Psalm 125:1, 'they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever;' they can never be removed from off Christ's heart, on which they always are; nor out of his arms, in which they are continually enclosed; for 'they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand.'

3. She desires a share in his heart's love and affection, and that she might be valued and esteemed by him as a signet upon his right hand; see ^{<3024>}Jeremiah 22:24; ^{<3023>}Haggai 2:23, for there is nothing more desirable to believers than the love of Christ and the discoveries of it; for his loving kindness is better than life; may they but have a share in Christ, an interest

in his favor, be but valued and esteemed by him, they care not how they stand in the world's esteem, what they say of them, or can do unto them.

4. She seeks for a continuance of his love, which may be depended on; for, 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end,' ^{<BEB>}John 13:1. Christ's love is like himself, 'the same yesterday, today, and for ever;' from whence it is impossible that any separation should ever be made.

5. She also wanted and sought after an assurance of Christ's love, which is the Spirit's work, and is expressed by sealing in scripture; see ^{<HIB>}Ephesians 1:13 and ^{<HIB>}4:30, which he performs, either more generally, by that work of grace which he has begun, and is carrying on in the hearts of believers; for from his drawing of them to Christ with loving kindness, they may conclude and be assured of their interest in his everlasting love; or else more particularly, by some special testimony of his, which he bears together with their spirits, that they are the children of God.

6. In this request she likewise presses after a manifestation of his love to her soul, by the arm of his almighty power, delivering her out of all temptations, and supporting and bearing her up under all afflictions, trials and exercises; which had wrought out salvation for her, and had plucked her as a brand out of the burning.

7. She desires a continual remembrance of him; and seems to allude to the high-priest, who had the names of the children of Israel engraven, like the engravings of a signet, upon precious stones; which were borne by him, both upon his shoulders and upon his heart, for a memorial before the Lord continually; which was typical of Christ, ^{f452}our great high-priest, who represented the persons of all the elect upon the cross, and now bears them upon his heart before the throne in heaven; whither he is gone to appear in the presence of God for us.

8. She desires to be always in his sight, and under his care and inspection, as his people always are; for they are graven upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him: they are as the apple of his eye, his jewels and peculiar treasure; which he has his eye always upon, and continually watches over, lest they should be lost, or any hurt come unto them.

Secondly, The reason of this request of hers, she adores to be the exceeding greatness of her love unto him; which she compares to death for its strength, to the grave for its cruelty, and to burning coals of fire for its insatiable and devouring nature.

1st, She asserts her love to Christ to be as strong as death: the meaning of which is,

1. That as death conquers all, kings and peasants, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, weak or strong; there is no disputing his authority, nor controlling his power; but all ranks and degrees of men must, whether they will or no, be subject to him, the king of terrors: so her love to Christ overcame all things, and surmounted all difficulties which stood in the way of her enjoying him; she could part with, and bear all or any thing for the sake of Christ; father, mother, wife and children, houses and lands, a good name, credit and reputation, are nothing to the believer in comparison of Christ, which he cheerfully quits when they stand in competition with him; nay, things that are the most frightful in nature, cannot scare him from Christ, nor separate him from the love of him; such, as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword; nor death itself in its most formidable appearance; ^{f453} for in all these things he is more than a conqueror, through Christ that has loved him: Perfect love casts out fear; it dreads nothing, runs all risks, encounters and surmounts all difficulties, that it may enjoy the object loved,

2. As her love, like death, had conquered all things, So she herself was conquered by it; ^{f454} it had wounded her sore; so that she was as one gasping, panting, dying, just ready to expire, unless she had the sight and enjoyment of him whom she loved.

3. Such was her love to Christ, that death itself was nothing to her, so that she might but win Christ and be found in him: the book of martyrs furnishes us with many instances of those bold, daring and heroic lovers, who loved not their lives unto the death, for the sake of Jesus; the most exquisite torments, and most cruel deaths they have been put to, have rather inflamed, than lessened their love to Christ; so that their love to him has not only been as strong, but even stronger than death.

4. Her meaning may be, that love had so captivated her, and worked so powerfully in her, that she was as a dead carcass, that might be moved and drawn by him whithersoever he pleased; the love of Christ constrained her

to live to him, and not to herself; for love, as one ^{f455} expresses it, is a kind of a civil death: lovers rather live at the will and pleasure of others whom they love, than at their own; and so the church did here for a frown, or an angry look or word from Christ, was as death unto her.

2dly, She says, that her jealousy was cruel as the grave: by which may be meant,

1. Jealousy of Christ's love unto her; either as it intends the height of love, love at its **ακνη**; or else that evil, groundless suspicion of not enjoying another's love, or of having a rival in it, which Solomon calls, ^{<1084>}Proverbs 6:34,35, 'the rage of a man;' and may be said to be cruel as the grave; for such an one, 'he will not spare in the day of vengeance; he will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts;' now if jealousy is taken in this sense here, it intends those fits of unbelief, which sometimes attend the people of God; who are often jealous of Christ's love to them: and ready to suspect his regard for them; which exceedingly tortures and afflicts them, and must not be reckoned their excellency, but their weakness; for of all people in the world, they have the least reason to entertain such thoughts of him.

2. By it may be meant the envy of the wicked against the saints, which is very great; for they would, as much as in them lies, deprive them of the common rights and liberties of mankind, as well as debar them the free enjoyment of their religious exercises; which is a great affliction to the people of God; for ^{<1074>}Proverbs 27:4, 'wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy, or jealousy?' it is the same word which is here used; in this sense the Targum or Chaldee paraphrase on our text understands it. Or,

3. By it may be meant her zeal ^{f456} for Christ, his gospel, cause and interest: thus Elijah is said to be, ^{<1190>}1 Kings 19:10, jealous for the Lord of hosts, that is, zealously affected to him, and concerned for his glory; which, like the grave, is of a devouring and consuming nature; for, says David, ^{<1093>}Psalms 119:139, 'my zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words:' Virgil ^{f457} gives the epithet of cruel to love.

3dly, The church expresses the ardency and vehemency of her love to, and zeal for Christ, by comparing them to coals of fire; live coals, such as have their coruscations, which flash and flame, and are bright and vehement; and to these her love may be compared, for the following reasons:

1. In such coals of fire there is light; so there is in the church's love to, and zeal for Christ. for though she believes in, and has love for an unseen Christ; yet not for an unknown Christ; for, *ignoti zulla cupido*; her zeal is not a blind, misguided zeal, but is according to knowledge,

2. In such coals, there is heat as well as light: it is true, sometimes the love of God's people waxeth cold, through the prevalency of corruption, and the cares of the world; it is like coals of fire covered with ashes; which seem to have no life nor heat in them; but then at other times it is re-kindled and re-inflamed by the Spirit; either under the hearing of the word, or in meditation upon the glory of Christ's person, love and grace; 'my heart,' says David, ^{<391B>}Psalm 39:3, 'was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue:' nothing sooner raises it into a flame, then fellowship and communion with Christ Jesus; agreeable to what the disciples said to one another, ^{<243B>}Luke 24:32. 'Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' Again, though they are sometimes cold, lukewarm and indifferent in their frames, yet at other times they are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

3. Fire is insatiable; it is one of those 'four things which say not, it is enough,' ^{<310B>}Proverbs 30:16, so is love; for it would always have more of Christ; it is never satisfied with communion with him; but, like the horse-leech at the vein, continually crying, 'Give, give:' and for the same reason love is compared to death, and jealousy to the grave, in the preceding sentences; see ^{<315B>}Habakkuk 2:5.

Moreover these coals of fire are said to have a most vehement flame; nothing is more common with other writers, ^{f458} than to attribute flame to love, and to call it a fire; and here a most vehement flame is ascribed to it; or, as it is in the Hebrew text the flame of Jah, or Jehovah: ^{f459} by which is meant, either,

(1.) An exceeding great or most vehement flame, as our Translators have well rendered it; for when the Hebrews would express the superlative degree, or increase the signification Of a word, they sometimes use some one or other of the names of God; as mountains of God, and cedars of God, for most high mountains, and most excellent cedars. Or,

(2.) It may mean a flame that is kindled by the lord; ^{f460} for it is by the Spirit of the Lord, who is compared to fire in scripture, that this flame of love is first kindled in our souls. Or,

(3.) it may be in allusion to the fire upon the altar of burnt-offerings which was always kept alive; and so a fit emblem of love, which is of an abiding nature; see ^{<R112>}Leviticus 6:12 and 9:24 and can never be extinguished, as is expressed in the following words.

VERSE 7.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

IN these words are some further commendations of love, which,

I. Is represented as inextinguishable and insuperable; many ‘waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it.’

II. As exceeding valuable and inestimable; ‘if a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would utterly be contemned:’ Which may be understood, either of Christ’s love to his church, or of the church’s love to Christ; for as these words stand connected with the former, and are spoken by the same person, they must be interpreted the same way; and I shall first consider them as they may be expressive of the excellency of Christ’s love: which,

I. Is inextinguishable and insuperable; it cannot be quenched by many waters; nor drowned by all the floods,

1st, Of sin and corruption, which have overflowed all human nature; for ‘all have sinned and come short of the glory of God:’ sin, like a mighty torrent, or rather inundation, has entered into the world, and brought death along with it, upon all the posterity of Adam; it has drowned them in destruction and perdition, as all hurtful and foolish lusts do. Now the elect of God themselves are not exempted from this universal deluge; but though these waters of sin have come into their souls and overrun all the powers and faculties thereof; yet they have not extinguished Christ’s love towards them; nor in the least alienated his affections from them it is true, when he first loved them, he saw them in all that glory and perfection, which his

Father designed to bring them to, and which they will appear in, in another world; yet when the great council was held concerning their redemption, they were presented to him as plunged into the depths of sin and misery; which was so far from setting his heart against them, that it rather moved his pity and compassion for them, and gave him an opportunity of showing the exceeding greatness of his love towards them; for upon this, he readily and cheerfully became their surety, engaged to assume their nature, lay down his life for them, and thereby satisfy law and justice in their room and stead; all which agreements were to a tittle made good by him, in the fullness of time, for all the elect of God, notwithstanding their after-fall in Adam, and their actual rebellion against him, as they appeared upon the stage of the world; nay, though their innumerable evils compassed him about like floods of water, and brought death and the curse upon him; these being imputed to him, and laid upon him by his Father; and with which, standing charged by divine justice, he suffered to the uttermost that they deserved; yet his love continued the same towards his people; for, 'having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end,' ^{<431>}John 13:1. For,

2dly, By these 'waters and floods,' may be meant the several afflictions and sufferings which Christ underwent for the sins of his own people; by which they are expressed, ^{<430>}Psalms 69:1,2, where Christ is introduced thus speaking, 'Save me, O God, for the waters are come' in unto my soul; I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.' Hence it is, that his sufferings are called a baptism, in ^{<425>}Luke 12:50, under which may be comprehended these following things:

1. 'The floods of ungodly men,' which compassed him about; some of whom reviled him, others spit upon him, others buffeted him, others crucified him, and pierced his hands, feet and side; yet his love to his people remained firm and unconquerable: nay, though the whole infernal posse of devils was let loose upon him, and exercised all their rage and cunning; yet as neither 'life nor death,' that is, all his sufferings, both in life and death, could separate his people from his love; so neither could angels, wicked angels, nor 'principalities and powers.'

2. Floods of reproaches were poured into his bosom on the account of his birth, parentage, and education, his public ministry, the miracles which he wrought, and the free courteous, and affable conversation, he used with

sinner: He was spit upon in Pilate's hall, and mocked at when upon the cross, in the utmost misery; yet he bore all this 'contradiction of sinners against himself,' with an uncommon patience; despising all the shame that attended these reproaches, for the 'joy that was set before him,' of having all his people with him in glory.

3. The vials of his Father's wrath were also poured forth upon him; for though, as God's Son, he was always the object of his love, yet, as the sinner's surety, suffering in their room and stead, he was 'cast off and abhorred;' for God was wroth with his anointed or Messiah; 'terrors took hold on him as waters;' when only some few drops of divine wrath fell upon him, he 'began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; his soul became exceeding sorrowful unto death; his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;' then was it that 'the waters began to come into his soul,' which kept flowing in until the measure was quite filled up; yet all these waters and floods could not quench nor drown his love towards his people; his affections to them, as well as his regard to his Father's will in their salvation, continued the same; as appears from those words of his to his Father, in the midst of his agony, 'not my will, but thine be done.'

4. All the sorrows and sufferings of Christ, from his cradle to his cross, may be included herein; for his whole life was one continued series of suffering, which ended in an accursed and ignominious death, to which he voluntarily submitted; that so his people might be set free by justice, and delivered from death and condemnation.

3dly, As the love of Christ cannot be extinguished and overcome by all the waters and all the floods of sin and corruption in them, nor by all the sorrows and sufferings which he has underwent in his own person for their sins; so neither can it, by all their water-floods and billows of sufferings and afflictions which pass over his members; these indeed make them appear mean and abject in the eye of the world, and render them the object of their scorn and contempt: yet nevertheless, though the sun of persecution has looked upon them, and made them black, they are comely in Christ's eye; his heart is not set against them, nor his love alienated from them upon that account; for when they 'pass through such waters,' he will be with them; nay, he chooses, approves of, and delights in them, when 'in the furnace of affliction,' and will purify them thereby; so that though they 'have lain among the pots,' and are become black and sooty; yet they 'shall be as the

wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold,'
<4983> Psalm 68:13.

II. This love of Christ to his church is also exceeding valuable and inestimable; 'if a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would utterly be contemned.' For;

1. This is not to be procured by money, if any should offer to purchase the favor of Christ at any such rate, he would be treated with the utmost contempt, as Simon Magus was by the apostles, of whom he would have bought the gift of the Holy Ghost with money; to whom Peter said, <4988> Acts 8:18-20, 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.' Christ and his love are of greater value, than to be obtained in such a manner; for not only the substance of a single person's house, but even the riches of the whole world, and the most precious things in nature, are not equal to them; see <8382> Job 28:12,13,15-19; <1081> Proverbs 8:11,19.

2. Riches will not entitle men to the love and favor of Christ; he does not regard them on the account of these; though perhaps too many, like Haman, are apt to say, <7086> Esther 6:6, 'to whom would the king delight to do honor, more than to myself?' and so 'trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches,' to a neglect of divine Providence, and concern about their immortal souls; such would do well to consider, that 'not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world,' whom it hath pleased him that the gospel should be preached unto.

3. Riches will not procure Christ's love, favor and regard, neither at the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment: when 'he takes thee away with his stroke,' that is, of death, then 'a great ransom cannot deliver thee;' all thy bags of money will not buy off thy life one hour, much less secure his favor to eternity; for, 'Will he esteem thy riches? no, nor gold, nor all the forces of strength,' <8339> Job 36:19,20, which will be much the same case at the day of judgment; for the righteous judge, who will then sit upon the bench, will not be bribed, nor can his favor be procured by any such methods: 'riches profit not in the day of wrath;' for if a man 'gain the whole world, and lose his own soul,' there will be no recovering it; for nothing will be given, nor will be taken 'in exchange for it.'

4. Therefore the love and favor of Christ should be preferred by us to all temporal enjoyments; for if his ‘loving-kindness is better than life,’ then it is better than all the temporal comforts and enjoyments of it: we should not covet to have our portion here, nor boast ourselves of our wisdom, strength, or riches; but ‘glory in this,’ that we know the Lord, who ‘exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth.’ Thus much may suffice for the first sense of the words. I shall now proceed to consider them as they may be expressive of the church’s love to Christ; which also is,

First, Inextinguishable and insuperable; it cannot be quenched nor drowned by many waters, nor all the floods,

1. Of wicked and ungodly men; the people and nations of the world, who are frequently compared to many waters; see ^{<237D>}Isaiah 17:12,13; ^{<617D>}Revelation 17:1,15 and so most of the Jewish ^{f461}writers understand them here: for the nations of the world, and the great men thereof, have not been able, either by force or flattery, by cruel edicts or fair promises, to alienate the church’s love from Christ, nor tempt her to desert his cause and interest.

2. It cannot be quenched nor drowned by all the waters and floods of persecutions, ^{f462}which wicked men, by the instigation of Satan, have brought upon the people of God thus we read, in ^{<6125>}Revelation 12:15, that the serpent, which is the devil, ‘cast out of his month water as a flood, after the woman,’ which is the church, ‘that he might cause her to be carried away of it:’ by which flood cast out of the serpent’s mouth, must be meant, either a flood of heresies brought into the church to disturb her, and draw her off from Christ, her head, through the cunning craft of Satan; or else, a flood of persecutions, introduced by wicked and ungodly men, through his instigation, in order to affright, scare, and turn her aside from the pure ways of Christ, but all in vain; for, ^{<6133>}Romans 8:33,37. ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us:’ nay, death itself attended with the most exquisite torments and barbarous cruelties that hell can devise, cannot do it; for saints count not their lives dear to themselves, so that they may but ‘finish their course with joy,’ and bear a noble testimony to ‘the gospel of the grace of God.’

3. The love of believers to Christ is not quenched nor drowned by all the waters and floods of affliction, which God is pleased to bring upon them:

they generally have a large share of them; ‘waters of a full cup are wrung out unto them:’ yet these, though they are not ‘joyous, but grievous,’ do not alienate their affections from Christ, but rather fix them more strongly on him; whilst they view all their afflictions as covenant-mercies, the effects of wisdom, love and faithfulness, and designed for their good, profit and advantage.

4. Neither can their love be quenched nor drowned by the many waters and floods of their own sins and corruptions: it is true, these are most likely to extinguish this fire and flame above all things else, and often do strike a damp upon it; for through the ‘aboundings of iniquity,’ love oftentimes waxeth cold; but yet it is not drenched and drowned there may be a leaving the first love; some degrees of heat in it may be remitted, but there is no such thing as losing the grace of love entirely; for it is an immortal seed, of a lasting, yea, of an everlasting nature.

5. Nor can it be quenched nor drowned by all the waters and floods of Satan’s temptations this enemy of believers oftentimes ‘comes in like a flood’ upon them, by filling their souls with blasphemous thoughts, vile suggestions, and wicked insinuations; in all endeavoring to draw off their love, and alienate their affections from Christ; which he sometimes attempts by fair words, shewing them ‘all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,’ as he did Christ, and promising to give them to them, which is more than he can perform, if they will but turn their backs on Christ, and his ways; at other times he sets before them all the hardships, difficulties, reproaches and persecutions, which they will be exposed unto, if they persist therein; and yet all these floods cannot quench nor drown their love to Christ. Nor,

6. Can this be effected by divine desertions, which are compared to ‘waves, billows and water-spouts,’ ^{<39415>}Psalm 42:5-7, for though these much weaken the faith, and disturb the peace of God’s children, yet they do not destroy their love: Christ’s absence gives much uneasiness to believers, brings much darkness upon them, and raises many doubts, fears and misgivings of heart in them; they cannot, it may be, say at such times with the church, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his;’ yet they can say with her, when in the same condition with them, ‘Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?’

7. The terrors of the law, and the apprehensions of God’s wrath which believers are sometimes filled with, are set forth by waves and floods of

water, in ¹⁸⁸⁶ Psalm 88:6,7,15-17, under which, though there may be but little faith, and less joy; yet there may be much love to Christ, great longings and earnest desires after the enjoyment of his presence; as appears from the case of the Psalmist, now referred to.

8. and lastly, All the hardships, difficulties, pressures and reproaches, which may attend believers in their Christian race, are so far from destroying their love to, and alienating their affections from Christ, that they do but rather endear him the more unto them; and make heaven, and the enjoyment of Christ there, the more desirable to them now, and the more welcome to them hereafter.

Secondly, This love of believers to Christ is exceeding valuable; for ‘if a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would utterly be contemned:’ for,

1. This is not to be bought with money, no more than the love of Christ is; no gift nor grace of the Spirit can be procured any such way: it is true, grace is compared to ‘gold tried in the fire,’ which we are advised to buy of Christ; but then it is to be ‘bought without money, and without price.’

2. As this grace cannot be bought with money, so neither will it be parted with for it: a Judas indeed, for thirty pieces of silver, forsook his master, and betrayed him into his enemies hands; as Demas also deserted the apostles, and cause of Christ, ‘having loved this present world; but these things cannot prevail upon true believers to do the like. For,

3. The offers of a man’s whole estate, nay of the riches of the Indies, or vast treasures of the whole globe, if made on terms and conditions of parting with Christ, or deserting his cause and interest, would be treated with the utmost disdain and contempt; they would ‘utterly’ be contemned;’ or, ‘in despising they would despise’ it, as the words may be read from the Hebrew text. For,

4. The things of this world appear but mean in the believer’s eye; who ‘counts all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus:’ nay, he is willing to part with all for Christ, and does, when called to it, ‘take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing that he has in heaven a better and a more enduring substance.’

5. The sense of this clause is thus given by some: ^{f463} that those who spend their substance, their time, their strength, nay, their very lives, for the love

they bear to God, Christ, his ways, cause and interest, are but laughed at, despised, and set at nought by those who are destitute of it; which sense is favored by the Septuagint version, which renders the words thus; 'If a man would give all his living away in love, or charity, in despising they would despise him.' Now the constancy and insuperableness of this precious and valuable grace of love in her soul to Christ, is improved by the church to obtain the former request; 'set me as a seal upon thine heart,' etc. for my soul is all in flames of love for thee, which cannot be extinguished by all I suffer on thy account, nor will be parted with for all that the world can give me; which love of hers discovers itself, not only in a regard to Christ, but also in a concern for others, as appears from the following words.

VERSE 8.

We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts:

What shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for ?

THESE are either the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, ^{f464} who were concerned for the welfare of the church; or else of Christ, ^{f465} being solicitous for the conversion of the elect uncalled; or rather of the church, ^{f466} who, having in the preceding verse discovered a very strong affection to Christ, here signifies her hearty concern for the good of others, which go under the appellation of a little sister; an own sister, near and dear to her, ^{f467} a loving expression; by whom may be meant, either the unconverted elect in general; or else, some new church that was to be set up in some certain age or period of time; or rather, the whole Gentile church, who is called so by the Jewish church: so that they seem to be the words of the old Jewish church, signifying her affection to and concern for the Gentile church, which was then uncalled. In which may be observed,

I. That the Jewish church asserts and owns the relation that the Gentile church stood in, both to her and Christ, at that present time; 'we have a little sister.'

II. She describes her,

1st, By her being little,

2dly, By her having 'no breasts.'

III. She manifests her concern for her; 'what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for?'

I. The old Jewish church asserts and owns the relation, in which the Gentile church, though uncalled, stood in both to her and Christ; 'we have a little sister.' In which may be considered,

1st, In what sense the Gentile church is sister to the Jewish church.

2dly, How she appears to stand in the same relation to Christ.

3dly, How she could be said to be so at that present time.

1st, The Gentile church may be said to be a sister to the Jewish church, for these following reasons:

- 1.** In a more general sense; because Jews and Gentiles are both of one and the same blood; for God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' ^{<417>}Acts 17:26,
- 2.** On the account of their being neighbors: thus Samaria and Sodom are said to be sisters to Jerusalem; the one the elder, the other the younger, ^{<316>}Ezekiel 16:46.
- 3.** Because, in a spiritual sense, those who are Christ's, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed, ^{<413>}Galatians 3:28,29.
- 4.** The elect of God, whether among the Jews or Gentiles, belong unto, and are interested in one and the same covenant of grace, ^{<241>}Isaiah 42:6. and 49:6.
- 5.** Believers in Christ, of either race, are born of one and the same Father, brought up in one and the same family, and are heirs together of the grace of life, ^{<419>}Ephesians 2:19 and 4:4.
- 6.** Christ stands in the relation of an elder brother to the Gentile, as well as to the Jewish church; and therefore these two must be sisters, ^{<413>}Romans 8:29.
- 7.** The church catholic or universal, with respect to its several parts, is called a mother, and that frequently in this song; see chapter ^{<206>}1:6 and ^{<214>}3:4 and ^{<212>}8:2 and so agreeably, the parts of it, with respect to themselves, may be called sisters, being mothers children.
- 8.** They are of the same faith and religion, as to the substance of it: it is true, there is some difference as to the circumstantial of worship, which are now laid aside; but the true spiritual nature and object of it are the

same: the Old Testament saints ‘eat the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink,’ as saints do under the New; the articles of their faith are the same; for converted Gentiles believe ‘none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come,’ relating to Christ’s person, grace, work and office.

2dly, The Gentile church is not only a sister to the Jewish church, but also to Christ; therefore she does not say, I have a little sister, but we have one; which way of speaking perhaps she purposely makes use of, that she might stir up his affection and concern for her the more, she being as much related to him as she was herself: and it may be observed, that Christ is not ashamed to own his church, whether of the Jewish or Gentile race, as standing in this relation to him; nay, rather seems to take pleasure in viewing her under this consideration, as appears from his frequent use of it, in chapter [2209](#) 4:9,10 and [2162](#) 5:1,2, where this character is more largely opened.

2dly, There remains a difficulty in this clause to be removed; and that is, how the Gentile church could be said before calling to stand in the relation of a sister, either to Christ or to the Jewish church; for she expresses herself in the present tense, *we have* a little sister: which difficulty will be removed, if we consider these following things;

1. She was so in divine predestination; just as the elect uncalled are said to be Christ’s sheep before conversion; [4306](#) John 10:16, ‘Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring in:’ by which are particularly meant the Gentiles; who were sheep, though wandering, though not yet brought in by grace, nor folded in a church-state: the same are called, ‘the children of God’ before conversion, [8152](#) John 11:52 though scattered abroad, and not openly and visibly appearing to be ‘fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God;’ for though they are not in the possession of adopting grace, yet: they are ‘predestinated unto the adoption of children;’ on the account of which they may truly be said to be related to the saints, who are called by grace,

2. The Gentile church was brought into this relation in the everlasting covenant; in which Christ not only stood as an elder brother and glorious representative to both churches, but also espoused them both to himself; so that they stood in the relations of sister and spouse to him, and of sisters one to another: thus Christ is said to be the husband of the Gentile church,

before her calling and conversion; ^{<2846>}Isaiah 54:5. 'Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name.'

3. The calling of the Gentiles being sure and certain in God's promises, all whose 'promises are yea and amen in Christ,' it is represented as if it was already done: as things only promised and prophesied of, though not yet fulfilled, frequently are in scripture; see ^{<2306>}Isaiah 9:6 and 53:3-5.

4. The Gentile church was a sister in the faith of the Jewish Church, who viewed her future calling as present; which agrees with the nature of faith, defined by the apostle, ^{<8101>}Hebrews 11:1 to be 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen?'

II. She describes this sister of hers:

1st, By her littleness.

2dly, By her having no breasts,

1st, She calls her 'a little sister;' so the Gentile church was to the Jewish church,

1. In respect of age, being a younger sister: the Jewish church was first called, and then the Gentile; which is very fully and aptly expressed in the parable of the two sons, the elder and the younger, as is thought by some, ^{<0152>}Luke 15:12-25, the elder signifying the Jewish church at that time, which murmured at the grace of God bestowed upon the Gentiles; the younger, the Gentiles, who had lived in all manner of sin and wickedness, and was disregarded of God, but was now embraced with all demonstrations of joy, affection, and tenderness.

2. She is called so as being in some respects, less honorable than the Jewish church; 'Who are Israelis,' as the apostle says, ^{<8001>}Romans 9:4,5 and ^{<8011>}3:1,2, 'to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came therefore, as he says, the Jew has the advantage of the Gentile, and that much every way; but chiefly, because to them were committed the oracles of God.

3. The Jewish church calling the Gentile church 'a little sister,' may express her pity and compassion towards her, being like a young and tender infant, that is in a forlorn and helpless condition; see ^{<2104>}Ezekiel 16:4,5.

4. She may be called so with regard to her number of converts, either at that time, which were very few, few proselytes being then made among the Gentiles to the Jewish religion; or else, at the time when the gospel first came among them; ‘for this sect was every where spoken against;’ and indeed the whole number of Christ’s sheep, either among Jews or Gentiles, are but a ‘little flock, when compared with the world.’

5. She was then more especially, as also at her first calling, but little in spiritual stature; her light, knowledge and faith, being but small, not having as yet arrived ‘to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,’ she was to grow up unto.

2dly, She says, that ‘she has no breasts;’ that is,

1. She was not arrived to years of ripeness; she was not marriageable; her ‘breasts were not fashioned,’ as in ^{<26:67>}Ezekiel 16:7, the time of her open espousal to Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, was not yet come. I call it the time of her open espousal to him; for she, as well as the Jewish church, her elder sister, was secretly espoused to Christ in the everlasting covenant; see ^{<26:6>}Isaiah 54:5, but she was not yet espoused to him in that sense in which the apostle Paul says, ^{<47:10>}2 Corinthians 11:2 of the Corinthian, which was a Gentile church, ‘I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ;’ the time fixed upon for it in ancient council not being yet come;

2. She had ‘no breasts;’ that is, at this time she had no ministers nor ordinances, from whence she might suck and be satisfied, with the sincere milk of the word: moreover, it was some time after the gospel came among the Gentiles, that they had a settled ministry; which was fixed by the apostles, who ‘ordained elders in every city.’

III. The Jewish church signifies her very great concern for the Gentile church, being thus little, and without breasts, saying, ‘What shall we do,’ or ‘shall be done for our sister?’ Which shews,

1. That this little sister was in a state of nature, uncalled, unconverted, poor, miserable, forlorn and helpless.

2. That the Jewish church was concerned for her, was moved with pity and compassion towards her; and would gladly contribute all she could towards her everlasting salvation; as the apostle Paul was for his unconverted kinsmen and relations, ^{<6:1>}Romans 9:1-3.

3. That she not only wished her well, but was willing to do any thing for her that lay in her power; though she seems, in some measure, to be at a loss what to do; and indeed the converted Jews were very much assisting to the spreading of the gospel among the Gentiles: they were Jews who first carried the gospel into the Gentile world; for it was proper that ‘out of Zion should go forth the law or doctrine, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem;’ and when tidings of the Gentiles reception of the gospel ‘came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem,’ they sent forth others also on the same errand; nay, supplied them with money, that so they might not be burdensome to the Gentiles, nor give them any occasion to reproach the gospel; for the fund or stock, which was raised at Jerusalem by the believing Jews, who knew that their land would be laid waste, and their city destroyed in a little time, and therefore sold their lands and possessions, and put the money into the apostles hands; this, I say, seems to be designed, not only for their own use, but for the service of God in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles; who, when they had churches settled among them, upon that consideration were called upon to make collections for these poor saints at Jerusalem.

4. She is not forgetful of the main and principal agent in this work, who is Christ; therefore she says, what shall we do? she was willing to do what she could; but she knew that all her endeavors would be of little significance, without his agency and blessing: she could send her ministers; but if Christ did not: go along with them, and bless them, they would meet but with little success; as it is said, ‘Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted,’ says Paul; ‘Apollos watered, but God gave the increase,’ ~~<RR>~~ 1 Corinthians 3:5,6.

The time that the Jewish church had in view, and is concerned what should be done for her then, is, ‘the day when she shall be spoken for, or with.’ ^{f468}
By which may be meant, either,

1. The time of the first preaching of the gospel among them, which, to them, was the ‘accepted time and day of salvation’ when Christ, by his ministers, spoke to and for them, wooed and beseeched them; treated and communed with them, as David with Abigail, about openly espousing them before the world: it seems to be an allusion to persons treating either with virgins themselves, or with their parents, ^{f469} about their marriage. Or,

2. It may refer to the fame that was spread abroad of the conversion of the Gentiles: when it was first effected, it made a great noise in the world; the faith of a single church, the church at Rome, was ‘spoken of throughout the whole world:’ thus the clause may be rendered, ‘In the day when she shall be spoken of; ^{f470} that is, when her fame shall be spread far and near; and some will say one thing of her, and some another: now the Jewish church seems to be concerned how she would behave herself under all this noise and talk about her. Or else,

3. The words may be rendered, ‘When she shall be spoken against’: ^{f471} this has been the common lot of God’s children; this sect, as it is called, has been in all ages and in all places spoken against; and no wonder, for Christ himself is ‘set for a sign, which shall be spoken against:’ now the old church might be concerned for this new church of the Gentiles; that she might be able to stand firm and constant to her profession, notwithstanding all the reviling, reproaches and persecutions of men. Or,

4. They may be read thus, ‘When she shall be spoken to’; ^{f472} that is, when the great men of the world, as Nero, and other heathen emperors, shall call her before them, and tempt her, either by fair words or severe menaces, to desert the faith, of Christ: O! that she might stand fast then, as if the church should say, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel; neither be frightened by their threatenings, nor deluded by their promises: she was jealous of her, as the apostle Paul was of the Corinthian church, lest she ‘should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.’ Now this should teach us in general, from the example of the Jewish church here, to be concerned for all the elect of God uncalled, and particularly for those among the Jews; we should earnestly pray for them, and use all proper means and methods to bring them to the knowledge of Christ: the time is coming, when they shall be spoken for, shall be called by grace, and openly espoused to Christ; and seeing they were so much concerned for us, when we were little, and had no breasts, we should be as much concerned for them, they being now in the same case and circumstances.

VERSE 9.

*If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver:
and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.*

THESE are the words of Christ, in answer to the solicitous concern of the old Jewish church for her little sister, the Gentile; declaring what should be done for her on such and such considerations.

I. If, or ‘seeing she is a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver.’

II. ‘And if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar:’ all which is expressive of what strength and ornament should be added to her, and what grace and glory should be conferred upon her.

I. He promises, that if or seeing she was a wall; that is, well walled, built upon a sure foundation, and firmly established in her faith in and love to Christ, and is constant therein, and stands as a wall against the attack of enemies; ^{f473} a palace or tower of silver should be built upon her: by which may be meant, either, the scriptures of truth, with which she should be furnished: which, for their impregnableness and store of spiritual armor that is in them, may be compared to towers; and for their purity, richness, and excellency, to silver ones: or else, the ministers of the gospel may be intended, who are set for the defense of it: or this phrase may in general signify, that she should be fortified and put into a posture of defense against all her enemies, having on the **πανοπλια**, or whole armor of God; walled towns and cities, to which the allusion is here made, usually to have towers built upon the walls thereof; so Zion is said to have such, ¹⁹⁸² Psalm 48:12,13, which also this little sister, the Gentile church, should not be without: though the word may as well be rendered, a palace; ^{f474} and signifies, that she should be built up an habitation for Father, Son, and Spirit, who would come and make their abode with her; and being such noble and uncommon guests, a silver palace must be erected for them. The persons who were to do this work, are either the Jewish church, with her ministers as instruments, and Christ as the principal agent; for ¹⁸⁷⁰ Psalm 127:1. ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it:’ or else, by the we, are intended the blessed Trinity, as in chapter ²⁰¹¹ 1:11, who were all jointly concerned in raising up a church-state in the Gentile world. From the whole may be observed,

1. That he that begins the good work, whether it relates to a particular person, or to a church, must and will finish it; the same hands which lay the foundation, must raise up the superstructure, and complete the whole building, by bringing in ‘the head-stone with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it.’

2. This verifies the saying of our Lord, ^{<1250>}Matthew 25:20, that ‘unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance” grace is usually but very small at first, but it afterwards increases much; frequently from small beginnings great things arise: this Gentile church at first had but a very small appearance of a building; a foundation was just laid, and a side-wall erected; but in a short time, a noble structure, a silver palace for God, is built up.

II. Christ also assures her, that if she was a door, she should be inclosed with boards of cedar: the meaning of which may be, either,

1. If the Gentiles had the door of the gospel opened among them, as they had in many places, see ^{<4407>}Acts 14:27; ^{<4608>}1 Corinthians 16:8,9; ^{<4702>}2 Corinthians 2:12, this should be succeeded for the building up of an holy temple for the Lord; which should be of such ornament and strength, so well fenced and enclosed with the grace and power of Christ, that it should not be in the power of all their enemies to deface or demolish it. Or,

2. If the door of their hearts was opened to Christ, as Lydia’s was, ^{<4104>}Acts 16:14, so as to receive and let in this king of glory, with his numerous train of graces; then she should be adorned and beautified with a larger measure of them. Or,

3. If when they came into a church-state, the door was set open, that so ‘the righteous nation which keepeth truth, may enter in,’ and yet at the same time careful to exclude others; this should make much for their honor, comfort, safety, and security. Or,

4. This phrase is expressive of the building being completed; but only it wanted some farther decorations and ornaments, which it should not be long without: so the setting up of gates or doors to towns or houses seems to signify; see Nehemiah 3. Though,

5. It seems rather to intend the mean, low, and weak state and condition the Gentile church was first in, when there was but very little appearance of a building: there was only as it were a door set up; which afterwards grew up to be a magnificent and stately temple, built up of cedar-boards of the wood of Lebanon; of which Solomon’s temple was made: and to which an allusion here seems to be. But,

6. Some ^{f475} have thought that these words carry in them some intimations of her inconstancy to Christ, and the wandering of her affections after other

lovers; as also the methods which Christ would take to restrain and prevent her: 'If she be a door;' that is, if she will not keep at home, but will gad abroad, and go in and out at pleasure, we will use some methods to keep her in; 'we will enclose her with boards of cedar;' or, as it is expressed in ^{<811>}Hosea 2:7. 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.' Though,

7. The meaning rather seems to be, that however mean and abject she might appear to be, even as a door, yet she should be adorned with grace here, and enjoy glory hereafter; both which, for their perpetuity and incorruptibleness, may be compared to cedar-boards: besides, the safety and security of the church in this present state, her walls being salvation, and her gates praise, may be here intended; as well as the delights and pleasures of the heavenly state, signified by the fragrant cedar, which she should, ere long, be inclosed and surrounded with.

VERSE 10.

*I am a wall, and my breasts like towers:
then was I in his eyes as one that found favor.*

THESE are either, the words of the Jewish church, asserting herself to be what her little sister was not; namely, that she was a wall well fenced, and firmly established, was indulged with ordinances, and blessed with ministers; whilst the Gentiles lay open, were 'without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,' ^{<412>}Ephesians 2:12, as also confirming what Christ had said in the former verse; as well as assuring her little sister, the Gentile church, that she should also find favor in Christ's eyes, when she came into the same state and condition: unless we should rather choose to consider them as expressing that additional glory; peace and prosperity, which should accrue to the church by the calling of the Gentiles; which would not be inconsiderable, and no small indication of her finding favor or peace in Christ's eyes; who would then 'extend peace to her like a river, and the glory' of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.' Though I rather think, that they are the words of the little sister herself, the Gentile church; either signifying her desire to be in such a well-settled state and condition, 'O that I was a wall!' etc., or else, asserting herself to be in such a case, ^{f476} which Christ had intimated in the former verse,

I. She asserts herself to be a wall.

II. That her breasts were like towers. And,

III. Being so, was in his eyes as one that found favor.

I. She asserts herself to be a wall; that is,

1. Well walled; God himself is a wall of fire about his people; Christ's salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks to them; nay, faithful ministers and Christian magistrates may in some sense be said to be so, being placed for the protection and fence of the church.

2. She is one of those two walls, to which Christ is the comer-stone, as he is called, ^{<4021>}Ephesians 2:20, the Jewish church is one, and the Gentile the other; which both meet and make up one building in Christ, the middle wall of partition being broken down.

3. She is a wall built up of lively stones, cemented together in love: the elect of God, by nature, lie in the same quarry, are taken out of the same pit, and hewn from the same rock, as others are; but being separated from them by distinguishing and efficacious grace, are hewn and fitted for the building by the Spirit of God, where they are laid by him, and knit together in the bond of love.

4. She was firmly built on Christ, the foundation; which God has laid in Zion, and is sure, firm, and lasting, against which the gates of hell can never prevail; and which will be sufficient to bear up and support the church and all believers, who lay the whole stress of their persons, and the salvation of them upon it.

5. She was well established in the doctrine of faith: the Gentiles received the gospel with all readiness of mind, when the Jews rejected it; and though it was in much affliction, yet it was with much joy in the Holy Ghost; and when they once got it, they could not be moved away from it, by all the frowns and flatteries, promises, and threatenings of men; Which, to their adversaries, was an evident token of perdition, but to them, of salvation, and that of God; so the Targum and R. Solomon Jarchi interpret these words of the steadfastness of the congregation of Israel; in the religion and laws of God.

6. She was constant and immoveable in her love to Christ; she was a wall; she was proof against all temptations and insinuations, and not a door, that easily let into her affections every one that knocked: she loved Christ dearly, and kept her love inviolate and pure for him; nothing could separate her from it; the greatest pleasures and profits of life could not tempt her to desert him; nor the most dreadful sufferings and torments deter her from expressing her affections to him; she was like a wall that stood invincible and impregnable.

II. She says, that her breasts were like towers; which may in general denote her ripeness for marriage; her breasts were fashioned; were round and plump, and rose up high like towers; she was now marriageable; the time of her being presented as a chaste virgin to Christ, and of her open espousals to him, was come. Or else more particularly,

1st, By her breasts, may be meant the ministers of the gospel; who, like nurses, ~~and~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:7, give the breast to ‘newborn babes,’ and feed them with the ‘sincere milk of the word;’ and, like towers, are set for the defense of the gospel: such ministers the first church among the Gentiles had; whose ministry was not only edifying and nourishing, but they themselves also were faithful, zealous, and courageous in the discharge thereof; and could not be moved, from their station, nor be made to desist from their work, by all the violence and oppression of men. Or else,

2dly, By these breasts, may be meant the two Testaments, the Old and the New; which are both full of the milk of excellent doctrines and precious promises; which are all useful for the comfort, edification and instruction of God’s people; and from whence, as from towers, they may be supplied with all needful armor, to repel Satan’s temptations, refute, erroneous doctrines, and defend the gospel; and though efforts have been made by Satan and his emissaries to remove them out of the world, yet they still remain impregnable and invincible: now with these breasts the Gentile church is blessed.

3dly, The two ordinances, of baptism and the Lord’s supper, may be intended; which are peculiar to the church under the New Testament dispensation; and are as breasts of consolation to believers, especially when they have the presence of Christ in them, and his love at the same time manifested to them; these are like towers, have stood firm and immoveable

against all the efforts of men, to, change, deface, subvert and abolish them. The Jews ^{f477} interpret the wall of the congregation of Israel, and the ‘breasts as towers,’ of the synagogues and schools; also the former of the law, and the latter of the scholars.

III. Being so, she says, she ‘was in his eyes as one that found favor;’ which may either respect,

1st, The time ^{f478} of her becoming a wall, and having breasts like towers; then was I, or ‘from the time that I was in his eyes, as one that found favor or peace;’ that is, I became a wall, was firmly built on Christ, established in the doctrine of faith, and formed into a church-state; had breasts, a settled ministry, and gospel-ordinances; which have continued with me ever since I found peace with Christ, which he made for me by the blood of his cross. Now this is certainly matter of fact, that from the time that Christ became ‘our peace,’ ~~<BIB>~~Ephesians 2:14, the ceremonial law, which is there called ‘the middle wall of partition,’ which stood between Jew and Gentile, was removed; so that they both coalesced in one church-state, verse 14-16 and equally shared in all gospel-ordinances find privileges, verses 17-22, from that time the Gentile church began to be a church in gospel-order. Or else,

2dly, It may respect the time of the open manifestation of Christ’s love, which was when she became a wall, and had breasts. It is true, he loved her before, even from eternity, with an everlasting love; but that was hidden and secret both to herself and others: but now her ‘breasts are fashioned;’ he looked upon her, and her ‘time is the time of love;’ he openly espouses her to himself, and lets all the world know, as well as herself, what favor she found in his sight: and it manifestly appears that she was sensible of it; and by expressing it, would signify,

1. That her being a wall and having breasts, were instances of his kindness to her; and indeed, it is an unspeakable mercy to have a gospel-ministry and gospel-ordinances; ~~<BIB>~~Psalm 148:19,20. ‘He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them: praise ye the Lord:’ if it was so great a favor for the people of Israel to have the law, on the account of which, they were called a ‘great nation:’ what an instance of surprising and distinguishing grace is it, that we Gentiles should have the gospel and the ordinances thereof! The church here esteemed it a favor, and so should we.

- 2.** She ascribes all these blessings and privileges which she was possessed of, to his grace and favor: Was she a wall? it was owing to him; and had she breasts? she acknowledges it as an instance of his regard to her; and was ready to say, with the apostle, ^{<415D>}1 Corinthians 15:10. ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am.’ an excellent example for us to follow.
- 3.** This phrase may be expressive of her gracious acceptance with Christ; thus Noah is said to have ‘found grace in the eyes of the Lord,’ ^{<0068>}Genesis 6:8, the Gentiles, who were proselyted to the Jewish religion before the coming of Christ in the flesh, were like Esther, ‘standing in the court’ alone, for they might not worship with the Jews; whom, when Christ looked upon, they ‘obtained favor in his sight;’ and he held out the golden scepter of his grace, and admitted them to nearer communion with him; built them into a church-state, furnished them with gospel-ordinances, and graciously accepted both them and their services; he ‘took pleasure in these his people, and beautified the meek with salvation.’
- 4.** The enjoyment of the presence of God and Christ, is a very considerable instance and evidence of finding favor in his eyes: Moses desired to be ascertained of his having found grace in God’s sight, by the enjoyment of this blessing, ^{<0235>}Exodus 33:15,16, which he was graciously indulged with; and perhaps it is this which the church here had particularly in view; and a great mercy it was to have ordinances, and the presence of Christ along with them, than which nothing can be more desirable and delightful.
- 5.** The words may be rendered, ‘then was I in his eyes as one that found peace;’ meaning that inward peace of conscience, and tranquillity of mind, which ‘passeth all understanding;’ which she enjoyed in the midst of all her tribulations and sufferings for Christ; which he only gives, and which the world cannot take away; for if he ‘giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?’
- 6.** This word ‘favor or peace,’ may comprehend all these spiritual blessings, wherewith she was blessed in Christ Jesus; such as peace, reconciliation, justification, pardon of sin, sanctification, adoption, etc., for he is ‘a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.’ ^{<1841>}Psalm 84:11
- 7.** The manifestation of Christ’s love, which is the greatest blessing in life, may be here intended: hence says the Psalmist, ^{<1904>}Psalm 106:4. ‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people;’

and no wonder that he should be so desirous of it; for ‘in his favor is life;’ but not to enjoy it is death: O! how miserable will those be to all eternity, in whom that scripture will be verified, ^{<371>}Isaiah 27:11. ‘He that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will shew them no favor!’

VERSE 11.

Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers: every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

IN these words the little sister goes on to give an account of the success of the Gospel, the planting of churches, and establishment of Christ’s interest in the Gentile world; together with the advantages which accrued to Christ thereby, under the metaphor of a vineyard, and the fruit thereof: where we have to consider,

- I.** The vineyard itself, and what is intended by
- II.** The owner of it, who is Solomon.
- III.** The place of its situation, at Baal-hamon.
- IV.** The letting of it ‘out to keepers,’ and who are meant by them.
- V.** The price it was let at, or the rent which they were to bring in; ‘every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.’

I. It will be proper to consider what is meant by this vineyard; which I think is to be understood of the church of Christ; the Israelitish nation, and the church of God therein, sometimes bears this name; see ^{<3818>}Psalms 80:8,9,14,15. ^{<3811>}Isaiah 5:1,7, and it is very usual with Christ to express the New Testament church-state by the same metaphor; see ^{<4111>}Matthew 20:1 and ^{<4213>}21:33, which was thus prophesied of by Isaiah, chapter ^{<3712>}27:2. ‘In that day, sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine.’ Now the church of Christ may be compared to a vineyard, for these following reasons:

1. A vineyard is a spot of ground, separated and distinguished from others; so is the church of Christ from the rest of the world, by electing, redeeming, and efficacious grace; believers are a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, an holy nation; and being, so, are a peculiar people; they are fenced about with sovereign grace, whereby they are made to differ from others.

2. A vineyard is a spot of ground set with plants of various sorts, and especially vines: it is manifest, from chapter ~~2014~~1:14 and ~~2072~~7:12, that it was usual to set other plants in vineyards besides vines; for which see also ~~2136~~Luke 13:16. In the vineyard, the church, stands in the first place Christ, the true and most noble vine; and next to him true believers, who are there planted by him, engrafted on him, and grow up in him: now these are of various sorts, of different growths and fruitfulness; some are larger and more fruitful than others; but are all ‘the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified:’ but besides these, there are some who are only externally planted here, and grow up only in a mere outward profession; who are not planted by Christ’s heavenly Father, and therefore shall be rooted up; because, instead of bringing forth right fruit, they bring forth wild grapes.

3. Vineyards are valuable to the owners of them; one part of their wealth and riches consisting therein: the church of Christ is highly esteemed of by him, it being his inheritance, his portion, and wherein great part of his riches, as mediator, lies; his Father gave it to him, and he values it upon that account; as Naboth did his vineyard, because it was ‘the inheritance of his fathers,’ and therefore would not part with it to Ahab upon any consideration whatever: moreover, Christ’s esteem for his vineyard, the church, is farther manifest from the great price he gave for it, which was his own blood, as also from the exceeding great care he takes of it.

4. A vineyard is a very fruitful spot; so is the church of Christ and all believers, who are ‘filled with the fruits of righteousness by Jesus Christ:’ who is ‘the true vine,’ on whom they are engrafted; and ‘the green fir-tree,’ from whom their fruit is found: all that are ‘planted in the house of the Lord,’ being watered by divine grace, ‘flourish in the courts of our God,’ and bring forth fruit, whereby he is glorified.

5. Vineyards are delightful and pleasant; thus among the several methods which Solomon took to gratify and indulge himself in pleasure, this was one; he ‘planted himself vineyards,’ ~~2104~~Ecclesiastes 2:4. The church is a delightful vineyard to Christ, where he delights to walk, and observe how his several plants grow and thrive; for this purpose he often goes down into it, as in chapter ~~2181~~6:11, and the church, knowing how much pleasure he takes therein, invites him to it, in chapter ~~2072~~7:12.

6. Vineyards are not only delightful, but also profitable; there is much fruit produced by them, to the advantage of the owners thereof: so Christ has much fruit from his vineyard, as appears from this and the following verse; which makes for the advancement of his honor and glory in the world; for as all their fruit comes by him, and from him, so all the glory redounds unto him; and ‘his glory is great’ in every branch of their salvation.

7. Vineyards are exposed to beasts of prey, which often break in and do much damage to them: the church of Christ is not only exposed to the ‘boar out of the wood,’ the openly profane world, which often makes great havoc of it, by its oppressions and persecutions; but also to those foxes, false teachers, heretics, who cunningly bring in their pernicious doctrines, to the great annoyance and disturbance of the peace, comfort, and faith of God’s people; hence it is said, in chapter ²¹⁸¹⁵2:15 ‘Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.’

8. A great deal of care must be used in promoting the fruitfulness of vineyards; the vines must be watered, pruned, and propped up, as well as the stones gathered out, and a fence set about them; see ²¹⁸¹⁶Isaiah 5:2. Christ does all this and much more to his vineyard; he waters it every moment with his grace, prunes and lops off the unfruitful branches, supports the weak and tender vines with his Almighty power; gathers out all things that offend, and fences it about with divine favors; in short, acts the whole faithful part of a vine-dresser to it.

II. The owner of this vineyard is Solomon, by whom the Messiah is meant; for it may be truly said, that ‘a greater than Solomon is here.’ Christ bears this name, because Solomon was an eminent type of him, as has been shown on chapter ²¹⁸¹⁷3:7, he now is the owner of this vineyard; it is his,

1. By choice; he has pitched upon this spot of ground, and separated it from all others for his use and service.

2. By his Father’s gift: he asked it of his Father, and he gave it him; ‘thine they were,’ says he, ‘and thou gavest them me,’ ²¹⁸¹⁸John 17:6.

3. By purchase; he has bought this vineyard with his own blood, ²¹⁸¹⁹Acts 20:28.

4. It is of his own planting: all the vines in it are of his setting, and are made fruitful by him.

5. He takes the whole care of it, and has the advantage of the fruit thereof.

III. The situation of this vineyard, at Baal-hamon; perhaps the same with Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon, ^{<6117>}Joshua 11:17 and ^{<6135>}13:5, since they are of the same signification, ‘the master of a multitude, or of a troop. By which may he meant, either,

1. The city of Jerusalem; ^{f479} which may be called ‘Baal-hamon, or the master of a multitude,’ because it was a very populous city; as it is said, in ^{<2001>}Lamentations 1:1. ‘How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people?’ where was the principal seat of the Jewish church-state; the letting out of which to keepers, the priests and Levites, may seem to suit well with the legal and mercenary spirit which much attended the Old-Testament dispensation. Though,

2. I rather think the Gentile world is here intended; among the nations of which Christ has a gospel church planted; whereby the promise is fulfilled to Abraham, that he should be a ‘father of many nations ;’ which his name signified, and is of ‘much the same import with this in our text. Unless,

3. It should be thought only to intend in general, the fruitfulness of the soil in which Christ’s vineyard was planted; at ‘Baal-hamon, the Lord or master of a multitude, ^{f480} that is, where a multitude of vines grow. Thus it is said, in ^{<2382>}Isaiah 5:2, ‘My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.’ the church of Christ, and so all believers, are planted in a very fruitful soil, being ‘rooted and built up’ in Christ, and watered with the continual dews of divine grace; the believer is like to ‘a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper,’ ^{<1503>}Psalms 1:3.

IV. The letting out of this vineyard to keepers, is next to be inquired into. By the keepers, we are to understand the ministers of the gospel; who have their several parts and different employments assigned them in this vineyard of Christ.

1. The business of some of them is to plant: this work the apostle Paul was much concerned in; ‘I have planted,’ says he, ^{<4815>}1 Corinthians 3:6,8, and indeed it is hard to say how many churches, and how many souls in those churches, were planted by him; and especially at Baal-hamon, in the Gentile world, with whom he was chiefly concerned.

2. Others are employed in watering this vineyard, as was Apollos; of whom Paul says, ‘I have planted, Apollos watered:’ some ministers are more useful for edification than conversion; their ministry succeeds most for the watering of Christ’s plants, for promoting the comfort and faith of those who are already planted; their ‘doctrine drops as the rain, and their speech distils as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass,’ ^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 32:2, so that they become fruitful.

3. The work of others is to prime the vines; they have an excellent talent at reproof, both on the account of erroneous doctrines, and immoral practices; they can give gentle admonitions where the case only requires them; and rebuke with sharpness, cut deeper, where there is a necessity for it; not being afraid of the faces of any, but having the good of Christ’s vineyard at heart; these excel in that branch of their office, which concerns the discipline of the church.

4. Others are useful in supporting and upholding weak believers; who, like vines, stand in need of it; which they do, by putting into their hand the staff of the promises, and refreshing them with the reviving cordials of gospel-doctrines.

5. The employment of others is to protect and defend; their business is chiefly to take the foxes, to refute heresies, and defend the doctrines of grace, and preserve the church from all innovations, both in doctrine and worship. Now I would not be understood, as though I thought that ministers were so confined to one or other of these particular branches of the ministerial work, that they had no concern in the rest; for one and the same minister may be more or less useful in them all; but yet, generally speaking, he excels in some one of them.

The letting out of this vineyard to them, agrees with those parables of our Lord, in ^{<BIB>}Matthew 20:1,2 and 21:33, where he seems to allude to the words of our text; which is no inconsiderable evidence of the divine authority of this book.

‘The phrase shows,

1. That though Christ takes care of the vineyard himself, yet he also makes use of his ministers: Christ is not separated from his ministers; he acts as the owner, they as the servants; he is the chief and principal wine-dresser;

which work he performs mediately by his ministers, who are not to be slighted and laid aside; hence the apostle writing to the Corinthians, among whom were many divisions about their ministers; some being for Paul in opposition to Apollos, and some for Apollos in opposition to Paul; and others for Cephas in opposition to them both, and others for Christ in opposition to them all; they were for Christ without his ministers; but, says the apostle, ^{<4012>}1 Corinthians 1:12,13. Is Christ divided? that is, from his ministers; no, they are not to be separated from him, though subordinated to him.

2. It shows, that Christ entrusts his vineyard with his ministers; he makes them overseers of it; he sets them to watch over it, and faithfully discharge the several branches of their duty before-mentioned which is meant by the letting it out unto them: and it ought to be observed, that Christ has the sole power of letting out his vineyard, and he lets it out to whom he pleases; therefore none ought to usurp it: it is indeed a great honor to be entrusted with it; but no man should take this honor to himself, but he that is called of God to it; persons should not run into this work before they are sent, nor perform it negligently when they are in it.

3. Christ in some respects makes his ministers owners of this vineyard; he let out, or gave ^{f481} the vineyard to keepers; hence, in chapter ^{<2125>}2:15, it is said, our vines have tender grapes: ministers-have in some sort an interest in the vines, the churches; their joy, comfort, life, and glory, lie much in the fruitfulness and well-being of them; which is a very great and powerful argument to induce them to vigilance, diligence, and carefulness, in the discharge of their work.

V. The price this vineyard was let at, or the rent which these keepers were to bring in for the fruit of it, is a thousand pieces of silver: which may denote,

1. The exceeding great fruitfulness of this vineyard, that the fruit of it was worth so much: thus in ^{<2173>}Isaiah 7:23, it is said, ‘and it shall come to pass in that day, that every place Shall be, where there were a thousand vines, at a thousand silverings, it shall even be for briars and thorns;’ that is, those places, which were so exceeding fruitful before, shall now be barren and desolate, a. It may denote the usefulness of a gospel-ministry; which is to bring home souls to Christ; to gather in the fruit of his labors, and travail of his soul, which are as dear and valuable to him as a thousand pieces of

silver; at which he rejoices as much as the poor woman did, ^{<2158>}Luke 15:8,9. at the finding of her lost piece: Christ's ministers are her rent-gatherers, and the collectors of his fruit; 'I have chosen you and ordained you,' says he, ^{<81510>}John 15:10, 'that they should go and bring forth fruit;' and then do they bring it in, when souls are converted under their ministry.

3. The sum to be brought in from every one of them is alike, every man his thousand pieces: Christ's ministers have indeed one and the same commission to preach the gospel; but they have not all the same abilities for the work, nor are they alike succeeded in it; but yet, in the faithful and honest discharge of their work, they are all so blessed by him, as to answer the end of their ministration designed by him; so that he reckons that every one, even the meanest, brings in his thousand pieces, as well as the more able and successful.

4. It shows that there is a reckoning-day coming, for ministers as well as others; who must give an account of their talents, what use they have made of them in Christ's vineyard, and what success has attended their labors; which, if they can do with joy, and not with grief, will turn to their account, as well as be of advantage to others,

VERSE 12.

My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

THE former part of these words seem to be the words of Christ, asserting his interest in his vineyard, the church thereby explaining and confirming what the church had said in the former verse. The latter part of the text appears to be the words of the church, allotting proper portions to the owner and keepers of the vineyard.

I. Christ asserts his claim, right and property in his vineyard, the church; 'my vineyard, which is mine, is before me:' in which may be considered,

1st, The vineyard itself, which is the church of Christ, and is called so for several reasons, which have been shown on the preceding verse.

2dly, This is expressed in the singular number, a vineyard; for Christ's church is but one, as he asserts in chapter ^{<2119>}6:9, though it is true, we read of vineyards, in the plural number, in chapter ^{<2172>}7:12, because there are several separate, distinct and congregated churches; though these all make

up but one catholic church, one ‘general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.’

3dly, Christ asserts his right and property in his vineyard, ‘My vineyard,’ says he; whereby he confirms what the church had said in the foregoing verse; where has been shown in what respect he is the owner of it, and what kind of right he has to it;

4thly, He doubles this claim of his unto it; he not only says, ‘My vineyard,’ but adds, ‘which is mine;’ whereby,

1. He excludes all others from having any right unto it; the vineyard is his, and only his; he is the sole proprietor of it; none has any thing to do with it but himself.

2. By repeating his claim, he shows the certainty of it; that his title is unquestionable and indisputable: and indeed what can be more sure and evident, seeing his Father has given it to him, who had an undoubted right to dispose of it? nay, he has purchased it with his own blood, and has it now in possession; he is right heir to it, according to God’s own appointment though he wicked Jews, the chief priest’s and Scribes; who were the keepers of the vineyard, when our Lord was here on earth, when they saw him, ‘said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance; and they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him,’ ^{<123>}Matthew 21:38,39.

3. He may use this additional phrase, ‘which is mine,’ to distinguish it from all other vineyards; as also to shew the excellency of it, it being preferable to all others; this world, when compared with Christ’s church, is a mere desert and wilderness; all other vines are ‘of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter,’ ^{<532>}Deuteronomy 32:32,33.

4. He repeats it, to signify the great delight he took in his vineyard; as it is in itself preferable to all others, so it is exceeding valuable and delightful to Christ; he says of it, ‘the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea; i have a goodly heritages’ ^{<918>}Psalms 16:8.

5thly, He says, that this vineyard was before him; which may denote,

1. The omniscience of Christ; which in general extends to all persons and things, that ever were, are, or shall be; ‘Lord, says Peter, thou knowest all

things,' ^{<4217>}John 21:17, but in a more especial manner he is concerned about his own people, whom he knows by name, and is acquainted with all their wants and necessities; he knows his own flock, and the state of it, which the Father has committed to him; he knows every sheep and lamb therein, in what condition they are, and what is most suitable for them; he knows his vineyard, and the several vines which grow there; there is never a plant escapes his notice and watchful eye; he is acquainted with every one of them, and in what case they are.

2. The omnipresence of Christ; he is the Lord that 'fills heaven and earth' with his presence; the whole World is before him, but more especially his church; where, in a peculiar manner, he grants his gracious presence, there he dwells, and will abide for ever; who 'holds the 'seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,'

^{<4111>}Revelation 2:1.

3. The delights and complacency, which Christ takes in his church; it is ever before him; his eye is continually upon it; he cannot bear it out of his sight, so dear and valuable is it to him: thus it was from everlasting and has continued ever since, and so it ever will; his delight from all eternity 'were with the sons of men,' the elect of God, 'rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, where he knew,' in time, he should have a vineyard planted.

4. The care of Christ over his people, 'who are engraven upon the palms of his hands, and whose walls are continually before him;' though Christ does indeed let out his vineyard to keepers, yet he does not neglect it himself; he is present with them, and works by them; it is still in his own hands, and under his watchful eye; 'I the Lord,' says he, ^{<2378>}Isaiah 27:3, 'do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.' Thus these words may be expressive of Christ's claim unto, affection for, and care over his vineyard, the church. Though, there are some Interpreters who take them to be the words of the church, speaking of her vineyard; by which may be meant, her own soul, and the particular concerns of it: thus every one has a vineyard to look after; and in what condition that of the slothful man's was, may be seen in ^{<1240>}Proverbs 24:30,31, which was all grown over with the thorns, and nettles' of sin and corruption; its stone wall or fence was broken down, so that he was exposed to every snare and temptation. Or else, by this vineyard may be meant, the church in general; for believers have a mutual interest in each others persons, gifts, graces, prayers, etc. and being all members of one and the same body, should, as

the apostle says, ^{<4126>}1 Corinthians 12:26, 'have the same care one for another.' Though perhaps the several gifts and talents, whether of nature or grace, which God bestows upon his people, may be intended; which are all to be used for the glory of Christ, and the good of his church ' for as every one has a vineyard of his own, or a particular work assigned him in the vineyard, the church; so he has his particular gift, talent and capacity for that work, which ought to be used by him; for he must one day give an account thereof. Now the church here says, that her vineyard was before her, thereby signifying her care, watchfulness, and diligence in it, of which we have an instance, chap. ^{<2172>}7:12, and shows that she was now in a different frame from that of which she complains, in chapter ^{<2106>}1:6. Though I think that the former sense of the words is most agreeable. Yet,

II. The latter part of the text, 'Thou, O Solomon must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof, two hundred,' manifestly appears to be the words of, the church allotting proper portions:

First, To the owner of the vineyard, Solomon.

Secondly, To the keepers of it, the ministers.

First, She allots to 'Solomon a thousand,' that is, a thousand pieces of silver, as in the former verse: where is to be considered,

1st, Who is meant by Solomon; by whom, no doubt, the Messiah is intended; as is acknowledged by R. Ahen Ezra, ^{f482} and other Jewish ^{f483} writers though Maimonides ^{f484} says, that 'wherever the name of Solomon is mentioned in the Song of Songs, it is holy, and is as the rest of the names, except that, a thousand unto thee, O Solomon:' to which some ^{f485} add also, chapter ^{<2177>}3:7, but that Christ, and not Solomon, is here intended, is most agreeable to the nature and design of this song.

2dly, The church's manner of addressing him, 'Thou, O Solomon,' shows that she was now in his presence, had much nearness to him, and used much freedom and familiarity with him, as she was by him allowed to do.

3dly, The allotment which she makes to him, is, 'a thousand;' which,

1. Is the sum agreed upon in the former verse for the church is willing that Christ should have all that he demands or desires; she would have no abatement made, but would have him have his whole due, and full revenue of glory from his people.

2. It is a far greater share than what is assigned to the keepers; and good reason there is it should be so; for he is the head and master of them, as well as the owner of the vineyard; he is ‘all and in all, and God over all, blessed for ever;’ his is the vineyard, and all the fruit thereof; he has a right unto it, and takes the chief care and oversight of it; so that ‘neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but Christ, who gives the increase;’ and therefore should have all the glory.

3. This shows the fruitfulness of this vineyard, that it yields so large a profit both to the owner and keepers of it.

Secondly, The share allotted to the keepers, is, ‘two hundred;’ from whence may be observed.

1st, That the ministers of the gospel shall have their reward; every one that labors in the vineyard shall have his penny; and every man, as the apostle says, ^{<4188>}1 Corinthians 3:8, ‘shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor; whether he be employed in watering or in planting.

2dly, That their having their reward, is no lessening of Christ’s; for he has his whole thousand, though they have their two hundred; nay, Christ comes at a considerable part of his revenue, through their having theirs; for ‘he that receiveth you,’ says he, ^{<4000>}Matthew 10:40, ‘receiveth me;’ where ministers are valued and honored, Christ also is.

3dly, As one ^{f486} well observes, where Christ gets his due among a people, there and there only do ministers get their due; where Christ is heartily received, the feet of them that ‘bring glad tidings’ will be beautiful; where Christ has his thousand, ministers will have their ‘two hundred;’ but if Christ comes short of his due, no wonder that ministers should of theirs: but what ‘is this ‘two hundred, which is due to the keepers? Why,

1. An honorable maintenance for themselves and their families; for ‘the laborer is worthy of his reward,’ which is his due according to God’s ordination: hence the apostle, ^{<4107>}1 Corinthians 9:7-14, establishing the truth of this, from several instances in nature, from the reasonableness of things, as well as from proofs out of the law of God, adds, ‘even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel;’ but this is but the least part of their ‘two hundred.’

2. Honor and esteem among the people, to whom they minister, is another part thereof; for, ^{<5157>}1 Timothy 5:17,18, the elders that rule well, ‘are to be

counted worthy of double honor;’ by which the apostle means, first an honorable maintenance, as is manifest from his following words; and then, that duty and respect which are due to them from their people, who ought to ‘esteem them very highly in love,’ not for their persons, but ‘for their works sake.’

3. The conversion Of sinners is another part of this two hundred; and indeed, godly and faithful ministers think that they have a very large share of their reward, when their labors are succeeded this way; for, ‘what is our hope,’ says the apostle, ^{<519>}1 Thessalonians 2:19,20, ‘or joy , or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? for ye are our glory and JOY:’ and as the conversion of sinners, so the comfort and edification of saints; their steadfast adherence to, and continuance in the doctrines of the gospel, are likewise a great satisfaction to them; ‘for now we live,’ says the same apostle, ^{<518>}1 Thessalonians 3:8, ‘if ye stand fast in the Lord.

4. Eternal glory is the complement of it; they will have their full two hundred in heaven, how math short so ever they come of it; here; where, instead of it, poverty, disrespect and reproach frequently attend them: then ‘they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever,’ ^{<718>}Daniel 12:3, who when they have ‘fought the good fight of faith, ^{<508>}2 Timothy 4:8, they shall receive ‘the crown of righteousness,’ which is laid up for them, and shall be given, not only to them, ‘but unto all them also that love Christ’s appearing.’

VERSE 13.

*Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken
to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

I once thought, as some have, ^{f487} that these words were the words of the church of Christ, whose dwelling-place is in his gardens, the churches; to whose voice in the everlasting gospel, the companions, or young converts, Listen with great attention and affection; which the church observing, stirred up in her earnest desires to hear the same with more power and efficacy, life and liveliness: but having considered the original text, I find it will by no means bear this sense; for the word translated, ‘thou that dwellest,’ is in the feminine gender, and so regards the bride, and may well be rendered, ‘O thou inhabitress of the gardens’ ^{f488} I though the Septuagint and Ambrose render it in the masculine gender, ^{f489} but wrongly, for the

word is certainly feminine: hence it appears, that the words are the words of Christ, directed unto his bride, the church. In which may be considered,

I. The title and appellation which is given her; ‘thou that dwellest in the gardens.’

II. The notice which the companions take of her; ‘the companions hearken to thy voice.’

III. The request which Christ makes unto her; ‘cause me to hear it.’

I. The title and appellation given her by Christ, is, ‘Thou that dwellest in the gardens;’ or, ‘O thou inhabitress of the gardens!’ Where by the gardens, must be understood particular congregated churches, as has been observed on chapter ^{<218B>}6:2, of which the church universal is made up, and wherein it may be said to dwell; the Jewish ^{f490} writers interpret them of the schools and congregations where the law was taught. Now her dwelling in those gardens is expressive,

1. Of the work she is employed about there; she does not dwell there idle; there is work for her to do, which is the reason of her dwelling there; and that is, to plant, water, prune and dress the gardens, which she does by her ministers: her business here also is to attend upon the ministry of the word, and all other ordinances of the gospel, where she frequently meets with her beloved; for ‘he feeds in the gardens, and gathers lilies.’

2. It denotes her diligence, constancy, and assiduity, in attendance on public ordinances: she not only attended now and then, but always; she dwelt in the gardens; and like the first Christians, ‘continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,’ ^{<418B>}Acts 2:42.

3. It shows the delight she took in being there, seeing she had taken up her dwelling there: ‘the tabernacles of God were amiable to her; a day in his courts was better than a thousand elsewhere: this was the one thing she desired of the Lord,’ ^{<1274>}Psalm 27:4, and what, with a great deal of application she sought for; namely, to ‘dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of her life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;’ because, with the disciples, she judged it was good for her to be there; where she enjoyed the presence of Christ, had the assistance of his Spirit, and the discoveries of his love.

4. It also appears evident from hence, that she made an open profession of Christ; she did not creep into those gardens now and then, as it were by stealth, but she dwelt in them; she was not like Nicodemus, who came to Christ by night; nor those other Jews, who believed in him, but were afraid to confess him, for fear-of being put out of the synagogue; nor like many in our days, who will not enter into church communion, because of being exposed to the reproach of the world; ‘though with the mouth confession should be made unto salvation, as well as with the heart man should believe unto righteousness,’ ^{<5100>}Romans 10:10, for as the one is necessary for the comfort of the believer, the other is as necessary for the glory of Christ.

5. Her dwelling here expresses her steadfast adherence to the profession she had made, as well as her constant attendance on gospel-ordinances; she was not as many who ‘forsake the assembling of themselves together;’ but cleaved unto the Lord and to his churches with full purpose of heart, having an affectionate concern for them all; and in this respect she dwelt in them: it may be said of her on some accounts, as the apostle said of himself, ^{<4113>}2 Corinthians 11:28, that ‘the care of all the churches was upon him;’ as appears from chapter ^{<2372>}7:12 and ^{<2388>}8:8.

Moreover, from Christ’s giving her this title, may be observed,

1. That her dwelling in the gardens, was what he approved of, and was well pleasing to him; it is his will that saints should incorporate into churches, and those who are converted, give themselves up to them and continue with them; as appears from his blessing of them, when they are there, with greater measures of grace, light and knowledge, larger supplies of his Spirit, and sweet enjoyments of his presence,

2. That this is a title of honor, and is expressive of what dignity she was advanced unto; and indeed it is no small honor which saints have, to ‘have a name and a place in God’s house, which is better than sons and daughters:’ David thought so when he envied the very sparrow and swallow, which had made their nests, as he says, ‘even near thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God!’ and then adds, blessed are they that dwell in thine house, they will be still praising thee, ^{<1343>}Psalms 84:3,4, their work, their employ-merit, as well as their place, is honorable and glorious.

3. That it was for her profit, as well as for her honor, to dwell here for these gardens are stored with all manner of precious fruits and above all, there stands in the midst of them the apple-tree, Christ Jesus, which is

richly laden with a variety of excellent fruit, mentioned chapter ^{<210B>}2:3, under the shadow of which the church frequently sits with great delight, and plucks and eats, and the fruit thereof is sweet unto her taste.

4. That she should always continue and abide there; he does not say, 'thou that didst dwell, or shalt dwell in the gardens;' but 'thou that dwellest,' denoting her continued abode there: there is no fear of her being turned out of these gardens, as Adam was out of his Eden, 'so he drove out the man,' ^{<100B>}Genesis 3:24, nor are there any cherubim, nor a 'flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life;' but all free and open, and nothing terrifying and menacing: it is true, every plant which Christ's heavenly father has not planted, shall be rooted up; all those who are in churches only by a mere visible profession without the truth of grace, shall be turned out, with a 'Friend, how earnest thou in hither?' but as for all true believers, they shall continue and abide, until they are transplanted into the heavenly paradise above;

II. The notice which the companions take of her; they hearken to her voice: in which may be inquired,

1st, Who are meant by the companions,

2dly, What by their hearkening to her voice.

1st, These companions may be taken either in a bad sense or in a good sense. If in a bad sense, as in chapter ^{<210B>}1:7, then by them we are to understand false teachers, who pretend to be the companions and friends of Christ; who artfully insinuate themselves into churches, and would have them believe, they 'are aiming at the advancement of the same cause and interest,' and mean the game thing as they do; and thus, with feigned words, they introduce their damnable heresies, and make merchandise of the souls of men; they listen to the church's words and doctrines, to catch and carp at, wrest and pervert, use and improve, to answer their own ends and purposes: now these words may be considered as a caution given by Christ to the church to beware of them, as he did to his disciples, ^{<107B>}Matthew 7:15 and as Paul did to the elders of Ephesus, ^{<402B>}Acts 20:29, 31, seeing they were listening to what she said, not out of good, but ill will; yet notwithstanding he would not have her be silent, but, says he, cause me to hear it, or cause to hear me; that is, preach me boldly and openly, in no wise being afraid of them; for he would not have her speak so softly to him, that the companions which listened might not hear, as R. Aben Ezra

on the text observes; no; for, says he, ‘what I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops,’ ^{<4007>}Matthew 10:27, but yet with a proper guard, upon themselves, both with respect to open and secret enemies. Though I rather think, that we are to understand these companions in a good sense: by whom may be meant, either,

1. God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost; ^{f491} who are both the companions of Christ; for ‘there are three that hear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one,’ ^{<4387>}1 John 5:7, they are of one nature and essence, possess the same perfections, are partners in the same works both of nature and grace, and equally share the glory which results from thence; now these divine persons listen to what the church and poor believers say; ‘They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it,’ ^{<4386>}Malachi 3:16. Or else;
2. The holy angels may be here intended, as many interpreters, ^{f492} both Jewish and Christian, think; these are the friends and companions of the saints; as well as of Christ; they are reconciled to them through Christ; are willing to perform all the offices of friendship to them; they rejoice at their conversion, bring messages of peace and comfort to them; acknowledge themselves to be their fellow-servants, and are ministering spirits unto those who are the heirs of salvation: not to enter upon the consideration of that question, whether every man hath his angel to attend upon him; which I must confess I am somewhat inclined to believe, there being some scriptures which seem to furnish us with some proofs of it, as ^{<4180>}Matthew 18:10; ^{<4425>}Acts 12:15, however this appears certain, that the saints have the angels of God attending on them; he hath given his angels charge concerning them; they encamp round about those that fear him; they are the guardians and companions of the saints in life, and at death carry their souls to glory; now these listen to what they say in their closets; in their families, in their private or public conversation, as seems manifest from ^{<4006>}Ecclesiastes 5:6, they wait upon the public assemblies of the saints, and hearken to the voice of the gospel, as delivered by the ministers of it; hence that direction is given by the apostle, ^{<45110>}1 Corinthians 11:10, for the woman to cover her head in the time of public worship: the angels get much of their knowledge in, and acquaintance with the great mysteries of grace and salvation, from what they hear from the church, ^{<4080>}Ephesians

3:10, and it is with much constancy, diligence, and earnestness, that they desire to look into these things, ^{<4012>}1 Peter 1:12. Or else rather,

3. By these companions may be meant the daughters of Jerusalem, who all along attended the bride in this song; who are the virgins, her companions, as they are called, ^{<3954>}Psalm 45:14, by which young converts more especially may be understood; who listen with a great deal of affection and attention to what the church, or older and more experienced Christians say; though all believers in general may well come under this title of companions, as it is given to them, ^{<4938>}Psalm 122:8, for David, though he was so great a man, and in such an exalted station of life, yet did not disdain to be called ‘a companion of all them that fear God,’ ^{<4896>}Psalm 119:63. Now the saints may be said to be companions of each other for these following reasons:

- (1.)** Because they are interested in one and the same covenant, of which Christ is the head, surety, and mediator; and have an equal right and claim to all the blessings and promises of it.
- (2.)** They have all one and the same Savior, are all saved in one way, and share alike in the same salvation; for which reason it is called ‘the common salvation,’ Jude 3, not that it is common to all the world, but only to the elect of God, who are called to be saints.
- (3.)** They are partakers of the same grace, particularly that of faith; for the meanest saint obtains like precious faith with the greatest; the same may be said of all other graces of the Spirit; for indeed as there is but one body, of which they are all members: so there is but one spirit which actuates them all, even as they are also called in one hope of their calling, ^{<4004>}Ephesians 4:4.
- (4.)** They are partners, and share alike in the same privileges of the gospel, to which they have all an equal right; for they are all ‘fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.’
- (5.)** As companions, they frequently converse together; ‘they that feared the Lord, spoke often one to another;’ they meet in private, and take sweet counsel together, as well as walk unto the house of God in company; they sympathize with each other in all conditions, both outward and inward; they ‘weep with them that weep, and rejoice with

them that rejoice; they bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.'

(6.) They are here companions together in tribulation and sufferings, as John says, ^{<6609>}Revelation 1:9, and shall be partners together in heaven, where they shall enjoy that glorious inheritance which lies among them that are sanctified.

2dly, Now these companions hearken to the voice of the church: by which may be meant, either,

1. The gospel, as preached by her ministers; which is a joyful sound, and makes delightful music in the ears of believers, which are opened and unstopped by the Spirit of God. Or,
2. The admonitions of the church, which ought to be hearkened to, ^{<0815>}Matthew 18:15-17, and will be regarded by all those who wish well to Zion, who have a value and esteem for the authority of churches, and entertain mean and humble thoughts of themselves, ^{<1415>}Psalms 141:5.
3. The voice of the church in all other ordinances, and particularly that of singing, may be here intended; for the church was now bearing her part in this song with Christ; with whose voice these virgins her companions were charmed; which made them get the nearer, and more carefully listen to her: thus saints should be 'teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord,' ^{<0316>}Colossians 3:16.
4. The voice of the church, and of true believers in private conversation, is listened to by young, converts; because it is that which is good; to the use of edifying, and what ministers grace unto the hearers.

III. 'The request which Christ makes to his church, is; cause me to hear it; that is, thy voice, which is exceeding sweet and charming to Christ, as appears from chapter ^{<2114>}2:14, where he says, 'let me hear thy voice;' a phrase exactly agreeable to this, and which is there more largely explained, and the reason there given, why he makes such a request, is, 'because sweet is thy voice:' so is the voice of the church, in praying to him, praising of him: speaking largely of his person, grace and office; as well as boldly confessing of him before men. Though the word here used may as well be rendered, 'cause me to hear me; ^{f493} that is, preach me, as Junius translates it: and the meaning is, seeing the companions thus flock unto thee, and

listen with the utmost attention and satisfaction to thy voice; take the opportunity of preaching me unto them; let my person, blood, righteousness, and grace, be the subject of thy ministry. And thus indeed it was in the primitive times; for, says the apostle Paul, ‘I determined not to know,’ that is, to make known ‘any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,’ ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 2:2. The first ministers of the gospel did not preach themselves nor others, but Christ Jesus the Lord; he was the sum and substance of their ministry; and now though this way of preaching was ‘to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;’ yet it was owned of God, for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of saints; and has been more or less so in all ages of the world, and will be continued to be practiced until the second coming of Christ; which he may perhaps here intend, and is what the church earnestly prays’ for in the following verse.

VERSE 14.

*Make haste, my beloved and be thou like to a roe or
to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.*

THESE are the words of the church, earnestly imploring the presence of Christ. She begins and ends this song; and in both signifies her great affection to him, how much she valued his company, and how desirous she was of it: this appears throughout the whole song to lie uppermost in her heart, affections and desires; she had had much nearness of access to

Christ, and much communion with him, as appears from this chapter, and yet she wants more; she cannot be easy without the everlasting enjoyment of him on the mountains of apices. In the words may be considered,

I. The title she gives him; ‘my beloved.’

II. The request she makes to him; ‘make haste,’ etc.

I. The title she gives him, is, ‘my beloved;’ and is what she had often given him in this song: she seems to take delight in using it; in which she expresses her love and affection to him, with the continuance of it; she acknowledges that he was her beloved still; she claims her interest in him, a comfortable sense of which she now enjoyed; hereby she also distinguishes him from all other beloveds, and shows that she was not ashamed to own him as such; as indeed she had no reason; and perhaps she may have a

particular view in giving him this title here, which is to improve her interest in him, as a motive or argument to obtain her request; for such suits that are founded upon the near relation which souls bear to Christ, seldom miss of succeeding. But having more largely explained this character elsewhere, I shall not insist longer upon it; but proceed,

II. To consider the request she makes: which may be regarded, either,

1. As a passionate wish for the incarnation of Christ, that he would speedily come and appear on mount Zion, and in the temple where the sacrifices were offered up, and the sweet-smelling incense ascended, which were both typical of his sacrifice and mediation; nothing was more desirable or more importunately prayed for, or more impatiently longed for by the Old Testament-church than this was, and yet nothing more slighted than it was, when brought about.

2. It may be understood as the desire of the church after the spiritual presence of Christ, in his house, and upon the mountains of Zion, where he commands his blessing, even life forevermore: nothing is more satisfying to believers than Christ's presence; it is preferred by them to all the enjoyments of life; if thy presence go not with me, says Moses, ^{<0315>}Exodus 33:15, carry 'us not up hence;' this puts joy and gladness into the souls of God's people, more than when corn and wine increase; they are oftentimes impatient without it, pant for it, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks; for as his absence is death unto them, so his presence is life; this fills their hearts with comfort, diffuses an universal pleasure throughout their souls; banishes their doubts and fears, supports them under all the pressures, sorrows and afflictions of the; sets them above the fears of death, and makes them that they can look into another world, and an awful eternity, with the utmost satisfaction and serenity of mind; so that it is no wonder that Christ's gracious presence should be so desirable to saints: besides, there was good reason for the church to make such a request here; seeing he had, in the preceding verse, enjoined her to cause him to hear her voice; that is, to preach his gospel, set forth the glory of his person, and open the treasure of grace to souls; which to perform aright, she knew that she was unable of herself; for who indeed is sufficient for these things? for even those who are furnished with the greatest gifts and largest' capacities for such a work, are yet insufficient to think any thing as of themselves, much less to go through so great a work; but their sufficiency is of God; and therefore the church here desires the presence of Christ with her, and that

speedily, in order to do it: it is as if she should say, I am very willing to be found faithful and diligent in the discharge of this work, which thou hast called me to; but I am not able to perform it myself; do thou therefore hasten to my assistance, and grant me thy presence, ‘without which I can do nothing; and this also Christ knows full well, and therefore he has promised his ministering servants to be with them always in their work, even unto the end of the world. Or else,

3. This petition of hers may regard the spreading of the gospel over all the nations of the world: the gospel shall not only be preached to all nations, but this precious box of ointment being opened, the savor of Christ’s knowledge shall be diffused in every place: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, ^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:9, multitudes of souls shall be converted to Christ, and made subject to the scepter of his grace; those voices shall then be heard in heaven, that is, in the church below; ^{<6115>}Revelation 11:15, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: those nations which before were comparable to lions dens, and the mountains of the leopards, may now be called the mountains of spices, for their fragrancy and fruitfulness; on which Christ appears in his glory; the time being come that the prophecy should be fulfilled, ^{<340>}Zechariah 14:9, and the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one; what can be more desirable to the saints than this? no wonder the church should be so importunate in her request. Though,

4. I rather think, that she intends the second coming of Christ; as the Old Testament saints breathed after his first coming, so New Testament saints earnestly desire his second coming; they love it, they long for it, they pray for it; nay, as the apostle Peter says, ^{<1082>}2 Peter 3:12, they are hasting to it, that is, ‘they desire Christ to hasten it; they do not care how soon that day comes; for though it will be awful and terrible to the wicked, yet it will be much to their profit and advantage; for Christ ‘will appear a second time without sin unto salvation:’ his first appearance was ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh,’ and with all the sins of his people charged upon him; for which he made satisfaction to justice, and thereby procured eternal salvation for them; but his next appearance will be without any sin at all, in any sense whatever, being fully discharged from all, as the head, surety and representative of his people; when he will put them into the actual possession of that salvation he before procured. Now it may be observed, that this is the last petition of the church’s; she closes the song with it, as

John does his book of the Revelation; 'surely I come quickly,' says Christ; 'Amen,' says John, 'even so come, Lord Jesus:' from whence we may observe, that the coming of Christ to take his people to himself, that where he is, there they may be also, is the completion of all believers prayers and joys; when this is obtained, they have no more to ask for, nor any more indeed do they want; it may be said of them then, what is said of David in the 72d Psalm; which whole Psalm regards the glory and peace of Christ's everlasting kingdom; 'the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended;' that is, all his wishes are granted, and his requests fulfilled, when this is effected. But now let us consider a little more particularly the several phrases, by which the church expresses her desire for the coming of Christ. And,

1st, She says, 'Make haste, my beloved:' not that she desired him to come before the time appointed of the Father: for as there was a set time, which is called 'the fullness of time,' which was agreed upon for Christ's coming in the flesh; so there is a time fixed and determined, for his second coming; as the person, so 'the day is appointed by God, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness;' though 'of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son,' as he is man, 'but the Father;' therefore it is both vain and sinful for persons curiously to inquire into it, and bold and daring to attempt the fixing of it; for 'it is not for us to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.' Now Christ will not come before, nor will he stay longer than this time appointed; and this his church knew; nor does she desire him to come sooner; yet could be glad to see those things accomplished which must precede it; such as the conversion of the Jews, and the bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles; all which the Lord will hasten, but it will be in 'his own time:' nor does the church mean any other; but by using this expression, she signifies the earnestness of her desire to have this accomplished, being as it were impatient until it was done; her language is much like Sisera's mother's, who said concerning him, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?' Moreover it may be observed, that the word here translated, 'make haste,' may be rendered, 'flee away;' ^{f494} the meaning of which is, not that the church desired to remove or depart from her; no, she valued his presence at another rate than to desire him to withdraw from her; those indeed who prefer their lusts, their pleasures, their profits, their swine before Christ, say, depart from us; but as for the church, when she has found him, she holds him fast, and will

‘not let him go:’ so that when she desires him to ‘flee away,’ something else must be understood; which is, that she being weary of a sinful and troublesome world, breathed after an everlasting rest with him upon the spicy mountains; and therefore she would have him remove from his garden below, where he was, and take her along with him to glory; where she might eternally enjoy him, without any disturbance or molestation.

2dly, She desires that he would be ‘like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices;’ for what reasons Christ may be compared ‘to a roe or a young hart,’ has been shown on chapter ^{<211B>}2:9. Her meaning here is, that he would come quickly and speedily, and be as swift in his motion as the roe or young hart, and flee as swift as they; ^{f495} which run upon the mountains, and other high places, where they delight to skip and leap; see ^{<31B>}Habakkuk 3:19, and by these ‘mountains of spices,’ we are not to understand mount Moriah, and the temple built upon it, as R. Solomon Jarchi interprets them; but rather, the mountains of Zion, or the several congregations and churches, where she desired his gracious presence until his second coming; which may be compared to mountains for their height and sublimity, being established and exalted above all others, ^{<311B>}Isaiah 2:2, as well as for their permanence and immoveableness; for, ‘they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which can never be removed, but abideth for ever,’ ^{<351B>}Psalms 125:1, and may be called ‘mountains of spices,’ because of those precious plants which grow there; and those fragrant cruces with which they abound; as well as those sweet-smelling sacrifices of prayer and praise, which are there offered up. Though I rather think, that the joys and glories of the heavenly state are here intended; where the church desires to have everlasting and uninterrupted communion with her beloved, and that speedily, if it was his will; where she should be on high, and out of the reach of every snare and every enemy; where she would be safe, secure and immove-able, and in the possession of pleasures that will never end.

For,

- 1.** These mountains may denote the height and sublimity of this happy state; It is above, it is an ‘inheritance reserved in heaven; a hope laid up there, a prize of the high calling of God Christ Jesus.’
- 2.** May express the permanence and everlastingness thereof: it is a ‘city which hath foundations,’ and these immoveable; it is a ‘building of God,

eternal in the heavens;’ these habitations are everlasting, from whence there never will be a remove.

3. May signify the exceeding pleasantness and delightfulness thereof: that state may well be represented by’ spicy mountains, seeing in the presence of Christ there ‘is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore;’ no wonder then that the church should so passionately wish for the enjoyment of this happiness; and close this song in the manner she does, saying, ‘Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.’

FOOTNOTES

- ft1 vid. R. Aben Ezram in loc.
- ft2 I [b clausit, obseravit, pessulum obdidit, Buxtorf.
- ft3 Hortus regius, qui hortus conclusus dicitur; hortus erat in suburbauis Jerusalem muri; undique septus & obsirntatas; atque sicut paradus aroormn, fructicum, herbarum, aromatum, florum, fructuumque ubertate amoenus; mulcendis-que ac fovendis sensibus conveniens, & ad recessas voluptuarios idoneus; in quo erat inclytus ille fons Rogel & lapis Zoeleth, etc. Adrichomii Theatrum Terra, Sanctae, p. 170. I. Vid. ~~<1077>~~ 2 Samuel 17:17. ~~<12304>~~ 2 Kings 25:4.
- ft4 Journey from Aleppo etc. 89. edit, 7.
- ft5 R. Sol. Jarchi, R. Ahen Ezra in loc.& R. David Kimchi in lib. Shorash, rad. I I g
- ft6 Athen. Deiphosphist. 1. 12. c. 2. p. 515.
- ft7 Joseph. Antiquitat. 1. 8. c. 7. s. 3.
- ft8 Journey from Aleppo, p. 88, 89.
- ft9 Targum. R. Sol. Jarchi, & R. Aben Ezra in loc. T.B. Yoma, fol. 75. apud Wagenseil. Sotah, p. 240. Seder Tephillot, fol. 203. 1. ed. Basil Addison's present state of the Jews, c. 5. p. 50.
- ft10 Lexic. Cabal. p. 237.
- ft11 Vid. Gaisium in Misn. Sheniech, c. 2. 8. 2.
- ft12 **srpp** **παρρασεισος**, Sept paradiaus, Pagnius, Montanus, *Tigur*. version, Cozceius, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft13 Gnonmastic. Sacr. p. 291.
- ft14 Poseunt haec etiam in ecclesia intilligi, ut ea melius accipiamus tanquam prophetica indicia precedentia futurorum; paradusum scilicet ipsam ecclesiam, sicut de illa legitur in Cantico Canticorum; quatuor autem paradisi fumina, quatuor evangelia; ligna fructifera, Sanctos; fructus outem eorum, opera eorum; lignum vitae, sanctum sanctorum, utique Christum: lignum sciennae boni & mali, proprium voluntatie abitrium. Aug. de Civit. Dei. 50:13 c. 21.

- ft15 **sdrp παράδεισος**, paradus, pomarium, voluptatis & amoenitatis causa consitum, Buxtorf.
- ft16 vid. Plin. 50:13. c. 19.
- ft17 So Junius & Tremellius, Piscator.
- ft18 Lexic. Pentaglott. col 910,
- ft19 Coryell pressura croci, Lucan, Pharsal. 1. 9- 5:8,9. Hic Cilico crocus editus arvo, Virgil Culex.
- ft20 Ovid. Fast. 1. 1. 5:76. in Ibim. 5:200. Propert 50:4 eleg. 6. 5:74.
- ft21 Plin. 1. 12. c. 19, 22. Strabo, 1. 15. p, 478. Herodot, Thata, c. 107. anamomi & multi pastor odoris Arabs, Propert, 50:4. eleg. 13. 5:8.
- ft22 Vel. Reland. de Vet. Ling. Ind. s. 10. p. 216
- ft23 sive 50:3. III, Vid. Plin. 50:12.c. 19,
- ft24 Plin. 13.
- ft25 Hermippus apud Athem Deipnosoph. 1. 10:c. 21. p. 22.
- ft26 Origin. 1, 17. c. 8.
- ft27 Strabo, 1. 16. p. 538 vid. p. 335.
- ft28 Fernel; Method, Medend. 50:6. c. 7. & 1. 5, c 17; 21
- ft29 Plin. 1. 21. c.. 6.
- ft30 Ibid 1. 12. c. 19. & Solin. c. 43. & 46.
- ft31 So Ainsworth, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Marckius.
- ft32 Isidore, Cocceius. Schmidt, Heunischius; so the Cabalistic doctors interpret the well of living waters of malcuth, or the bride, the church, Lexic Cabal. p. 183.
- ft33 Adrichom. Theatrum Terra Sanctae, p. 107, 108.
- ft34 Ibid. p. 6.
- ft35 Journey from Alleppo, etc. p.1. 2, 143.
- ft36 Travels, part 2. ch. 12. p. 187, 188. edit. Ray.
- ft37 Flumine vivo, Virg. AENEid. 50:2. 5:715. semper fluenti, i.e. naturali, Servius in Ibid.
- ft38 Plin. 1.5. c. 20. & Joseph. Antiq 1. 5. c. 3. s. 1.
- ft39 **Ροιζουντος απο του Αβιανου**, Sept. quae finunt impetu de Libano, V. L. Et impetus descendens a libano. Ambros. in Psal. cxviii, octon.

17. col. 1041. All agreeable to the accounts before given of those streams.

ft40 Coceius, Marckius, Michaelis.

ft41 Ovid. Metamorph. 1. 1. fab 7.

ft42 Foliot, Sanctius, & Tig. not in loc. so Ambrose, in Psal. 1:5. p. 686. Theodoret in loc. & Tres Patres apud ibid.

ft43 Aristot. Meteorolog. 50:2. c. 6.

ft44 R. Sol. Jarchi, & R. Aben Ezra, & Yalcut in foe,

ft45 Lib, 2, c. 47.

ft46 Ovid. Metamorph. 1. 11. 5:663. Fluvioque madescit ab austro, Ibid. 1. 1. fab. 2. Pluvialibus austria, Virgil Georgic. 50:3. 5:429,

ft47 Lib. 2. c. 47.

ft48 Perfluant aquae aromata cjus, Junius,

ft49 Diodat. & Durham in loc.,

ft50 Floribus austrum perditus, Bucolic. eclog. 2; 5:58. Velut primos expiraturus ad austros—flos, Statii Sylv. 1. 2. ode 1. 5:106.

ft51 Verbum **ἀναζωπυρεῖν**, significat ignem cineribus tectura excitare, sopitam favillam in flammam proferre, Aretius in ~~5006~~ 2 Timothy 1:6.

ft52 Vid. R. Sol. Jarchium in loc.

ft53 **Καταβήτω εἰς κῆπον αὐτου**, Sept.

ft54 Durham in loc.

ft55 Brightman in loc.

ft56 Sanctia. in loc.

ft57 Foliot, Alcuin, Cocceius, and Bishop Patrick in loc.

ft58 **Ἐφαγον ἄρτον μου μέτα μέλιτός μου**, Sept.

ft59 In Cocceius in loc.

ft60 **γρ [γ τον δρυμον μου**, Symmachus; mel sylvestre, Michaelis.

ft61 See my Exposition in loc.

ft62 Et nivei lactis pocula mista mero, Tibullus, 50:3. eleg. 5. 5:34.

ft63 Paedagog. 1. I c. 6. p. 107.

ft64 R. Aben Ezra, Sanctius, & Diodat. in loc.

- ft65 Targum & R. Sol. Jarchi in loc.
- ft66 **μydwɔd wɾbɔç** inebriamini amoribus, Mercerus, Schmidt; inebriamini amoenitatibus, Cocceius; be drunken (that is, be plenteously failed) with loves, Ainsworth. See ~~31718~~ Proverbs 7:18.
- ft67 Familiar. Epist. 1. 7. ep. 1. so Seneca, ep. 122.
- ft68 Qui vigilans dormiat, Plauti Pseudolus, act. 1. sc. 3. 5:151.
- ft69 Brightman and Cotton in loc.
- ft70 And so Tanchuma in Yalkut in loc;
- ft71 A phrase used by lovers, meum cor, Plauti Poenulus, act 1. sc. 2. 5:154, 170, 173. meum corculum, Ib Cafina, act 4. sc. 4. 5:14.
- ft72 In Deuteronomy fol. 122. 2.
- ft73 Brightman, Cotton, and Cocceius in loc.
- ft74 **ytm̄t τελεία μου**, Sept. perfecta mea, Montanus, Tigurine version, Marckius: integra mea, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Cocceius, Michaelis, Galatinus, 1. 3. c. 30. de Arcan. Cathol. Verit. from the Midrash, would have it, that it was formerly read, **ytm̄wat** gemella mea, my twin; and I find in Zo
- ft75 Janua vel domina, etc. Propert. eleg. 16. 5:17-19. me medias noctes, loc. 5:22.
- ft76 Vid. Sanct. in loc. har, in Deuteronomy fol. 126. 3. it is observed that it should be so read.
- ft77 Vid. Brightman in loc.
- ft78 **Απονιψατε, καθετε δ' ευνην**, Homer. Odyss. 1. 19. 5:317. Vid 5:343,351,376,387.
- ft79 **rj h ^m wdy hl ç ydwɔd** , **ἀδελφος μου ἀπεστειλε χειρα αὐτου ἀπὸ της οπης**, Sept. dilectus meus demiseret manum suam a foramine, Junius.
- ft80 R.,. Aben Ezra in loc,
- ft81 Vid. Sanct. and Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft82 At lachrymans exclusus amator — postempue superbos unguis amaricino, Lucret. 1. 4. prope finem.
- ft83 Plin. Nat. Hist. 1. 12. c. 16.

- ft84 **rb[rwm** myrrham transeuntem, Pagninus, Mon-tanus: etc, lachrymantem, Bochart. vid. Mercer. and Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft85 Vid. R. Sol. Jarchium in loc.
- ft86 Vid. Cocceium is foe. R. David Kimchi in lib. Shorash. rad. **qmj** and to this purpose Montanus and Pagnine translate it; the one renders it, circuierat, the other, verteret se.
- ft87 Vid, R. Aben Ezra and Brightman in loc.
- ft88 **ta[y εζηθεν**, Sept. **εξηρχετο**, Symmachus; egressa est, Pagninus, Montanus, Marckius.
- ft89 Vid. Sanct. in loc.
- ft90 **wrbbrb εν λογω αυτου**, Sept. **λαλουντος αυτου**, Symmachus; in loquela ejus; Marckius.
- ft91 **Του̅ς εν δυναμει Θρουρουμενου̅ς**, praesidio Dei circumvallamur; metaphora a castris vallo & fossis undique munitis, ut nulla hostilium vel astutia expugnari possint, Paraeus in ~~1~~ 1 Peter 1:5.
- ft92 Ambros. in Psalm 118. octon. 7. col. 933. Psellus, & Tres Patre, apud Theodoret. in loc. Foliot & R. Sol. Jarchi in loc.
- ft93 Theodoret in Sanct. in loc. & Diodat. in loc.
- ft94 Greg. Beda, Bernard. Aquin. in Sanct. in loc. Isidore, Foliot, Alcuin in loc.
- ft95 Ainsworth & Mercer. in loc.
- ft96 De Legibus, 50:2. p. 602.
- ft97 **Εμωλωπεσαν με**, Aquila.
- ft98 Homer. Iliad. 22. 5:470.
- ft99 Lucea demissos velarunt flammae vultus, Lucan. Pharsal. 1. 2. 5:361. Ubi tibi corycio glomerarem flammae luto, Virgil. Cyris. Vid ! Barth. ad Claudian. Fescen. ode 4. 5:4. & Plin. 1. 21. c. 8.
- ft100 Vid Chartar. de Imag. Deorum, p. 84, 89. & Kippiug. Antiq. Romans 1. 4. c. 2. p. 695,696.
- ft101 Homil. in Cant. 21. p. 651.
- ft102 Foliot in loc. & Psellus apud Theodoret in loc.
- ft103 Vid. Sanct. in loc.

- ft104 **wl wrybt hm τι ἀπαγτειλητε αὐτω**. Sept. Quid indicaretis ei? Junius; Quid, parrabitis ei? Pagninus, Michaelis; Quid. indicabitis ei? Montanus, Mercerus, Marckius, so Ainsworth.
- ft105 *Ovid.*
- ft106 **yt [bçh ὄρκισα**, Sept. adjuro, Vulg. Lat. Cocceius, Pagninus, Mercerus, Junius: obtestor, Tigurine version.
- ft107 Durham in loc.
- ft108 Foliot & Ainsworth in loc. Ambros. in Psalm 118. octon. 5. col. 907. Theodoret. & Tres Patres apud ibid.
- ft109 Color albus praecipue decorus Deo est, Cicero de Legibus: 1:2.
- ft110 Vid. Baxtorf. & David de Polnis in Lex, in rad. **µda** & Joseph. Antiq; 1. 1. c. 1. s. 2.
- ft111 Hieron. Greg. Psellus, S. Thorn. Beda, & Rupert. in Sanct. in loc.
- ft112 Vid. R. Aben Ezra, R. Alshech, & Ainsworth in oc. & R. Sol Jarchi in ver. 16.
- ft113 Vid. Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. fol. 20, 1.
- ft114 **Ἐκλελοχισμενος απο μυριαδων**, Sept. electus ex millibus, Vulg. Lat. David de Pomis in Lexic. Hebrews fol. 18. 3, renders it magnificatus, electus.
- ft115 **hbbrm l wnd** vexillatus, ornatus vel elatus ut vexillarius, Buxtorf. vexillatus myriade, Mercerus; vexillatus a decem millibus, Montanus; vexillarius est e myriade Junius; sub signis habens exercitum decem millium, Tigurine version.
- ft116 Vid. Targum, Aben Ezra, & Shirhashirim Rabba in loc.
- ft117 Intelliges insignem prae decem millibus, ut **m** prae comparationem designet, Mercerus in loc. Insignitus prae myriade, Cocceius, Marckius; insignius prae decem millibus, Pagninus.
- ft118 Antiquit. 1. 8, c, 7. s. 3.
- ft119 Vid. Bochart. Hierosoic. par. 1. 13. c. 9- col. 154.
- ft120 **µtk** aurum insigne, aurum purgatissimum. **ḥp** aurum solidum, Buxtorf.
- ft121 Vid. Ainsworth, Bishop Patrick, and Sanctius in loc.

- ft122 Leo African. *Descriptio Africa.*, 1. 2. p. 273.
- ft123 Aurum auri Mercerus.
- ft124 Mercerus in loc. so Theodoret. in loc. & Thom. Beda in Sanct. in loc.
- ft125 Targum, Shirhashirim Rabba, Alfhech, Yalkut, & Jarchi in loc. Vajikra Rabba, paraih. 19.
- ft126 Vid. Ainsworth & Sanctius in loc.
- ft127 Foliot & Alcuin in loc. Greg. Thorn. Beda, & Carpath. in Sanct. in loc. So these locks are interpreted of the disciples of the wise men, by R. Judah, in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc.
- ft128 **μῦλ τλ τ** cumuli, tumuli, Schindler. *Lex. Pentaglott.* fol. 1972. so Targum, Aben Ezra. Mercer. & Ainsworth, in loc.
- ft129 Mercer.
- ft130 Jarchi, & Vochart. *Hierozoic.* par. 2. 50:2. c. 10. col. 199. and so the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions; and, according to Castell, this is the best sense of the word, vid. ejus Annot. in Ethiop. vers.
- ft131 *Crispaturae capillorum*, Buxtorf. Marckius; *crispis discriminibus*, Junius; *crispi*, Cocceius, Montanus.
- ft132 Aristol. *de Generat. Animal*, 1. 5. c. 3.
- ft133 Aristot. *de Generat. Animal*. 1. 5. c. 3.
- ft134 *Spectandum nigris oculis nigroque capillo*, Horat, *de Arte Poet.* 5:37. *Et Lycum nigris oculis nigroque trine decorum*, ib. *Sermon.* 1. I. ode 32. 5:11. *Led fuit nigra conspiciena coma*, Ovid. *Amor*, 50:2. eleg. 4, 5:42.
- ft135 Lib. 29. c. 6.
- ft136 *De Animal.* 1. 1. c. 48.
- ft137 So Theodoret, & Tres Patres apud Ibid, Thorn. Aquin. Beda, & Rupert. in Sanct in loc.
- ft138 Isidore, Foliot, & Alcuin in loc. & Greg. Nyssen. in *Cant. Homil.* 13. Ambros. in *Psalm cxviii.* octon, 15. col. 1009. & Pacilus apud Theodoret. in loc. & Carpathius in Sanct. in loc. They are interpreted of the Sanhedrim, by the Targum and Shirhashirim Rabba in loc.
- ft139 The Jews, in Shirhashirim Rabba and in Yalkut in loc. understand by them the waters of the law, and 4:1 as has been there observed; and therefore I choose rather,

- ft140 Vid. Jarchi in loc.
- ft141 Lib 10. c. 34.
- ft142 Targum & R Sol. Jarch in loc.
- ft143 Alba Palestino Sancta columba Syro, Tibullus, 50:4. eleg. 7.
- ft144 **tal m** ad plenitudinem, Tigurine version, Bochart juxta, Vatablus, so some in Brightman; juxta fluenta plenissima, Vulgate Latin, so the Septuagint, Syriac and Arabic versions.
- ft145 Siti insitione, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator.
- ft146 Super plenitudinem Montanus, Mercerus.
- ft147 **wyyj l** maxillae ejus, Pagninus, Montanus, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft148 Sanctius, Cocceius, Ainsworth, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft149 Sicut areolae aromatum consitre a pigmentariis V. L. similes sunt areolis aromatum & turribus seplasiariae Officinae, Tigurine version.
- ft150 Vid. Fortunat. Schacc. Eleochrysm. Boer. 1. 1. c. 18. p. 90.
- ft151 **uyj qrm twl dgm** turriculae pigmentorum, Mercerus; turribus pigmentorum, Marckius; condimentorum, Schmidt, Michaelis.
- ft152 So Foliot & Tit. vers. in loc. & Carpathius in Sanct. in loc.
- ft153 In Hercul. Gall.
- ft154 Lib. 21. c. 3. Theophras apud Athen. Deiphnosophist. 50:15. c. 8. p. 681. So Tertullian speaks of both lilies, that is, the white and red, De Corona, c. 14.
- ft155 In Misn. Shevith. c. 7. s. 6. Midrash Esther, fol. 91. s.
- ft156 Dioscorides an Fortuna. Schacc. Elcochrysm Sacr. 1. 1. c 27. p. 134. so in Egypt. Herodot. Futerpe sexta l. 2. c. 9,
- ft157 Rosea labra Martial. roacum os, Virgil.
- ft158 Schaccus, ut supra, 50:1. c. 28. p. 138, 139.
- ft159 Ambros. in Psalm cxviii. octon, 18. col 1047. Psellus apud Theodoret. in loc. Carpath. & Ruin Sanct. in loc.
- ft160 Olent tua basia myrrham, Martial. Epigr. 1 2. ep. 10.
- ft161 Annuli gemmati, Liv. Hist. 50:1. c. 11. Gemma ornat manus, Propert. 1. 3. eleg. 6. 5:12. Vid. Macrobian. Saturnal. 1. 7. c. 13.
- ft162 Et Selitum digito beryllum adederat ignis, Propert, 50:4. cleg. 7. 5:9.

- ft163 Plin 50:37. c. 5. Solin. c. 65. Ruaeus de Gemmis, 1. 2. c.8. De Boat. Hist. *Gemm.* 1. 2. c. 70. [Βερυλλου γλαυκη λιθον](#), Dions. Perieg. 5:1012.
- ft164 Albertus Magnus, 1. 2. tract. 2. c. 2. de Rebus Metal. Ruaeus, 50:2. c. 8.
- ft165 Plin. 1. 37. c. 9, 11.
- ft166 Albertus Magnus, 50:2. tract. 2 c. 3. de Rebus Metal. Ruaeus de Gemmis, 1. 2. c. 7.
- ft167 Plin. 1. 37. c. 9. Solin. c. 43.
- ft168 Fernel. Method. Medend. 50:5. c. 21. Albertus Magnus, 50:2, tract. 2. c. 8. de, Rebus Metal.
- ft169 Plin. 50:37. c. 1, 6. Solin. c. 46. Ruaeus de Gemmis, 50:2. c. 5.
- ft170 Martial Epigr. 1. 2. cp. 25.
- ft171 Juvenal. Satyr. 7. 5:144. Persii Satyr. i, v, 16.
- ft172 Isidore Foliot, & Alcuin in loc & omnes in Sanct in loc.
- ft173 Quale manus addunt ebori decus, Virgil Aeneid. 1. 1.
- ft174 [Κοιλία αὐτοῦ πυξιον ελεφαντινον επι λιθου σαπφειρου](#), Sept.
- ft175 [wy\[m](#) ejus, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft176 Fernel. Method. Medend 1. 5. c. 21, 23.
- ft177 Targum Jon. in ^{<Q318>}Exodus 31:18. Targum in Cant. 1:11. & R. Sol. Jarchi in ^{<Q301>}Exodus 34:1.
- ft178 Pith. 50:37. c. 9. Ruaeus de Gemmis, 1. 2. c. 2. Dionys. Perieg. 5:1105.
- ft179 Fernel. Method. MEDend. 50:5. c. 21. Ruaeus, *ibid.*
- ft180 Lib. 2. tract. 2. c. 17. de Rebus Metal Ruaeus de Gemmis, 1. 2. c.2.
- ft181 Lira, Soo Major, Sanctius, & Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft182 In ^{<Q204>}Exodus 28:4.
- ft183 See a discourse of mine, called Levi's Urim and Thummim found with Christ, p. 34- 33.
- ft184 Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft185 Vid. K. D. Kimchi, in lib. Shorash. rad. [רזץ](#) Maimon. Cole Hamikdash, c. 8. s. 14. & Jarchi in ^{<Q201>}Exodus 26:1.

- ft186 This is mentioned by Pliny, 50:9. c. 35. and 1. 37. c. 2.
- ft187 Perque caput ducti lapides, per colla, manusque, ex pedibus niveis fulscrunt aurea vincla, Manilius de Margaritis, 1. 5. Littora marinoreis pedibus signanda puellae, Ovid. Amor. 50:2. eleg, 11. 5:15.
- ft188 Several Jewish writer, by the pillars of marble, understand the six days work of creation (tho' the Targum interprets them of the righteous) on which the world is founded; and by the sockets of gold, the doctrines of the law, Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. Bemidbar Rabba, parash. 10. Vajikra Rabba, parash, 25.
- ft189 So St Thomas and Beda in Sanct. in loc.
- ft190 Foliot in loc. & Ambros. in Psalm cxvili. octon. 5. col. 914. & Carpathius in Sancr. in loc.
- ft191 **wtarm ειδος αυτε**, Sept. species ejus, Vulg. Lat. adspectus ejus, Montanus, Michaelis, etc.
- ft192 So this phrase is used of lovers by Solon, in Plutarch, in Erotica. p. 751. and in Aprilrli Apolog. p. 192.etc. Theocrit Idyll g. 5:82.
- ft193 **μγqtm** dulcedines, Pagninus, Montanus, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft194 So the Targum and R Solomon Jarchi in loc.
- ft195 greg. Myssen. in Cant. Homil. 14.
- ft196 So Sanctius in loc.
- ft197 Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft198 **μγdmj m wl kw και ολος επιθυμια**. Sept totus ipse desideria, Mercetus, Montanus, Marckius; totus desiderabilis, Vulg. Lat. version, Cocceius,
- ft199 Omnia Caesar erat, Lucan. Pharsal. 1. 3. 5:108. id unum dixero, quam ille omnibus omnia fuerit, Paterculus, 1. 2. **και συντελεια λογων το παν εσιν αυτο**, Ecclesiast. c. 43. 29.
- ft200 Suus rex reginae placet, Plautus in Sticho, act. 1. sc. 2. 5:76.
- ft201 **γ[r hzw και αυτος ωλεσιον μου**, Sept. & ipse est amicus meus, Vulg. Lat. version; & iste socius meus, Montanus, Mercerus; & is est meus consors, Tigurine version,

- ft202 **dl j j na ποῦ ἀπηλθεν**, Sept. quo abiit, Vulg. Lat. version, Montanus, Tigurine version, Junius; quo ivit, Mercerus; quorsum ivit. Cocceius.
- ft203 **hgr hga ποῦ απεβλεψεν**, Sept. quo declinavit, Vulg. Lat. version; Pagninus; quo respexit, Montanus; quo se vertit, Junius, Mercerus, Tigurine version ' quorsum flexit, Cocceius,
- ft204 So R. Sol. Jarchi in loc.
- ft205 Durham in loc.
- ft206 **dm[ψηζqbnw κὶ ζητησομεν αυτον μετα σου**, Sept. & queremus cum tecum, Vulgate Latin version, Montanus, Cocceius, Mercerus, Marckius; ut quaeramus. cum tecum, Junus; ut tecum perquiramus cum, Tigurine version, agreeable to our version.
- ft207 Piscator & Diodat. in loc.
- ft208 Antiquitat. 1, 8. c. 7, a 3.
- ft209 The Jews, in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. by gardens understand their schools and synagogues; as do also R. Sol. Jarchi and Alshech in loc. The whole is expounded in the Talmud thus, My beloved, this is the holy blessed God; is gone down into his garden, this is the world; to the beds of spices, these are the Israelites; to feed in the gardens, these are the nations of the world; and to gather lilies, these are the righteous that spring up among them, T. Hieros. Beracot, fol. 5. 2, 3. vid. Yalkut in loc.
- ft210 Ut ubi pascatur in hortis. Vulg. Lat. version, Munster, Mercerus.
- ft211 **ευπνοα λειρια κερσοι**, Theocrit. Idyll, 19. 5:32. Aut candida lilia carpit, Ovid. Metamorph. 1. 5. lab. 6. Liliaque alba legit, & Fasti. 1. 4.
- ft212 Carmin. 50:1. ode 36. 5:16.
- ft213 Zohar in Genesis fol. 44. 3. Bereahith Rabba, parash. 62. Shirhashirim Rabba, & Alshech in loc.
- ft214 It is explained the same way in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc.
- ft215 Lib. 5:c. 14.
- ft216 It is highly commended for its beauty, in T. Bah, Kiddushin. fol. 49, 2.
- ft217 Foliot & Alcuin in loc. Thorn. & Beda in Sanct. in loc.
- ft218 Ut illi efferant me, Junius; illi enim me extulerunt, Mercerus

- ft219 **ynbyhrj** corroborant me, Marckius.
- ft220 In lib. Shorash. rad.
- ft221 Me superbiorem faciunt, Tig. version, Piscator, etc.
- ft222 Ipsi reddiderunt efferum me, Montanus; ii ferocire fecerunt me, Cocceius.
- ft223 Fortiores fuerut me, Pagninus, Mercerus.
- ft224 **ἄνεπερωσαν με**, Sept. ipsi me avolare fecerunt, Vulg. Lat. version.
- ft225 **μυχνι γρ** quidam vocem compositam volunt ex **bl p** divisit, & **hça** uxor, quasi uxor divisa vel dimidia, Buxtorf. secundariae uxores, Michaelis
- ft226 Vid Jarchium in ⁻⁰²³⁶Genesis 25:6. Schindler. Lex. Pentaglot. fol. 1508. David de Poinis Lex. Hebrews fol. 143. I. & Kimchi lib. Shoraah. in voce **çwl γρ**.
- ft227 Theocrit. Idyll. 18. 5:24
- ft228 Alcuin in loc. Thorn. & Bede in Sanct. in loc.
- ft229 So Durham in loc. & Nyssen. Homil. 15. Theodoret. in loc. Psellus & Tres Patres in ib.
- ft230 In Zohar in Genesis fol. 77. 1.
- ft231 Durham in loc.
- ft232 **ayh hrb** munda ipsa genitrici suae, Motanus; pura est genitrici suae, Cocceius, Mercerus: puram iliam apud genetricem suam, Junius.
- ft233 Dinon in Peraicis apud Athnani Deipuosphist. 50:13, c. 1. p, 456.
- ft234 Vid. Reushlin. Cabbal. 50:1. p. 739
- ft235 Vid. Targum in Cant. i.x.
- ft236 Luna distat a sole, cujus lumine collustrari nutatur, Cicero de Divinazione, 1. 2 c, 43
- ft237 Tanto formosis formos or omnibus illa est, Ovid. Leander Heroni, 5:73. Pulchrior tanto tua forma lucet Senecae Hippolytus, act. 2. chorus, 5:740. Aurea lona, Ovid Metamorph. 50:10. fib. 9.
- ft238 Vid, Barthii Animadv ad Clau dian, de Nupt. Honor. 5:2,3. So particularly the beauty of Hero is described by the white-cheeked, rising morn, Museus de Hero, etc, 5:57

ft239 Vid. Yalkut in loc.

ft240 So of Helena, in Theocrit. Idyll 18. 5:26 it is said, **Λώς ἀντελλοισα καλον διεφαινε πρόσωπον**, that she shelved her beautiful face as the rising norm.

ft241 Homer often, describes the morning by her rosy fingers, **ροδοδακτυλος ηως**, Iliad. J, 5:477 & passim; so Theocritus **ροδοπηχυν**, Idyll. 2. and as clothed with a saffron garment, **ηως κροκοπεπλος**, Iliad 8 5. 1, and 19. 5:1. so, aurora lutea, Virgil AENEID 50:7. 5:26, and as beautiful and divine. Iliad. 18. 5:255, and fair-haired. Odys. 5. v 39, and as on a golden throne, and comely, Odys. 15. 5:56,250. A shining brightness is ascribed to it Nitor aurorae, Lucret. 1. 4. v. 542. Rubescebat aurora, Virgil. AENEID. 50:3. 5:521.

ft242 Diodat. in loc.

ft243 Theodoret. in loc. & Tres Patres in Ib. So Athanasius Synops. Sacr Script, 50:16, interprets it of Jerusalem, the church, who observing the faith of the children, and the philanthropy of the Word says this; and by the garden of nuts, he *understands* the scriptures, which are hard without, but spiritual within: and the Ethiopic version renders the words, My beloved is gone down, etc,

ft244 Targum and R. Sol. Jarchi in loc. Lyra interprets it of the temple of Solo-mon, but the Cabalistic doctors interpret it of malcuth or the congregation of Israel, Lexic. Cabal. p. 24, 240.

ft245 Quicquid nobile pontieis, nuuncetis Statii Syiva, 50:1 ode 6. 5:12.

ft246 Ad norcos putatos, Junius & Tremellius; toasionis, Piscator; hortum putationis, Marckius.

ft247 **ἄωγα τῆς ἰα εἰς κῆπον καρυας**, Sept. in hortum nucum, Vulg. Latin version; ad hortum nucum, Cocceius, Tigurine version; in hortum nucis, Mercerus; ad hortum nucis, Montanus.

ft248 Sparge marite nuces, etc. Virgil. Bucolic. eclog. 8. 5:30. Da nuces pueris, Catulli Juliae Epithalam. ep. 59. v 131. Et nucibus relictis, Perfii Satyr. 1. 5:10. Vid. Plin. 50:17. c. 22. Chartar. de. Iniag. Deorum, p. 87. & Kipping. Antiq. Ram. 1. 4 c. 2 P. 697'

ft249 Vid. T. Bab. Chagigah, fol. 15. 2. & Shirhashirim Rabba in loc.

ft250 Vid. R. Aben Ezra in loc. who also applies the words to the Israelites.

- ft251 Diodat. & Ainsworth in loc. Nux odorata, nux myristica, Buxtorf. Talmud Lexic. col. 21;.
- ft252 Antiquitat. 1. 8, c. 7. s. 3.
- ft253 Plin Nat. Hist. 50:13. c. 5. Athenaei Deipnosophist. 1. 14. c. 17. P. 649.
- ft254 De Bello Jud. 1. 3. c. 9. s. 8.
- ft255 **I hnh ybab twarI** **ιδειν εν γεννημασι του χειμαρρου**, Sept. **ιδειν τον καρπον των χειμαρρον**, Al. Interp. apud. Flam. Nobil. Not. in Vat. Lect, Sept. Interp. Ut spectarem virentes plantas ad torrentem, Tig. version.
- ft256 **I hb** vallis, torrens per vallem dicurrens, Buxtorf.
- ft257 Diodat. in loc.
- ft258 Nihil celorus mente, Cicero.
- ft259 **yt [dy al** **ουκ εγον**, Sept. **ουκ οιδα**, Symmachus; nescivi, Vulg. Lat. version, Mercerus; nescio quid rei sit, Tigurine version; non novi, Montanus; me nescientem, Coccius
- ft260 **bydn ym[twbkrm ἄρματα Ἀμιναδάβ**, Sept. quadrigas Aminadab. Vulg. Lat. version; currus Aminadib, Tigurine version..
- ft261 Quadrigae polauli mei munifici. Montanus; quadrigae populi mei spontanei, Pagninus; curribus populi mei ingenui, Junius; curribus populi mei voluntarii, Cocceius Piscator, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft262 so R. Aben Ezra in loc. and R. David Kimchi, in lib. Thorash rad. **מל a** give the sense of the word.
- ft263 Vid. Durham in loc. & Menochium de Repub. Hebrews 1. 3. c. 21. n. 14.
- ft264 **מל צ** compleri, perfici; pacem habere vel colere, Buxtorf,
- ft265 *Eireneousa*, Aquilla: this is interpreted of a nation that both makes and enjoys peace, in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. and in Bereshith Rabba, parash. 66.
- ft266 Vid. R.. Aben Ezra & Brightman in loc. & Carpzov. Critics Sacra, par. 3. P. 904.
- ft267 In Shirhashirim Rabba and Bereshith Rabba ubi supra, it is interpreted of the four kingdoms the Jews had been carried captive into.

- ft268 Verbum Hebrews **bws** sub, pro quo, Vulgatus, revertere, etiam convertere significat; & ita vertunt LXX. (*epistrephe*) & legit Ambros. libro de Isaac. cap. 8. & Hieronymus in Epistola ad Algasiam, Sanctius in loc. Though it ought to be observed, that the Hebrew word is not **ybows** but **ybwç** which is Sanctius's mistake.
- ft269 Vid. Sanctium in loc.
- ft270 **μνϋ mh t l j mk** **ως χοροι των παρεμβολων**, Sept. nisi choros castrorum, Vulgate Latin version; velut chorum castrorum, Mercerus, Montanus, Cocceius; quae similis est choreae castrorum, Tigurine version; velut chorum macharnaimorum. Junius. Vid. R. Aben Ezra in loc.
- ft271 **bydn tb** puella nobilis, Castalio; principalis, nobilis & ingenua virgo, se. filia so some in Michaelis.
- ft272 Odyss. 11. 5:602, 603. Auratos pedes Ovid. Amor. 50:3. deg. 12.
- ft273 Euterpe, sive 1. 2. c. 98.
- ft274 Virginibus Tyriis mos, est, etc. Virgil. AEneid. 1.
- ft275 Vid. Persii Satyr. 5. 5:169. Virgil. Bucolic. celog. 7. 5:31.
- ft276 Pes malus ia nivea, etc. Ovid. de Arte Amand. 50:3. Vid. Martial. 1. 7. epigr, 27.
- ft277 So Mercerus, Cocceius, & Not. Tigur. Vers. in loc.
- ft278 So Sanctius in loc.
- ft279 So Durham and Ainsworth in loc.
- ft280 Vid: Plin. 1. 9. c. 35. & 50:33. c. 3, 12.
- ft281 So R. Aben Ezra, Sanctius, and Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft282 **dykdy yqwmj** ambitus feaeorum, Buxtorg Mercer. Junius.
- ft283 In lib. shoran, rad. **qmh**
- ft284 So Junius and Cocceius in loc.
- ft285 Vertebrae, Pagninus, Montanus, Vatablus; signat illam agilem versatilem juncturam, qua capit in suis foraminibus expedite moventur, Brightman.
- ft286 Durham in loc.
- ft287 R. Aben Ezra and Sanctius in loc.

- ft288 Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft289 Elcochrysm. Sacr. 1. 3. p. 1016.
- ft290 So likewise do the Jews, in T. Bah. Sota fol. 45. 1. and Sanhedrim, fol. 14. 2. and fol. 37. 1, and Shihirhashirim Rabba in loc. and in Bemidhar Rabba, parash, 1
- ft291 Vid. R. David Kimchium in ^{<5812>}Ezekiel 38:12. & Jarchium in loci
- ft292 Lex. Cabal. p. 99.
- ft293 **nzmh** mistio. Mercerus: mixtio, Tunius & Tremellius, Piscator; mixtura, Marchius, Michaelis; though Gataker interprets it of pure wine, and that the most generous. Adversar. Miscel p. 44.
- ft294 The Jews say, it was two parts water and one wine, Shirhashirim Rabba in loc and Bemidbar Rabba, parash of the wine of Sharon was mixed, Misn Niddah, c. 2. s. 7.
- ft295 Ne deficit illius mixtio, Junius: so Ainsworth
- ft296 Vial. Selden Uxor. Hebrews 1. 2. c. 15. p 195. and Addison's Present State of the Jews, c. 5. p. 52,
- ft297 Durham in loc.
- ft298 Gratiam super graitiam, q. d. gratiam gratis cumulatam, Beza in John i.
- ft299 The Jews in Sharhashirim Rabba in loc. and in Bemidbar Rabba, parash. 1. interpret it of the Israelites, whom for many reasons they compare to wheat, and the nations of the world to chaff: and R. Alshecb. of young disciples.
- ft300 **μνησῶςβ ἡνωμ πεφραγμανη εν κρινοις**, Junius, Mercerus, Cocceius, Marckius. & alii; vallatus lilils, Vulgate Latin ver sion; circumseptus liliis, Tigurine version.
- ft301 Vid. Cotton and Bishop Patrick in lec.
- ft302 **Ελεφαντινος τραχηλος**, Anacreon. Eburnea cervix, Ovid. Epist: 20. v. 37. eburnea colla, lb. Metamorph. 1. 3. lab. 6. 5:422. & 50:4 fab. 5. 5:335.
- ft303 Nivea cervice, Ovid. Amor. 1. 2 eleg. 4. 5:41.
- ft304 Lactea colla Virg. AEneid. 1.8. 5:661.
- ft305 Marmoreo collo. Ovid. Fasti, 1. 4. v. 135. mamorea cervice, Virgil. Georgic. 4. prope finem.

- ft306 AEneid. 50:5. so Ovid. Fast 1. 6 animique oculique natabant.
- ft307 [~]rbçhb twkrk dny[oculi tui piscinis artificiossaimis, Junius, Piscator. In Bemicoa Rabba, parash. 14 the words are paraphrased thus; 'Thine eyes are like fishpools, which are finished with consultation and thought.'
- ft308 The Targum by them understands the scribes; Jarchi, the wise men, or such who delight in sublime wisdom; so in Zohar, in Numbers fol. 89. 2. Aben Ezra, the prophets: in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. and in Bernidbar Rabba, parash, 11. they are interpreted of the Sanhedrim, and elders of the congregation; and so in Yelammedenu and Siphri in Yalkut in loc.
- ft309 Vid. Sanct. in loc.
- ft310 De natura Deorum, 50:2. c. 57.
- ft311 dpa tua facies, Pagninus; frons, Clarius; so Jarchi.
- ft312 Pharsal. 50:3. 5:215.
- ft313 Theatrum Terrae Sanctae p. 100. so Jarchi in loc from the Midrash.
- ft314 Comment. in Jes. 37, 24.
- ft315 Alcuin and Sanctius in loc.
- ft316 So of hair it is said, Humeros ut lucus obumbrat, Ovid. Metamorph. 50:13. fab. 8. Comanti humo, Statii Thebaid. 1 5. 5:502, comata sylva, Catullus, 4. 11. arboreas comas, Ovid. Amot. 50:2. eleg. 16. 5:36
- ft317 Velut coccinum, Pagninus, Vatablus, Mercerus; simile est coccineo. Junius & Tremellius; est ut cocceus, Piscator. so Ainsworth; sicut carmesinum. *Schindler*, so R. Aben Ezra in loc. and R. David Kimchi, in lib. 'Shorash. in voce l mrk
- ft318 Sanctius and Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft319 Durham in loc.
- ft320 Ovid, Metamorph. 1.8. lab. 1 5:301. De Arte Amandi, 50:1. & de Remed. Amor. 50:1. 5:68 Hygin. Fab. 198. Pausan. Attica, p. 33.
- ft321 Pindar. Olymp. ode 6. & pythia, ode 1. v 2.
- ft322 Homer. Odyss. 6. 5:231 & 23 5:158.
- ft323 Paradise Lost book 4.

- ft324 Paludamentum erat insigne pallium imperatorum, cocco purpuraque & aum distinctum, Isidor. Origin.119. c. 24.
- ft325 Durham and Bishop patrick in loc.
- ft326 So Montanus, Brightman, Cocceius, Mercerus, Tigurine and Vulgate Latin versions; and so the Jews understand it in Shirhashirim Rabba in loc. and in Vajikra Rabba, parash. 31. and the Targum and Aben Ezra in loc.
- ft327 in lib. Shorash. tad. **fhr**
- ft328 See Shaw', Travels, p. 273.
- ft329 Vid. Buxtorf. Synag. Jud. c. 50,
- ft330 Meae deliciae, Plauti Stichus, act. 5. sc. 5.
- ft331 Sepher. Dibre Hayamim, fol. 7. 2.
- ft332 Ovid. Metamorph. 50:13. fabrg,
- ft333 Theocrit. Idyll. 18. 5:30.
- ft334 A. Gell. Noct. Attic. 1. 7. c. 16. Vid. Strabo, 50:17. p. 563.
- ft335 Sandy's Travels, b. 2, p 79.
- ft336 Amo forma pulchram, statura procerem, Theophilus apud Athen Deipnosoph. 50:13. c. 2. p. 563.
- ft337 **dtmwq μεγεθος σου**, Sept. statura tua, Vulgate Latin version.
- ft338 Odys. 6. 5:163, 164.
- ft339 Lib. 13 c. 4.
- ft340 Soto Major and Bishop Patrick in loc. Vid. Harduini Opera, p. 331. 2. 332. 1. 731. 1. 2, 735. 1. 743. 3.
- ft341 August. de Civit. Dei, 50:22. c. 1. & in Enchir.c. 29.
- ft342 Levin, Lemnii. Herb. Bibl. Azplic. c. 20.
- ft343 Levin. Lemnii Herb. Bibl. Explic. c. 20.
- ft344 Ibid.
- ft345 Plin. 1. 13, c. 4. & Dalecamp. in idem
- ft346 Plin. 1. 17. c. 24.
- ft347 Pile. 1. 16. c. 20. Lemnii Herb. Bibl. Explic. c. 20.
- ft348 Jude 12.

- ft349 Plin. 50:16. c. 44.
- ft350 Travels, p. 244.
- ft351 Vid. R. Abcn Ezram in Psal. xcii. 12.
- ft352 Plin. 50:13. c. 4.
- ft353 Plin. 1. 13. c. 4.
- ft354 Vid. Soto Major in loc.
- ft355 Foliot & Alcuin in loc. Tertull. & Cyprian. in Soto Major in loc.
- ft356 Diodat. in loc.
- ft357 Plin. 50:13. c. 4. so Sandy's Travels, b. 2. p. 79.
- ft358 Travels. tom. t. p. 142, ed. 2.
- ft359 De Des Syria.
- ft360 Vid. Buxtorf. Lex Talmud. rad. רװק col. 2005.
- ft361 Plutarch. de San. Tuend. vol. 2. p. 133. Plin, 50:13. c. 4.
- ft362 Athenaei Deipnosophist. 50:2, c. 28. p. 71.
- ft363 Liventibus uva racemis, Propert. 50:4. eleg. 2. 5:13. ipse racemiferis uvis, Ovid. Metamorph. 50:3. 5:666.
- ft364 **dydç an wyhyw** & sint quaeso mam-mae tuae, Tigurine version, Merceras; & sint agedum ubera tua, Cocceius; & sint aunc ubera tua. Brightman, and so Ainsworth.
- ft365 **Ἐναλείφεται τὰς ρίνας**, etc. Alexis apud Athen. Deipnosoph. 50:2. c. 7. p. 46. Et crocino nares myrrheus ungat onyx, Propertius, 50:3.
- ft366 De natura Deorum, 1. 2. c. 63. Vid Plutarch. Sympos. 50:5. p.883.
- ft367 Athenaeus, ut supra, 1. 15. c. 11, 12. p. 688, 689. Plin. Nat. Hist. 50:13 c. 1. & 50:23. c. 6.'
- ft368 Sanctius in loc.
- ft369 Misn. Niddah, c. 2. s. 7.
- ft370 As Kerutim, Hatulim; and next to them, Beth-rima and Beth-laban in the mountain, and Cepharsignah in the valley, Mish hot, c. 8. s. 6.
- ft371 Plin. 1. 5. c. 18.
- ft372 Atcuin in loc.
- ft373 **μυρçyml** directe, Mercerus; rectissime, Brightman, Junius.

- ft374 **Εἰς εὐθυτητα**, Sept. ad rectitudines, Montanus; ad ea quae rectissima sunt, Tigurine version.
- ft375 Ad rectitudines, i.e. rectos homines, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft376 **μυνεϋ γτρϋ** labia veterum, Pagninus; antiquorum, Vatablus.
- ft377 De Senectute c. 16.
- ft378 Plutarch. Sympos. 50:7. p. 715.
- ft379 Philoxenus apud Athen. Deipnosophist, 50:2. c. 1. p. 35. Vid. Sanhedrin T. Bab. fol. 38. I.
- ft380 Philoxen. apud Athen. Deipnosoph. 1. 11. c. 3. p. 463.
- ft381 Ibid. 50:4. c. 4. p. 124. & 50:10. c. 7. p. 428.
- ft382 Vid, Fuller. Miscell. Sacra, 1. 3. c. 15.
- ft383 **μυρϋκβ ηνυλ η** pernoctemus ad cypros, Junius, Piscator, Brightman, Michaelis.
- ft384 Mr Dod.
- ft385 Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft386 In Shirhashirim Rabba, in loc. By the field and villages, the nations of the world are understood.
- ft387 T. Bah. Erublm. fol. 21. 2.
- ft388 **rdmsh j τρ ἤνθησεν ὃ κυπρισμος**, Sept. si flores fructus parturiunt, Vulg. Lat. version: aperuerit se uva parva, Montanus; an aperta sit gemma, Mercerus; ac florem protrudat, Tigurine version; exeruent se uva prima, Cocecius: an aperiat ae prima uva, Junius; aperuerit uva prima, Brightman.
- ft389 Naias amat Thyrsin, Glauca Almona, Nisa Theonem; Nisa rosas, Glanca violas, dat lilia Nais: Cythereus Sidonius apud Auson.
- ft390 R. Sol. Jarchi in ~~<0E04>~~Genesis 30:14.
- ft391 Vid. Jun. in ~~<0E04>~~Genesis 30:14.
- ft392 L. 1. c. 9. n. 23.
- ft393 Odyss. 9. 5:94.
- ft394 Melpomene, sive 1. 4. c. 177.
- ft395 Tristium, 1. 4. Epist. 1. 5:31 & De Ponto, 1. 4. eleg. 10. 5:18,

- ft396 Vid. Strabo Geograph. 50:17. p. 574. Athenaei Deipnosophist. 1. 14. c. 18. Plin. 50:13. c. 17. & Pomponius Sabinus in Virgil. Georgic. 1. 2. p. 210.
- ft397 Hist. Patriarch. tom. 2. exercit. 19. s. 9. 15.
- ft398 Fernel. Method Medend. 50:6. c. 1. and Plin 1. 26. c. 9, 10-14, 15.
- ft399 Avicenna apud Castel. Animadv. Samar. in ~~<0304>~~Genesis 30:14.
- ft400 Maundrel's Journey from Aleppo, etc. p. 6., edit. 7.
- ft401 L. 25. c. 13. So Plutarch. Sympos. 50:3. P. 652. and Medici in Theodoret. in loc. Vid. Philostrat. Vita Apollon. 50:8. c. 3.
- ft402 Herb. Bibl. Explic. c. 2.
- ft403 De Audiendis Poetis, p. 15.
- ft404 **Μανδραγοραν πεπωκοσιν**, Demosth. Orat. Philip. 4. **Υπο μανδραγορα καθευδις**, Lucian. in Timon. s. 1. Vid. Julian. Ep. 21. p. 139.
- ft405 Odor gravis ejus, sed radicis & mali gravior, 1. 25. c. 13.
- ft406 Herb. Bibl. Explic. c. 2.
- ft407 Contr. Faustum, 1. 22. c.56.
- ft408 T. Bah. Erubin, fol. 21, 2.
- ft409 Dr Guild in loc.
- ft410 Vid. Schindler. Lex. Pentaglott. col. 970.
- ft411 Bishop Patrick in loc.
- ft412 Vid. Plutarch. Amator. vol. 2. p. 755. & Barthiam ad Claudian. de Nupt. Honor. 5:208. Longos erexit janua ramos. Juvenal, Satyr. 12. 5:21; Necta coronam postibus. Ib. Satyr. 6. 5:51, 52. ornantar postes, 5:79, ornatas paulo ante fores, etc. 5:276, 227. janua laureata, Tertullian. ad Uxor. 1. 2. c. 6. Vid. Ovid. Metamorph. 50:14. fab. 17.
- ft413 Targum in loc. and Zohar in Gen. fol. 179. 3.
- ft414 Sunt poma gravantia ramos; sunt auro similes longis in vitibus uvae, sunt & purpureae; tihī ae has servamus & illus; Ovid, Metamorph, 1. 13. fab. 8.
- ft415 **yl j ak dnty ym δων σε αδελφιδε μου**, Sept. Quis mihi det to fratrem meum? Vulgate Latin version: O si quis daret to ut fratrem esse mihi! Junius: Quis det to ut fratrem mihi? Montanus, Mercerus: Quis

dabit to tanquam fratrem mihi? Brightman. Utinam quasi frater mihi sis!
Tigurine version: Utinam fins mihi ut frater! Cocceius.

- ft416 Targum in loc. Zohar in Genesis fol. 104, 1. Caphtor Uperah, fol. 5. 2. & Tzeror Hammor, fol. 73. 3.
- ft417 **qwbj** **εξω**, Sept. foris, Vulgate Latin version, etc. in platen, Montanus,. Brightman, Marckius; or in any public place; is publico. Cocceius; **εν αγρω**, al. Interp al Interp apud. ilam Mobil. Not. in Var. Lect. Sept.
- ft418 **yl wzb al mn** **κὶ γε ουκ εξουθενωσουσι με**, Sept & jam me nemo despiciat, vulgate Latin version; eniam non contemnant me, Montanus; & non faciant contumeliam mihi, Cocceius; neque vero me dispicient, Tigurine version; etiam non contemnerent me, Brightman, Marckius.
- ft419 Audacem faciebat amor, Ovid. Metamorph. 50:4. fab. 4.
- ft420 **yndml t** quae docet me, Junius; & doceret me, Mercerus; ut doceres me, Cocceius; doceres me, Brightman.
- ft421 Docebis me, Vulgate Latin version, Pagninus, Montanus, Tigurine version; so Sept. in Theodoret. Ibi doecbis me, Ambros in Psalm cxviii. octon. 19. col. 1057,
- ft422 Buxtorf. Synagog. Jud. c. 39. P. 632. etc.
- ft423 Phocenses apud Athen: Deipnosoph. 50:13. c. 5. P. 576. Vid. Plutarch. de Virtut. Mulier, p. 258.
- ft424 Targum & P,-. Solom. Jarchi in loc.
- ft425 **ygm r mys** **[m** & mustum malorum granatorum meorum, Vulgate Latin version; de musto mali puuici mec, Cocceius; de vino dulci mali granati mei, Montanus.
- ft426 Lib. 14. c. 16.
- ft427 T. Bab. Sabbat. fol. 143. 2.
- ft428 Hilchot Maacolot Asurot, c 17. 8. 11.
- ft429 Athen. Deipnosophist. 1. 11. c. 3. P. 464.
- ft430 Plin. Nat. Hist. 1. 14. c. 13, 16 Plauti Persa, act. 1. sc. 3. 5:7. 8.
- ft431 Munster. Dictionar. Chaldaic p. 22, 27.
- ft432 Aufidius forti miscebat mella Falerno, Horat. Satyr. 1. 2. sat. 4. 5:24. & 2. v. 15.

- ft433 Apud Chartar. de Imag. Deorum, p. 139.
- ft434 Athenaei Deiprosophist. 1. 3. c. 8. p 84.
- ft435 Sinistra ejus supponatur capite meo, Tigurire version, Marckius. some in Michaelis.
- ft436 Circumdatoque me brachiis, Plauti Asinaria, act. 3, sc. 3. v, 106.
- ft437 **wrr [t hmw wry [t hm** Quid excitaretis, nut quid expergefaceretis? Junius, Brightman: Quid expergefacitis, & quid excitatis? Cocceius. Quid excitabitis, & quid expergesacietis? Mercerus: Cur suscitabitis, cur evigilare taciatis? Montanus, Schmidt.
- ft438 Vid. Theocrit. Idyll. 13.
- ft439 Sanctius & Diodat. in loc.
- ft440 Alcuin in loc.
- ft441 Junius in loc.
- ft442 **Αελευκωνθισμενη**, dealbata, Sept.
- ft443 R. Sol. Jarehi, R. Aben Ezra in loc. R. Joseph Kimchi, in R. David Kimchi. in lib. Shorash. rad. **qpr** & R. Sol. Urb. Ohel. Moed, fol 19. 1. Adjungens se, Montanus; adjiciete ae, Cocceius; associans se, Brightman, Schmidt, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft444 R. David Kimchi. lib. Shorash, rad. **qpr** Targum and Vulg. Lat. vers.
- ft445 Injiciens se super dilectum suum, Cocceius.
- ft446 Innitens, Mercerus; innixa, Vulgate Latin version, Pagninus: Tigurine version,
- ft447 Vid. Hottinger, Smegina Oriental. 50:1. c. 6. p. 106.
- ft448 **qprm** axilla, Buxtorf. Talm Lexic. col. 2281.
- ft449 Theodoret. & Tres Patres in lb. Foliot & Alcuin in loc.
- ft450 Genet ix is often used for a mother, in poetical composures,
- ft451 So Mercerus, Cocceius, Marckius, Michaelis.
- ft452 Alcuin, Foliot, Sanctius, Not. Tig. in loc,
- ft453 See more of this in my sermon, called, "Levi's Urim and Thummim found with Christ."
- ft454 Nostros non rumpit funus amores, Lucan Pharsal. 1. 5. 5:761. 762.

- ft455 Omuia vincit amor, & nos cedamus, amori, Virgil. So Plato represents love as the strongest of all things; since that which rules over the strongest of other things, must be the strongest of all; Symposium; p. 1189,1190.
- ft456 Sanctius in loc.
- ft457 Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Cocceius, Marckus.
- ft458 Crudelis amor, Bucolic. eclog, 10. 5:29 Musaeus de Hero, etc. 5:245.
- ft459 Vid Barthii Animadv. ad Claudian. de Nupt. Honor. v.16. & de Laude Stilico, 5:74. So love is said to kindle a more vehement flame than Vulcan's forge, Theocrit. Idyll. 2. 5:133, 134. Vid. Idyll. 7. 5:56. & Musaei Leand. 5:245. 246.
- ft460 **hytbhl** **ç** flamma Domini, Mercerus, Montanus; vastantis flammae 247. Domini, Brightman; flammaeque divinae, Junius; flamma Dei, Cocceius, Tigurine version; flamma Jah, Marckius.
- ft461 Cujus Carbones sunt igniti a flamma Dei, Tigurine version, so Castalio; quam Dominus accendit, Glassii Philolog. Sacr. 1. 5. tract 1. c. 10,
- ft462 Targum, Shirhashirim Rabba. R. Sol. Jarchi, & R. Aben Ezra, & Yalkut in loc. Shemoth Rabba, parash. 49.
- ft463 Se R. Alshech in loc.
- ft464 so Theodoret. in loc.
- ft465 So Sanctius in loc.
- ft466 Alcuin in loc.
- ft467 So Theodoret. Tres Patres, & alii in loc.
- ft468 Germana mea sororclua Plauti Fragment. Cistellar, 5:15.
- ft469 **hb rbdyc** **μwyb** **εν ημερα η εαν λαληθη εν αυτη**, Sept. In die quarrier sermo in ca, Montanus; quando ei colloquendum erit, Figurine version.
- ft470 Vid. Aben Ezram in loc.
- ft471 Die quo sermo fict de ca, Mercerus Junius, Brightman; in die quo verba fient de ea, Cocceius.
- ft472 Vil. Targum, Shirhashirim Rabba, & Jarchi in loc. & Bereshit Rabba parash. 39. fol. 34. I.
- ft473 In die quando alolquenda est, Vulgate Laria version.

- ft474 So Ajax is called the wall of the Grecians, Homer, Iliad. 6. 5:5. & 7. 5:211 and Achilles also, Graium murus Achilles, Ovid. Metamorph. 1. 13. 5:281.
- ft475 **āsk tryf εδωκε**, Sept propugnacula argentea, Vulgate Latin version; propugnacuium argenteum. Tigurine version; arcem argenteam, Mercerus: castellum argenti, Michaelis.
- ft476 Vid. R. Aben Ezram & Sanctium in loc.
- ft477 Hoc est, nolite dubitare utrum murus sum, Ambros. Enarrat, in Psal. cxviii. oct. on. 22. p. 1087.
- ft478 T. Bah. Bava Bathra, fol. 8. 1. & Pesachim, fol. 87, 1.
- ft479 Vid. Alcuin. in loc.
- ft480 So the Tarugam and R. Sol. Jarchi in loc. interpret it.
- ft481 In ea quae habet populos. Vulgate Latin version; in domino multitudinis, Piscator.
- ft482 **ˆtn εδωκε**, Sept. dcdit, Marckius, Michadis.
- ft483 In loc. & in Praefar. ad Comment. in lib.
- ft484 Vid. Shirhashirin, Rabba. & Alshech in loc. & R. Abendan. Not. in Miclol Yophi in Psal. lxxii. so,
- ft485 Yesod. Hattor. c. 6, s. 12.
- ft486 Vid. Vorst. Not. in Maimon. ibid. Vid. T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 35. 2.
- ft487 Durham in loc.
- ft488 So Theodoret. & Tres Patres in loc.
- ft489 **μγνnb tbcwyh** quae habitas in hortis, Vulgate Latin version, Michaelis; O quae habitas in hortis! Pagninus Brightman; O quae habitas in istis hortis! Junius; quae, O tu quae in hortis habitas! Mercerus; quae sedes in hortis, Cocceius, so the Targum.
- ft490 **Ο καθημενος** Sept. qui sedes, Ambros, in Psalm 118, octon. 22. col. 1088. but Symmachus and Aquila, as he observes, quae sedes.
- ft491 Targum, Shirhashirim Rabba, Jarchi, & Alshech in loc. Vid. T. Bah. Sabbat. fol. 63. 1. & Gloss. in Ibid,
- ft492 So Piscator in loc.
- ft493 Shirhashirim Rabba, R. Sol. Jarchi, R. Aben Ezra, Isidore, Alcuin, Foliot, Lyra, Sanctius, & Diodat. in loc.

ft494 **yn[ymçh** predica nae, Junius & Tremellius.

ft495 **j rb φυγε**, Sept. fuge, Vulgate Latin version, Pagninus, Montanus, Mercerus, Cocceius, Brightman; fugito, Tigurine version; accurre, Junias.

ft496 Cervique fugaces, Virgil. Georgic. 50:3. prope finem. Vid. Plauti Paenulum, act. 3. sc. 1. 5:26,27,