

A BRIEF EXPOSITION
OF THE
WHOLE BOOK OF CANTICLES;
OR,
SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY
JOHN COTTON.

EDINBURGH: JAMES NICHOL.
LONDON: JAMES NISBET & CO. DUBLIN: G. HERBERT.

M.DCCC.LXVIII.

THE CANTICLES; OR, SONG OF SONGS, OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEXT.

VER. 1. *The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

Ver. 3. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*

Ver. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee : the king hath brought me into his chambers : we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine : the upright love thee.*

Ver. 5. *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

Ver. 6. *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me : my mother's children were angry with me ; they made me the keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

Ver. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon : for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ?*

Ver. 8. *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*

Ver. 9. *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

Ver. 10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

Ver. 11. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

Ver. 12. *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

Ver. 13. *A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me ; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

Ver. 14. *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

Ver. 15. *Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold, thou art fair ; thou hast doves' eyes.*

Ver. 16. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant : also our bed is green.*

Ver. 17. *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

It was the manner of ancient times at espousals and nuptials to indite and sing epithalamia, love-songs, Ruth iv. 11, 12. The title of the forty-fifth Psalm may seem to be penned by one of the chief singers of the temple, who now were all of them prophets, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, 1 Chron. xxv. 1-5, upon occasion of Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter ; for though she was a stranger by birth from the commonwealth of Israel, yet his marriage was lawful with her. And therefore, notwithstanding this marriage, his love to God is still commended : 1 Kings iii. 1, 3, 'Solomon

made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Solomon loved the Lord,' &c.; for indeed herein Solomon was,

First, A type of Christ, admitting the Gentiles into the fellowship of his marriage-bed.

Secondly, This Pharaoh's daughter became a proselyte to the Jewish religion: Ps. xlv. 10-14, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house,' &c.

Now, though that marriage song was penned upon that occasion, yet it ascendeth far above all earthly respects of worldly marriage, and by a divine and heavenly workmanship sets forth a heavenly marriage song between Christ and his church. Of like argument was this song penned by Solomon himself, not to express his affections to Pharaoh's daughter, or hers to him, or the good parts of either of them, no, nor the like respects to any Shunammite amongst the rest of his wives, as some have vainly conceived, for then how absurd and monstrous were some of his comparisons—likening his spouse to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot; her head to Carmel; her eyes to fish-pools; her nose to a tower; her teeth to a flock of sheep; her whole self to a terrible army with banners—but his scope is to describe the estate of the church towards Christ, and his respect towards her, from his own time to the last judgment, as afterward it shall appear.

Now, through this whole marriage song this decorum it keepeth, that though the calamities of the church be as well described throughout this song as the comfortable condition of the same in all ages, yet such dismal passages are veiled and shadowed under some sweet and amiable resemblances, lest the joy of a marriage feast should be darkened by unseasonable mention of so sad occurrences; neither are all the passages of the estate of the church in every age here described, (for how can that be in so short a song?) but the chief heads of things in every age are sweetly, and shortly, and lively, not only pointed at, but deciphered. These verses contain,

First, The title of the whole book, ver. 1.

Secondly, The description of the estate of the church in the days, first, Of Solomon, ver. 2-4; secondly, Of Solomon and Rehoboam, ver. 5.

Thirdly, Of Rehoboam, ver. 6-9.

In the title we have,

First, The form of the book: it is a song.

Secondly, The excellency of it: a song of songs.

Thirdly, The author of it: which is Solomon's.

'The song of songs,' &c. In Col. iii. 16 there is mention made,

First, Of psalms.

Secondly, Hymns.

Thirdly, Spiritual songs.

Amongst the Hebrews there were psalms made to be sung with instruments, as well as with voice, and contained arguments of all sorts for petition, thanksgiving, and instruction.

Songs were chiefly made for the voice.

Hymns are properly praises of God, though any of these are sometimes put for all.

Use 1. First, This doth let us see that it were to be wished that this book were turned into verse or metre in each language, that we might sing the Canticles as the Hebrews did.

Use 2. Secondly, This teaches us to strive for such a gracious frame of spirit, that we might always be fitted to sing to God.

This song contains the estate of the church as well in the worst as best times, yet Solomon can as well sing in the misery of the church as in her prosperity; and David, Ps. lxxix. 2, hath as well psalms of his deep waters and calamities, as of his greatest deliverances; and the Holy Ghost saith, 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' Phil. iv. 4. And though singing be chiefly fit and requisite in mirth, James v. 13, yet we should be fit also for a psalm in our affliction. But we commonly in our ill hours are too sullen to sing, and in our merry moods our spirits vanish away in carnal mirth and jollity; but whatsoever the estate of the church be, we should have our spirits as ready to sing as to pray.

Use 3. Thirdly, Is reprov'd that ancient law and custom of the synagogue, which prohibited young men, under thirty years of age, the reading and use of this book; but what age fitter for songs than cheerful youth? And further, the amorousness of the ditty will not stir up wantonness in any age if the words be well understood; but rather, by inflaming with heavenly love, will draw out, and burn up all earthly and carnal lust; and even as fire in

the hand is drawn out by holding it to a stronger fire, or as the light and heat of the sun extinguisheth a kitchen fire, so doth heavenly love to Christ extinguish base kitchen lusts.

'A song of songs,' ver. 1.—that is, a most excellent song, the chiefest of songs; as when they would express the holy place, they say, The Holy of holies, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the servant of servants, Exod. xxvi. 33; a Hebrew superlative. So this is the chiefest song; first of all Solomon's other songs, even of his thousand and five, 1 Kings iv. 32.

Secondly, Of all songs without exception; for though David was in his time the sweet singer of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, yet as Solomon's throne exceeded his in all other magnificence, so did his name exceed his also, 1 Kings i. 47. Yet this is no disparagement to the other songs; so neither that some of David's psalms should be styled golden psalms, Ps. xvi. 52, 56–58; all purified gold, Ps. xii. 6. Yet some gold wrought more exquisitely than others, and finer engraven than others; even some portion of the pure and holy word of God more exquisitely penned and polished than other.

Reason 1. The first reason why this song is more excellent than others, is because this song speaketh not only of the chiefest matter, to wit, Christ and his church, but also more largely than any of David's psalms, and with more store of more sweet and precious, exquisite and amiable resemblances, taken from the richest jewels, the sweetest spices, gardens, orchards, vineyards, wine-cellars, and the chiefest beauties of all the works of God and man.

Reason 2. Secondly, This song admitteth more variety of interpretation than any other, and also of singular use. Some have applied it to express the mutual affection and fellowship between Christ and every Christian soul; some between Christ and the Catholic church; some to particular churches, from Solomon's time to the last judgment. And there is a holy and useful truth in each one of these interpretations; but the last doth exceedingly magnify the wonderful excellency of this song, making it a divine abridgment of the acts and monuments of the church. And that this book was chiefly penned to be such a historical prophecy or prophetic history may appear,

First, By the correspondency or suitableness of the words of this song to the events of each age.

Secondly, By the repetition of the same description, and other occurrences in divers parts of this song, which would be a needless tautology if it were spoken of the same persons in the same time, as you may see if you compare chap. iv. 2, with vi. 6; and ii. 7, with iii. 5; and viii. 3, 4, 6, with viii. 5.

Reason 3. Thirdly, By the diversities of descriptions of some persons, chap. iii. 3, 6, with v. 7–9, which would intimate and imply a contradiction if they were not spoken of several times and several persons.

Reason 4. Fourthly, By the sudden admiration of some new persons and occurrences, chap. iii. 6, vi. 10, and viii. 5.

Use 1. First, We may here see the eldest son of wisdom giveth the double portion of excellency to this song above all others; yea, since the Holy Ghost giveth it; it is not therefore only canonical Scripture, but an eminent portion of it. It were profane blasphemy to prefer this song above other songs of holy Scripture, if it were not also given by divine inspiration as well as they; to prefer the invention of man before the wisdom of God were sacrilegious madness. And although none of God's ten proper names in Hebrew be once mentioned in this song, yet that impeacheth not the authority of this book more than it doth of Esther, where no name of God is mentioned at all. Besides, this book is full of such names of God as suit more with the arguments, as, well-beloved, brother, shepherd, O thou whom my soul loveth, the chiefest of ten thousand, chap. i. 7–9, and v. 10.

Use 2. Secondly, This must exhort us to a more studious reading and meditating of this book, as of a most excellent portion of holy writ.

Use 3. Thirdly, This shews us that as this scripture is canonical, so the penman of it is a canonical saint in heaven; for he must needs be so, according to that, not of Peter's successor, as the papists would have it, but of St Peter himself: 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21; so that he must needs be a saint by St Peter's confession. And not he only, but Christ himself saith, 'All the prophets are in the kingdom of God,' Luke xiii. 28. Now

all the prophets came not near this prophet, and there was no Scripture but it was penned by a prophetic and apostolic spirit ; and though Solomon did fall, yet, 'If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, &c. But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul,' 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. If some say, by this it was meant that God would not take away his kingdom ; to this it is answered, he did take it away, but he would not deal with him as he dealt with Saul ; so then this telleth us Solomon is a saint in heaven.

'Which is Solomon's,' ver. 1. Solomon the penner of it, but a wiser than Solomon indited it. The Holy Ghost maketh choice of his instruments according to the use he had to put them to ; to set forth the estate of his church by the choicest treasures of nature, he useth Solomon's spirit, which was as large as the sand of the sea-shore, 1 Kings iv. 29, 30 ; Deut. xxxiv. 1-4. And as God led Moses to the top of mount Pisgah to behold all the places and situations of Israel, so he lifted up Solomon's spirit to the mountain of activity, that I may so speak, where only all times to come are present, to behold the estate of the church throughout the present, and all after times.

Use 1. This is to teach us, as it was said before, that Solomon is a canonised saint, else he had not been a penman of canonical Scripture ; canonised, not by Peter's pretended successors, who have shamefully erred in this kind, but by Peter himself, 2 Pet. i. 21, yea, by a greater than Peter or Solomon, even Christ Jesus, Luke xiii. 28. That promise, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15, reacheth further than to prefer Solomon before Saul in reserving the kingdom to his posterity, which he took from Saul ; for even from Solomon's posterity the kingdom was cut off in Jeconiah. The promise therefore of mercy to Solomon above Saul reached to the bestowing of a heavenly kingdom upon him. Besides, in that place, two blessings are promised :

First, Adoption : 'I will be his father,' &c.

Secondly, Establishment in God's house and kingdom ; so that if the latter promise should not evince his perseverance, yet the former doth.

Use 2. Secondly, This is to stir us up to the reading and meditation of this book the more for the 1 cman's sake.

The second, third, and fourth verses sing and shew forth the estate of the church in Solomon's time ; ver. 5, the estate of the church as well in Solomon's time as in Rehoboam's. The verses following, to the ninth, the estate of the church in all the time of Rehoboam.

In the church of Solomon's time, four passages are chiefly observable :

First, Solomon's choice of heavenly wisdom, by which chiefly we enjoy sweet and familiar fellowship with God, Prov. viii. 34, 35 ; 1 Kings iii. 5, 10 ; this is expressed, ver. 2.

Secondly, The sweet savour and fame of Solomon's gifts and graces, ver. 3, to the winning of the love and admiration of the sons of men.

Thirdly, The drawing and gathering of all Israel to the king's chambers, the courts of Solomon's temple, ver. 4, or his care to bring on his people to the public worship of God, and their respect of him in regard thereof.

Fourthly, The fall and deformity of the church by idolatrous worship, and toleration thereof in many, ver. 5 ; and yet the keeping of the native beauty of the church in many others.

'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,' &c., ver. 2. It is a prayer of the church, or, which is all one, some chief member of it, for a pledge of Christ's sweet and familiar acquaintance, and love, and fellowship with her. Kisses are pledges and incentives of love : 'Men shall kiss his lips that answereth upright words,' Prov. xxiv. 26. This is the effect of upright answers, men kiss his lips ; but God kissing a man's lips is the cause of man's answering upright words. His breathing into our mouths a right answer maketh us speak accordingly ; as, on the contrary, when one answers perversely, unjustly, erroneously, Satan then hath kissed them with his kisses ; he hath sitten as a lying spirit in their mouths, 1 Kings xxii. 23, 24.

'The kisses of his mouth,' which is more than the kisses of his lips ; the one is a silent gesture of love, the other implieth also amiable speeches, when Christ,

First, By the voice of his word, or,

Secondly, By the breath of his spirit, doth either,

First, Put wisdom or grace into our hearts, Ps. cxix. 98, or,

Secondly, Speak peace or comfort to our souls, Ps. cxix. 110.

'I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace,' &c., Isa. lvii. 19. Solomon's wisdom is the grace of God, as wickedness is folly. The beginning of this wisdom is the fear of God, Prov. xvii.; the end of it is the keeping of God's commandments, Eccles. xii. 13. This wisdom whoso finds, finds Christ, the wisdom of the Father, Prov. viii. 22, 35, in whom God is well pleased with us, Mat. iii. 17, and in whom he, as it were, kisseth us. This wisdom doth not only enable us to walk godly to our salvation, but likewise fits us to go in and out before our families, before our people, and so enlarges us to all duties of our callings; and to walk in the ways of this wisdom brings peace to our souls, and to those that live under us: 'All her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 17.

'For thy love is better than wine.' The favour of God in giving wisdom, and thereby peace to a man's self, and others depending on him, is more worth than wine; that is, than whatsoever makes the heart of man glad, Ps. civ. 15, and iv. 67; Prov. iii. 13-15, and xxxi. 6, 7; Judges ix. 13. This prayer was poured out by Solomon, the chiefest member of the church in this time, when he prayed for wisdom, and preferred it before long life, riches, victory over his enemies, &c., 1 Kings iii. 5, 9, 11; 2 Chron. i. 7, 10, 11; Prov. xvi. 10.

Or else this whole verse may express the desire of the church to Solomon, that he would express his love to her by his divine sentences, and books, and songs, Eccles. xii. 9, which are better than their civil peace, than the sitting under their own vine and fig-tree, 1 Kings iv. 25.

'Because of the savour of thy good ointments.' Good ointments are the gifts and graces of God's Spirit: 'But the anointing which ye have received of him,' &c., 1 John ii. 27; so called because they heal a broken heart, as oil, Luke x. 34; Isa. lxi. 3. The oil of God's grace heals the bruises of the soul.

Secondly, As oil doth make the face to shine, so do they, Ps. civ. 15; Eccles. viii. 1.

Thirdly, As by the holy oils all the vessels of the tabernacle were consecrated, Exod. x. 23, 31, so by these graces all the vessels of mercy are consecrated to God.

Fourthly, By the ointment were anointed to their

offices kings, 1 Sam. xvi. 3, and x. 1; priests, Exod. xl. 13, 15; and some prophets, 1 Kings xix. 16; so by these graces are we anointed to God our Father in Christ, Acts i. 8, and ii. 4, 7; kings, priests, and prophets, Rev. i. 6; John xii. 3. Savour is the manifestation of these graces, as ointments are manifested by their savour.

'Thy name is as an ointment poured forth,' ver. 3—that is, precious, sweet, and famously renowned—'therefore do the virgins love thee.' The virgins in this song are such as Christ hath not yet espoused to himself, nor spoken for in way of marriage, chap. viii. 8, and vi. 8, such as carnal Jews or the Gentiles.

'Love thee,' ver. 3—that is,

First, Honourably esteem thee.

Secondly, Affect thy sight and fellowship.

Thirdly, Seek after thee. This was fulfilled in Solomon, 1 Kings xxviii. iv. 31, 34, v. 7, and x. 1, 7-9. His own people revered him, even all of them; his name was famous in all nations round about him; all the kings sent to him, and of all people some came to hear his wisdom. The queen of Sheba cometh from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear it, and counteth his people happy under it, 1 Kings x. 1, 2. Hiram king of Tyre blessed God for his wisdom, 1 Kings v. 7.

'Draw me,' ver. 4. It will be the speech of Solomon to Christ, praying that Christ would draw him to the Father, near unto him in holy duties, and promising to bring all the people to run with him after God. Or it may be the speech of the church to Solomon, desiring him to draw them together, by public edicts and proclamations, to the solemn duties of God's worship, and promising to come freely, to run together willingly in the times of such assemblies, which was done, 2 Chron. ii. 2, 3.

'The king hath brought me into his chambers,' ver. 4,—that is, into those bride-chambers where Christ familiarly converseth with them; which were three:

First, The tabernacle at Gibeon.

Secondly, The ark at Jerusalem.

Thirdly, The temple.

Into these Solomon brought the whole congregation of Israel to solemn sacrifices, 2 Chron. i. 2-6; 1 Kings viii. 5, 14, 63.

The words following in this verse shew a three-fold respect which the people are to Solomon.

First, They rejoiced in him.

Secondly, They remember his love better than wine.

Thirdly, The upright love him.

Their rejoicing in him is recorded, 1 Kings viii. 66 ; their remembrance of his love more than wine is there also implied ; for, departing from the meeting with such glad hearts, they afterward remembered the comfort thereof as more blessed than the peaceable living under their own vine and fig-tree. The love of the upright to him continueth all his time, even when his wives and hollow-hearted subjects flattered him and enticed him to toleration of idolatry.

But consider further that Solomon, when he is here set forth as the desire, praise, and blessedness of all his people, he is then a type of Christ, greater than Solomon, ver. 2, whose heavenly fellowship and instruction the church desires above wine ; whose graces are excellent, and procuring him love and renown ; of whom the church prayeth to be drawn, and who leadeth us to fellowship with God in holy worship ; whom therefore the people rejoice in, and remember his love above wine ; the upright love him.

Use 1. This, first, Doth shew us the happy estate of a church or commonwealth, when men of place labour not for preferments or worldly profits, for honour or long life, but for wise and understanding hearts, that may go in and out before the people in their callings, when they desire to be kissed with the kisses of God's mouth, that he would breathe into them such graces as be needful for their places.

Use 2. Secondly, This sheweth what procures a magistrate love and reputation, when, being enriched with God's graces as sweet ointments, he manifesteth the sweet savour thereof in all his administrations. If any man desire a good name, if any man desires love and respect, this is the way to get it : fill your hearts with the good gifts and graces of God ; let God's grace shew forth itself in your speeches, in your answers, in your practices ; this ointment will be stronger to get a good name than any other noisome thing to hinder it. The virgins will love you, for they rejoice at your faith : ' And by faith our elders were well reported of,' Heb. xi. 2. By

these Solomon got a good name all the world over.

Use 3. Thirdly, This is to teach a magistrate to draw on the people to holy duties by all means he can : by his proclamations, laws, and examples.

Use 4. Fourthly, To shew that the greatest comfort of subjects, and the strongest love to knit them in all hearty affections to their prince, is his forwardness in drawing them on, and leading them an end to the holy duties of God's worship.

' Draw me, and I will run after thee,' ver. 4. If Solomon once be drawn, all the people will come after rejoicing, when they shall see the magistrate come.

Use 5. Fifthly, To shew us a sign of a true spouse of Christ. Such a one preferreth fellowship with him above all things, ver. 2, delighting in his company, in his ordinances. Thus did Paul : ' I count all things loss and dross for Christ,' Phil. iii. 7, 8 ; so David, ' Whom have I in heaven but thee ?' Ps. lxxiii. 25.

' I am black, yet comely,' &c., ver. 5-9.

In these verses is described the estate of the church.

First, Of Israel and Judah in the last days of Solomon, and then of Rehoboam, ver. 5.

Secondly, Of Judah alone, ver. 6.

Thirdly, Of Israel alone after the apostasy of the ten tribes, ver. 7, 8.

Fourthly, Of Judah alone, in respect of his civil condition under the service of the king of Egypt, ver. 9.

' I am black,' &c., ver. 5. The church is set forth by a double adjunction, the one contrary to the other—' I am black, yet comely '—and both these by comparison :

First, Black as the tents of Kedar.

Secondly, Comely as the curtains or hangings of Solomon.

First, Black by the fall of Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 4, 9.

Secondly, By the folly of Rehoboam, 1 Kings xii. 14, 15.

Thirdly, 1. By profaneness ; 2. By schism ; 3. By apostasy ; 4. By the rebellion of the ten tribes, 1 Kings xii. 16, 18, 19.

' Yet comely.'

First, By the present purity of God's ordinances in the temple, Ps. xlviii. 1, 2 ; 2 Chron. xiii. 10-12.

Secondly, The constancy of the upright in cleaving to God, to the king, to the house of God, and David ; the which was done in profession by whole Judah and Benjamin, and the Israelites inhabiting in the cities of Judah, but in truth by the upright, 1 Kings xii. 17, 20, 23.

'Ye daughters of Jerusalem,' &c. Children of the church are called daughters rather than sons, as being prepared as a pure virgin for Christ their husband, 2 Cor. xi. 2.

'As the tents of Kedar,' &c.,—that is, of the Arabians who were called *Scenith* or Nomade, for that they wandered up and down feeding their flocks, in tents, which they made of goats' hair, a coarse stuff of itself, and being weather-beaten the more homely and black. Hereto the prophet alludeth when he calleth the church of Israel Aholah, Ezek. xxiii. 4 ; and Jerusalem Aholibah, my tent in her, for she was then as the curtains of Solomon.

It was David's grief that he was long conversant in the tents of Kedar, Ps. cxv. 5 ; the church was now like to these tents,

First, In their blackness, which resembled their adversity.

Secondly, In that she now lived among the enemies of her peace, the sons of her mother being angry with her.

Thirdly, In that black and sad defection which laid the foundation of the after captivity, when the church wandered to Babel, her tent being removed as the curtains of Solomon or hangings, having the name from the coupling together. Josephus saith¹ that Solomon's halls were hung with hanging of Babylonian tapestry in their courses or suits, and the wall of marble underneath most curiously wrought with rich imagery ; it seemeth also, each hanging inwardly more rich than other. Such was the estate of the church in time of public defection, pure and richly graced in the upright members, whom the better one inwardly knew, the more gracious they appeared.

'Look not upon me because I am black,' &c., ver. 6.

¹ Flavius Joseph. Ant., ii. 8.

This verse hath two parts :

First, An admonition of the church of Judah to the daughters of Jerusalem not to despise her, nor alienate themselves from her in regard of her blackness, or, as it is in the Hebrew, Because I am she that am black.

Secondly, A rendering a threefold reason :

First, Of her blackness.

Secondly, Of their not despising her for it.

A third reason is,

First, From the highest cause of her affliction :

'The sun hath looked upon me.'

Secondly, From the instrumental cause, the anger of her mother's children against her.

Thirdly, For the meritorious cause, which she acknowledgeth was wholly in herself, her not keeping well her own vineyard, aggravated by the divers degrees, though they made her the keeper of the vineyards.

'Look not upon me,' ver. 6,—that is,

First, With a scorching eye, sunburning me, making me still more black by your disdain and separation, as the sun is said to look upon, that is, with a scorching eye.

Secondly, With a piercing eye, as the vultures do, whereof Job speaketh, Job xxviii. 7, using the same word here used of the sun, which spieth out what he may fasten upon, any corruption or carrion.

'The sun,' ver. 6,—that is, God hath looked upon me with a scorching eye in displeasure, Ps. lxxxiv. 11, for he was angry with Solomon. It came not by chance or civil causes in polity, 1 Kings xi. 9, and xii. 24, but by divine procurement ; and therefore the daughters of Jerusalem do make such a use of it as not to alienate themselves the more from God by it. That which cometh from God should draw us nearer to God ; he did it to set us more kings in the commonwealth, as Solomon had more gods in the church.

'The sons of my mother were angry with me,' ver. 6,—that is, the ten tribes were offended ; yea, this anger of the tribes was excessive, 1 Kings xii. 16, when it brake forth into such extremity, and therefore they rather to be reproved than the church disdained.

'They made me the keeper of the vines.'

First, God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 4-6.

Secondly, All the tribes, 2 Sam. v. 3.

'Of the vines,'—that is, of all the churches, Ps. lxxx. 8; Isa. v. 1; Mat. xxi. 33.

'But mine own vineyard have I not kept,'—that is, not the churches of Judah and Jerusalem. idolatry and superstition creeping in.

No, not the vines of mine own house, my wives, Ps. cxxviii. 3, from falling to idolatry, and seducing myself to toleration of it.

'Tell me, oh thou,' &c., ver. 7. This verse containeth,

First, A prayer of the faithful dispersed throughout the ten tribes, and commanded by Jeroboam to go no more to worship at Jerusalem, but to go to Dan and Bethel, desiring to know whither to resort to find Christ feeding his sheep that hear his voice, John x. 27, 28.

Secondly, A reason to prevent her turning aside to superstitious worship by following such teachers as will not be subordinate to Christ, depending upon his direction, but companions with him, usurping to prescribe with like authority as himself in his worship, 1 Kings xii. 28, 31.

'If you know not,' ver. 8. This verse containeth Christ's answer, where observe,

First, A compellation: 'Oh thou fairest amongst women.'

Secondly, A supposition: 'If thou knowest not;' as if he should say, It is much thou shouldst not know.

Thirdly, A direction to follow in this case,

First, The footsteps of the true sheep of Christ who went up all to Jerusalem, 2 Chron. xi. 13, 14, 16.

Secondly, The tents of the faithful priests and Levite priests, who were there also; there they feed the kids and young ones, 2 Chron. xiii. 10, 11, who else might in time grow rammish and rank with superstitious and bad ministers.

'I have compared thee,' ver. 9. Here the civil estate of the church of Judah is described; for after that the recourse of the faithful priests and Levites had strengthened the hand of Rehoboam, he fell away, 2 Chron. xi. 17, and xii. 1, 2, and most of Israel with him, wherefore God sent Pharaoh Shishak, 2 Chron. xii. 2, 8, 9, (for all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs,) to subdue them to his service. So then the church of Judah is here set forth,

First, By her service to Pharaoh, as if, like horses, they drew in Pharaoh's triumphant chariot, 2 Chron. xii. 8. Josephus saith this Shishak was Sesostris, of whom Herodotus speaks; yea, of him saith Diodorus Siculus, that he caused kings as horses to draw in his chariots.

Secondly, By her acceptance to God in this service: 'I have compared thee to the company of my horses;' and so in the Hebrew, because they had submitted themselves under God's just hand, 2 Chron. xii. 6, 12. If Solomon had spoken of any of his wives or concubines, it had been a monstrous and absurd comparison to liken them to coach-horses. Also, because this is a marriage song, he setteth down expressly no dismal thing to interrupt bride-chamber joy, but veileth the service under this magnificent comparison darkly.

Use 1. This shews us what it is that makes the church black, wherein the deformity of it stands; in the fall and sins of the people, and of the princes, in declining to idolatry; in their folly, schisms, and rents from their mother; profaneness, apostasy, and rebellious in the church and commonwealth; these do darken the fairest churches.

If Solomon shall set up other gods, God will set up foreign princes in his kingdom; if he and his people will serve other gods, God will cause his princes to draw in foreign princes' chariots; if we be at unity with other gods, God will be at enmity with us.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth shew us there may be a true comely church in the midst of such deformities, yet the true church of God in the greatest darkness is always comely. It is not the sins of princes and people that can take away the church's comeliness; they may bring blackness upon her, like to the tents of Kedar, but draw these curtains aside and you shall find that God's church is comely, like to the curtains of Solomon. Run we not therefore from the church because of her blackness, but run to her and embrace her in her most sad defections.

Use 3. Thirdly, To teach the children of the church not to separate from the church for corruption sake; not to look only at her corruptions, but to see her comeliness also; and not add affliction to the afflicted; much less are we to think they in

Bohemia, and in the Palatinate, are no churches, for that they are now sunburnt. The Sun, even God, hath looked upon them, and it is not their mother's children, but the bastards of the Roman harlot have been angry with her. Let us not then look at them with a vulture's eye, as though we would behold nothing but corruption and carrion; nor with a scorching eye make them more black; but with a childlike eye to pity them for their calamity and blackness which is befallen them.

Use 4. Fourthly, Observe that the calamities of the church spring not out of the dust, but it is God that causeth darkness upon the church; yea, to speak reverently, it is he that looks at her with a scorching eye; he searcheth her sins, and, finding them out, doth blast her, that she is tanned and sunburnt. If then it be God's hand, let us pity the church so much the more, and strive with God to renew the light of his countenance upon her.

Use 5. Fifthly, This was a sin in them to be angry with the church, as some of the separation are, and do depart from us; and it is not a little sin and fault in us to despise other churches in distress. What! and if some cast off England, shall we reject it because some of the sons of her mother do so? How much less then when the sons, not of a mother, but of a harlot, hate the church beyond the seas, shall we then reject the church? God forbid!

Use 6. Sixthly, This teacheth us concerning Solomon, that,

First, He repented of his fall, acknowledged his being wanting of keeping his own vine; and,

Secondly, He wrote this song after his fall and repentance; else if he had foretold his fall and repentance before it was done, it might seem like the Jesuits' popish repentance, who confess to their priests their sin before they commit it. But he penned it after his fall, to assure us the more of his salvation, which some make doubt of.

Use 7. Seventhly, This shews us such souls are the fairest and most beautiful in Christ's eyes, as, not resting in the commandments of governments touching matter of religion, but do seek for the true church and pure worship of God, and follow it, though with neglect of their suburbs and possessions, 2 Chron. xiii. 14, 16. Christ calleth those the fairest among women who here inquire after

him, and sell all to follow him, Mat. xix. 21, 27; Luke xviii. 22, 28; Mark x. 21, 28; so these that want means of salvation at home, are desirous to seek after them, and where they find them, there they go, and part with anything to enjoy the purity of God's worship and ordinances; these in God's account are the worthiest Christians.

Use 8. Eighthly, Here is shewed two marks of the true church of God. Do any doubt whether God be God or Baal, and do halt between two opinions, not knowing whether to join with Rome or England? ver. 8. Go then out by the footsteps of the flocks, where the faithful, hearing God's voice, resort, and will not hear any voice but Christ's; follow those. Now times are such, blessed be God, as every one may find out where the church is; but in the case of blackness and darkness, inquire then,

First, For such as will hear no voice but Christ's, and follow then the footsteps of the flock; see where they feed, there join yourselves.

Secondly, Where you find faithful ministers, priests, as Aaron's sons, and Levites anointed with heavenly graces, thither carry your kids, there plant your families, to be fed under such shepherds.

Use 9. Lastly, We see here when the church neglects God's service, God gives her up to the service of foreign princes, to draw as horses in Pharaoh's chariots, ver. 9; and yet being humbled for this, God will have mercy on her, and so dispose of it, that her service shall not be base, for God will make them to draw his yoke, though they draw it in the yoke of foreign princes, as Rehoboam and his people did, 2 Chron. xii. 2, 4, 8, 9.

'Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels,' ver. 10, to end. The estate of the church is here described, as it was in the days of Abijam, in these words, 'Thy cheeks are comely with jewels;' and as it was in the days of Asa, both in the same words, and in the words following to the end of ver. 11.

'Thy cheeks;' that is, the outward face of the church, are comely with rows of jewels—that is, with keeping their right place and order and manner of God's own ordinances.

This Abijam proclaimeth himself to all the house of Israel: 'But as for us,' saith he, 'the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; the priests, which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron,

and the Levites wait upon their business. And they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table,' 2 Chron. xiii. 10-12.

It was not so with the house of Israel, ver. 8, 9. Though Abijah's heart was not so upright as David's, 1 Kings xv. 3; yet the outward face of the church, her cheeks, as it were, were comely with the orderly keeping and observing the ordinances of God, yea, and comely also was the face of the church looking up to God in distress, which moved him to deliver you from Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xiii. 12, 18.

'Thy neck with chains of gold,' ver. 10. Chains of gold are wholesome laws, binding like chains to keep the worship of God and true religion pure as gold; such laws are called chains. This was done in the days of Asa, Ps. cxlix. 8, when he removed the altars of the strange gods, pulling down the high places, breaking the images, and cutting down the groves, commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and the people willingly submitted themselves to enter into a covenant or law, 2 Chron. xiv. 2-5, and xv. 12-15, that upon pain of death all the people should seek the Lord only.

'We will make thee,' ver. 11. This sheweth the forwardness of the people to join with Asa in reforming religion and adorning the church, as is recorded, 2 Chron. xv. 10, 16.

'Borders of gold,' ver. 11; that is, the borders of the kingdom, pure as gold by cleansing and putting away all the idols out of all quarters of Judah, yea, and of Benjamin also, and mount Ephraim, the very skirts, and frontiers, and borders of the kingdom, 2 Chron. xv. 8.

'Studs of silver,' ver. 11. In works of gold are such eminent knobs as adorn the works with variety of colours, and metal, and workmanship, Prov. xv. 11.

Suchlike eminent works which did adorn Asa's reformation of the church, even to the very borders, were these three:

First, His renewing of the altars of the Lord before the porch, 2 Chron. xv. 8.

Secondly, The deposing of his mother from her regency, for her idolatry's sake, and defacing her idol, 2 Chron. xv. 16.

Thirdly, The consecrating and bringing into God's

house his father's and his own dedicated vessels of gold and silver, 2 Chron. xv. 18.

'While the king sitteth at his table,' ver. 12; that is, while Jehoshaphat sits at rest and peace, refreshing himself at home, God establishing his kingdom in his hand, and giving him riches and honours in abundance, 2 Chron. xvii. 15.

'My spikenard,' ver. 12. An ointment of all others most precious;¹ of all other spices spikenard is of greatest estimation. This the apostle John calleth very costly, wherewith our Saviour Christ was-anointed by Mary.

By spikenard is here meant the preaching of the word, which is of all savours the most precious, even the savour of life unto life, 2 Cor. ii. 16.

When Jehoshaphat was established in rest and peace he sent forth the priests and Levites to carry the sweet savour of the word throughout all the cities of Judah, 2 Chron. xvii. 8, 9.

'A bundle of myrrh,' ver. 13. Myrrh is an odoriferous tree, that sweateth out a sweet gum called *stacte*, which is preferred before all others.²

This gum is also called from the tree myrrh; his smell is strong and fragrant, and fit to preserve from putrefaction, and it is of much use in embalming, and God himself recounteth it amongst the principal spices, Exod. xxx. 23.

'Between my breasts,' ver. 13. The breasts are those that give milk, the sincere milk of the word, to the church's children, 1 Pet. ii. 2—to wit, the priests and Levites. These, when Jehoshaphat sent forth to give milk to the cities of Judah, he sent with them a company of noblemen, religious princes, who added the more authority to the priests and Levites, and are therefore themselves said to teach in the cities of Judah, 2 Chron. xvii. 7. Thus these princes were as a bundle of myrrh amongst the priests and the Levites, to decide all controversies amongst the people, both in matters concerning God and the king; to preserve the people and one another free from corruption in all matters, whether of religion or civil justice, 2 Chron. xix. 5-12. Yea, and Jehoshaphat himself, representing Christ the church's well-beloved upon earth, he rested in the bosom of the church as a bundle of myrrh, sweet,

¹ Plin., lib. xi. cap. xii.

² Plin., lib. xii. cap. 16.

and strongly preserving the people from corruption; from Beersheba to mount Ephraim he went about, throughout all the people, to bring them back again to the purity of God's worship, 2 Chron. xix. 3, 4.

'As a cluster of camphire,' ver. 14. Camphire is a shrub for smell like unto spikenard, wasting the obstruction of the spleen, and by the very smell of it making men *vegetiores et firmiores*,¹ more lively and more strong; yea, and available also against the biting of serpents; such was Christ to his church when the children of Moab and Ammon and mount Seir gathered themselves together against the children of Israel in Engedi, 2 Chron. xx. 12; for by the ministry of Jehaziel he made Jehoshaphat and his people,

First, More strong in faith to rest on God and his word, 2 Chron. xx. 14-20.

Secondly, More lively and heartily to praise God; yea, and he saved them from their enemies, 2 Chron. xx. 21-24, themselves not striking a stroke, though their enemies, the breed of the old serpent, put them before in great fear, ver. 3, 12.

'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair,' ver. 15. The doubling of the words expresseth the superlative degree by a usual Hebraism. Fair fair, that is, very fair, which sheweth the estate of the church in Hezekiah's time, who returned and set the priests and Levites in their courses, restored their burnt sacrifices and oblations, sanctified the priests, called all the people to the passover, 2 Chron. xxix., xxx., and xxxi. 1, 2, prayed for their healing, took away all the images, groves, and high places.

'Thou hast doves' eyes,' ver. 15,—that is, chaste, and loathing uncleanness, as Pliny² reports the doves to be. Hezekiah loathed even the monuments of idolatry, even the brazen serpent, (though sometimes God's ordinance,) when once the people went a-whoring after it; so by this means abuses that crept into the church in the days of Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, 2 Kings xviii. 4, are not recorded till they come to be cleansed, lest the joy of the marriage song should be darkened by the mention of so sad occurrences; whence also it is that the abuses that crept in after the death of Hezekiah, in the days of Manasseh and Ammon, are not men-

tioned till their cleansing came, recorded in the days of Josiah.

'Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green,' ver. 16. This is the estate of the church in the days of good Josiah, who reformed it to the like estate of purity and beauty as in the days of Hezekiah; yea, in this he exceeded him, in taking away the high places which Solomon had built for his wives' idols, 2 Kings xxiii. 13, as also some other corruptions of Ahaz, ver. 12; and besides, he made all the people to worship the Lord only, and to serve him, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 32, 33.

'Yea, pleasant.' It being more than fair, so young a man to work so great a work of reformation, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-7.

'Our bed is green.' The house of God was the temple, the bed in the house were the ordinances of God, wherein God was wont familiarly to embrace his spouse, and she him.

These, in Josiah's time, flourished in greatest purity, 2 Chron. xxxv. 18, so that there was no passover like unto his.

'Our bed is green.' It is an allusion to the spring-time, when the worship of God began to flourish again after a winter-time of mire and dirty pollutions.

'The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters, (or walls, or galleries,) of fir,' ver. 17. These words set out the beauty of the church, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8, 14, in regard of the repairs of the temple made by Josiah.

Use 1. The use is to observe the several beauties and ornaments of the church, which are,

First, To enjoy each ordinance of God in his rank and place; it is as if the cheeks or open face of the church were decked with rows of jewels. Jeroboam made priests of the basest of the people, and such defect or corruption of God's ordinances is a blemish conspicuous in the face of the church.

Use 2. Secondly, Good kings ought to put upon their people wholesome laws, and strait binding to the purity of religion and the worship of God; it is no impeachment to their Christian liberty, as Anabaptists dote, but an ornament to their beauty, making their necks comely as with chains of gold. It was the commandment of Asa, 'Whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to

¹ Plin., lib. xxi. cap. 18.

² Plin., lib. x. cap. 34.

death,' 2 Chron. xv. 13; 'And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present to serve, even to serve the Lord their God,' 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

Use 3. Thirdly, People to be ready to bind themselves by solemn covenant and oath to keep such laws, and to assist their princes in cleansing their uttermost borders and corners of the kingdom from superstition and idolatry; and it is no impeachment of Christian liberty to bow to Christian laws; yea, it is the beauty of a Christian church to wear those chains, those laws, which were made for the good of the church, and it was their profaneness and rebellion that say, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, Ps. ii. 3.

Use 4. Fourthly, Princes to send forth savoury and gracious ministers into all quarters of their dominions, that all their people may taste and feel how sweet the preaching of the word is. This is the ornament of a church, when Christian princes so provide that all places may be furnished with preaching ministers; this is to open a box of spike-nard, that the smell thereof may flow forth, but to leave them relished with the dregs of superstition, this is a blemish.

Use 5. Fifthly, To see that the nobles and magistrates countenance priests and Levites, ver. 13, and by their authority to give the free passage to the word, and to prevent disturbances which else might be offered to ministers in their churches, yea, all magistrates to prevent corruptions in matters, whether of religion or civil justice, is as if a bundle of myrrh should lodge in the breasts of the church.

Use 6. Sixthly, The Lord Jesus to refresh and strengthen the hearts and spirits of his people in public calamities, and to save them from the malignity and venom thereof; he is then as a cluster of camphire to the church in the vineyards of Engedi, as he was to Jehoshaphat and his people when they knew not what to do, 2 Chron. xx. 12. Christ is an ornament, and encourageth both priest, prophet, and prince, to sing a psalm of thanksgiving, ver. 22. And suppose enemies should be as a cluster in the border of the church, how easy a thing is it for God to strengthen, and be as a cluster of camphire, to

strengthen and encourage them against these biting serpents.

Use 7. Seventhly, Not to foster and tolerate inveterate corruptions, though received from worthy ancestors, but to hate all abuses in God's worship, even the very monuments of idolatry, and to take them away, as Hezekiah did the brazen serpent, 2 Kings xviii. 4, and to set each ordinance of God in his place; the church then is very fair, she hath doves' eyes.

Use 8. Eighthly, Young princes to begin betimes to lift up their hearts to redress abuses in the church, to imitate the best of their predecessors, yea, and to go beyond them, as Josiah did, and to restore God's worship to her native beauty and integrity. It is a fair, yea, a pleasant thing, to behold this forwardness in any, much more in young princes.

Use 9. Ninthly, To enjoy the worship of God, purged from all superstition, idolatry, and from all devices of men; it is as if a bed were green, fresh, flourishing, and fruitful. In such worship Christ delights to reveal and communicate himself familiarly with his people, and loveth not to come into a harlot's bed, decked with the laces of tapestry of Egypt, Prov. vii. 16.

Use 10. Tenthly, Suppose the church again and again be laid waste, so that instead of camphire is mass and idolatry, it is an easy thing with God to send a Josiah to root out such superstitions; that though abuses crept into the church for three or four princes' lives, yet God can cleanse and reform her, as he did in Josiah's time. God looks not at the corruptions of his church thereby to loathe her, but to heal her, and thereby to glorify his grace in her recovery, rather than his holiness in the discovery of her pollutions.

The bed is here mentioned in the spring of her flourishing, when it began to wax green, not in the winter season of her dirty pollutions; and before, the chaste eyes of the dove recorded, abhorring uncleanness, not the eyes full of adultery, bringing spiritual pollutions into the church, 2 Pet. ii. 14. When there is any superstitious worship, there it is overspread with winter, but when it is purged, then is the bed green; when God's ordinances are kept pure, there Christ delighteth to be.

Use 11. Eleventhly, It is an ornament of the

church to restore her with beams of cedar, and her walls or galleries with fir. Cedar is famous for durability, enduring even to eternity, saith Pliny.¹ Fir is acceptable for his sweetness, and while he groweth, for his height, straightness, and perpetual greenness; Solomon's house or temple was of old a lively type, partly,

First, Of the human body of Christ, the temple of the deity, John ii. 19, 21.

Secondly, Of the mystical body of Christ, Col. ii. 9, his church or congregation, 1 Cor. iii. 16, and vi. 19. Christ's human body never decayeth, and therefore needeth no repairing; his mystical body, the church, if it fall into decay, through corruption of doctrine or worship, it may be most fitly repaired,

First, By laying in the walls of the church such solid and eternal truths of God as may hold up the walls of the building.

Thus Luther restored the church by laying this beam of cedar, the doctrine of free justification by Christ.

Secondly, By setting up such worship and works for the people to walk in as are truly sweet and amiable in God's sight, springing from fresh and green sincerity, growing up to the heavens; these are like galleries of fir, whereas vows of perfection, and works of supererogation, and all other relics and rags of popery, are no better than rotten and moth-eaten wood, fit fuel for the fire.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

Ver. 2. *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

Ver. 3. *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

Ver. 4. *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

Ver. 5. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.*

¹ Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 5, 16, 41.

Ver. 6. *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

Ver. 7. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses, and by the kinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

Ver. 8. *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

Ver. 9. *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*

Ver. 10. *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Ver. 11. *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;*

Ver. 12. *The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*

Ver. 13. *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Ver. 14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

Ver. 15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.*

Ver. 16. *My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.*

Ver. 17. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.*

The estate of the church from Josiah's repair of the temple, in the last verse of the last chapter, is described here,

First, Before the captivity, ver. 1, 2, under the last days of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, 2 Kings xxiii. 30, 34, and xxiv. 6, 17.

Secondly, In the captivity:

1. At home, the remnant, ver. 3.

2. Abroad, in Babylon, ver. 4-7.

Thirdly, In the end after the captivity, where is described,

1. Her calling out of captivity, to return and worship in Jerusalem, ver. 8-13.

Secondly, Her estate at Jerusalem till the days of the Maccabees, ver. 14-17.

'I am the rose.' The rose is,

First, Lovely for beauty.

Secondly, Sweet for smell, comforting both heart and brain.

Thirdly, Wholesome for use, and medicinal.

'Of Sharon.' Sharon was a fruitful field lying under Bashan, where the herds were wont to feed, excellent for fatness and fruitfulness, 1 Chron. v. 16, 17, and xxvii. 29; Isa. xxxiii. 9, and xxxv. 2.

'And the lily.' The lily is, first, Fragrant, Mat. vi. 28, 29.

Secondly, Fair, yet of the valleys, where the herds used to feed, as in Sharon, 1 Chron. xxvii. 29.

These words then set forth the church's complaint at that time, as some interpreters of chief worth have conceived it, though the words may as fitly be uttered by Christ himself, to set forth both his own disposition and the church's estate.

The first, He was then the rose of the field, the lily of the valleys, to shew that when the church despised him to converse with her in the temple, and the worship there celebrated, he was now ready to leave his temple, and to be a sanctuary to his church abroad, chap. i. 16, 17; Ezek. ix. 3, x. 4, 9, and xi. 23, 16.

Secondly, Christ is here described according to the estate of the church of that time, which wanted culture, ordering, and dressing, thorns and briers growing up in the church, and not weeded out. The wicked are as thorns and briers, 2 Sam. xxiii. 6; and store of them growing up in the church, Micah vii. 4.

When the church is as a garden enclosed, Cant. iv. 12, then briers and thorns are weeded out; but neither magistrate nor minister did his duty in removing offences in those days; so lilies of the field are taken for lilies neglected, Mat. vi. 28, 29, which neither take care for themselves, nor others take care for them, ver. 2, 3.

Thirdly, As the rose of the field, or lilies of the valleys, or lily amongst the thorns, is continually, First, Subject to be pricked and rent with thorns.

Secondly, Trodden under foot by the herds of beasts; so the church was then subject,

1. To be vexed with the wicked growing up with her.

2. To be trodden under foot by the beasts of the field, the Babylonians, the Egyptians.

Josiah, how sweet a rose! how fair a lily! yet how untimely trodden down by Necho! 2 Chron. xxxv. 22-24. The other kings were placed, displaced, imprisoned, and the whole kingdom with them, at the pleasure of the Babylonians and Egyptians, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17, and in the end the whole church laid waste by the Babylonians.

Again, Christ is the rose and lily, as being,

First, Sweet with the savour of his graces.

Secondly, Beautiful.

Thirdly, Medicinal.

When the church is corrupt in itself, it is yet fair and sweet in Christ; in him our life is hid in our worst taking, Col. iii. 3, he being white as a lily by the purity of his righteousness, we likewise are white as lilies in him, clothed with his righteousness.

'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat me down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste,' ver. 3. A tree, first, Not tall, as the cedar of Lebanon, not strong, as the oaks of Bashan, but a tree of middle stature, implying an inferior magistrate, not so high and mighty as the monarchs of the world, yet such whose shadow yields,

First, Refreshing to a man wandering and fainting in a wild forest.

Secondly, Whose fruit is sweet and comfortable. Such was Christ to his church, dispensing himself in Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made governor over the remnant of the people that were left in the land, 2 Kings xxv. 22.

First, Under him, as under a shadow, they were fearless and safe, 2 Kings xxv. 23-25; but after he was cut down they were driven from under his shadow, and durst stay no longer in their own country, which was left as a wild forest, ver. 26.

Secondly, They gathered,

First, Much sweet summer fruit, Jer. xl. 10-12.

Secondly, Much good instruction and direction from Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer. xl. 6, and xlii. 6, who both lived with him.

'Wine-cellar,' ver. 4. Heb., House of wine, not so

fitly termed banqueting house, which Solomon expresseth by another name, Eccles. vii. 2. A wine-cellar is a low vault under the ground, dark, cold, raw, and gloomy, yet replenished with vessels of liquor, which refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth.

This house, to the church, was Babylon, whither God brought his people into captivity, which at first view seemed doleful and heavy, but afterward yielded to them many sweet tastes, yea, deep draughts of God's favour. God's Spirit coming upon men makes them seem as full of new wine, Acts ii. 13; it refresheth and enlargeth the heart, and openeth the mouth,

First, To the praise of God.

Secondly, To the edification of his church. Such a spirit God poured upon Daniel, Ezekiel, Shadrach, and his fellows in the captivity, Dan. i. 19, 20.

'And his banner over me was love.'

Banner :

First, For an ensign of defence to the church.

Secondly, For a flag of defiance to their enemies. How lovingly and gloriously, as with a banner of love displayed, did God defend the three children, and Daniel himself! Dan. iii. 25, and vi. 22.

How did God offer defiance to idolatry in the three children! Dan. v. 16-18, and vi. 10.

'Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love,' ver. 5. I, the church, is here faint and sick, and ready to swoon, for desire of further fellowship with Christ, and for her own help desireth,

First, Flagons of wine to stay her.

Secondly, Apples to comfort her, as indeed apples do comfort the heart and stomach, prevents swooning, and restrains poison.¹ Thus Daniel, through abundance of revelations, was faint and sick, and desirous of more clear knowledge of his visions, and of the church's deliverance, and found the angel ready to refresh and strengthen him, Dan. viii. 27, and x. 12, 15, 19. And the other members of the church, feeling such sweet taste of Christ's presence amongst them in the captivity, were, doubtless, earnestly desirous of more full enjoying him perfectly,

First, By the ministry of the prophets, as by flagons of wine.

Secondly, By the magistracy of Daniel and his fellows, Dan. ii. 48, 49, whom the king set up for inferior magistrates, as by apples, the fruit of the apple-trees.

'His left hand is under my head, his right hand doth embrace me,' ver. 6.

The words may be either a narration how it is, or a prayer that it may be; so in the original the blessings of God's left hand are riches and glory, and of his right hand length of days or immortality, Prov. iii. 16. Riches and honours God conveyeth to us by the hand of the magistrate, immortality by the hand of ministers.

The church therefore desireth God in her captivity, which thing also God granted, that,

First, Princes should be the lifters up of her head, her nursing fathers and mothers.

Secondly, Prophets and priests might deliver to her the sweet testimonies of Christ's embracing love; this was done by Evil-merodach to Jehoiachin, 2 Kings xxv. 27, 30, and by the ministry of Daniel and Ezekiel, Dan. ii. 48, 49.

The princes allowed them great liberty, the prophets dispensed heavenly and comfortable doctrine, Jer. xxix. 5, 6.

'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please,' ver. 7. Heb., I adjure you—that is, I cause you to swear by the roes and by the hinds of the field, not by them as the persons thou art to swear by, but by those for whose sake and by whose means they are to take themselves bound as by a solemn oath not to stir up or awake my love—that is, not to provoke Christ to exercise his church by any change of their estate till it shall please himself.

These roes and hinds are wild and fearful creatures, easily and swiftly running away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep; such were then the Gentiles willing to converse with the Jews, and to come towards religion; yet if the estate of the church should have proved more troublesome by any indiscreet or offensive carriage of the Jews, they would soon have started back from fellowship with them. For their sakes therefore the church chargeth her daughters, as by an oath, not to disturb the peace of Babel, not to seek preposterously deliverance from

¹ Fernelius, a physician.

thence before the time that Christ had appointed, lest it turned to the disturbance of her peace, and to the carrying away such Gentiles as were coming on to be proselytes, Jer. xxix. 4-9.

Use 1. This may first let us see, that notwithstanding the reformation of religion, Christ may be pleased rather to live abroad in the fields than at home, where the people would willingly assemble. The house of God was now repaired, and the bed green, ver. 16, 17; and the church invites Christ to come in unto her in it, yet he disposeth himself so as more willing to call her abroad. So we may see that notwithstanding the purity and simplicity of Christ's worship, yet Christ is not bound to any place; if things were never so reformed, yet he might leave us, and go into the wild field. Rome hath long doated on Peter's chair, and Jerusalem might as well have bragged of her privileges as any other place, but Christ leaves them. Never rest we then in any outward estate, for Christ may leave us. The Palatinate hath been as reformed as any church for doctrine, and though they might say their bed was green, and their beams were of cedar, and their rafters of fir, yet God hath left them; for do we think that if God had been there these things had befallen them that now are?

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see that though magistrates and ministers should both neglect their duties in ordering and dressing the church, so that the wicked were tolerated to grow up with them, yet God keeps the spirits of his children sweet and pure, as roses and lilies in the midst of briers and thorns. Be not deceived then, for there may be roses and lilies growing where is nothing but briers and thorns to scratch them. It is not straight no church, when it is there, for Christ can see his church though she be there.

Use 3. Thirdly, We may here observe against the separatist, that it is not straight no church that is commingled, as they speak, with notorious wicked ones. The church may be Christ's love, yea, and a fragrant and pure flower in his sight and nostrils, and yet live amongst briers and thorns.

Use 4. Fourthly, Observe the state of the church is sometimes exposed to opportunity of treading under foot, no wall nor hedge to fence them; it may lie open,

First, To scratching and rending of thorns.

Secondly, To treading under foot of the wild beasts, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13.

Use 5. Fifthly, This serves to direct inferior magistrates how to carry themselves towards the church, to be as apple-trees in a wood, wherein the church travelling may find,

First, Shadow of protection.

Secondly, Sweet fruit of loving mercy.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may here see the wonderful power of God and goodness to his church, in turning their house of bondage into a house of wine, in spreading also his banner of love over them in their greatest distresses and dangers. What more doleful times of his church than captivity, when men would think God carries his church into a dungeon, then he carries her into a wine-cellar. This may be a ground of solid comfort to us in our worst takings; for though we be in the greatest extremity, yea, in the deepest dungeon of darkness, God can sustain and uphold us here, and refresh us with many comforts.

Use 7. Seventhly, This ought to stir us up to more ardent and longing affections after Christ, so that as we be ready to faint and swoon through earnest affections after more full and familiar fellowship with him. It was Daniel's case, he was sick of love; so let it be with us for want of God's presence, and pray that God would refresh us with his presence, and send good ministers and good magistrates to be as nursing fathers to his church, Isa. xlix. 23.

Use 8. Eighthly, This serves to teach, and straitly to charge the children of God, when they enjoy God's presence and favour in the ministry and magistracy sustaining and comforting them, to take heed of disturbing their peace,

1. By any indiscreet; or,

2. Offensive carriage; for it is,

First, A disturbance to Christ himself; he is stirred up and awaked, as it were, before he please.

Secondly, The roes and hinds of the field, young comers on in religion, are soon scared away by dangers and troubles arising against the church; therefore we should be careful and take heed we provoke not any dog to bark, for then they will be gone. Let us therefore walk wisely and inoffensively, that none be discouraged, that Christ, who doth sustain us and refresh us, may dwell with us for ever.

'The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,' ver. 8, to the end.

In these words are described,

First, The church's deliverance out of captivity; where is laid down,

First, The preparation to the deliverance in the causes of it; which were,

First, The voice of the beloved.

Secondly, The coming of the beloved, and that swiftly:

First, Leaping and skipping.

Secondly, As a young hart or roe, ver. 8, 9.

Thirdly, His besieging Babel and overcoming it, set forth in three actions:

First, Standing behind the wall.

Secondly, Looking out at the windows.

Thirdly, Shewing himself through the lattice, ver. 8, 9.

Secondly, The calling out of captivity.

First, To go out of Babylon into their own country, ver. 10-13; whereunto there are motives:

First, From removal of impediments, ver. 11.

Secondly, From store of opportunities, ver. 12, 13.

Thirdly, To worship God in public meetings in their own country, ver. 14.

Secondly, The state of the church returned into their own country, in regard,

First, Of opposition of enemies, ver. 15, subtle and ravenous, where is set forth,

First, Their nature; they are foxes, little foxes.

Secondly, The harm they do; they spoil the vines.

Thirdly, There take us the foxes.

Secondly, Of their communion with Christ's outward enemies, and inward abuses restrained, partly, more plentiful and entire.

First, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.'

Secondly, 'Feedeth amongst the lilies,' ver. 16.

Secondly, Interrupted, and yet by turns Christ often and speedily visiting and succouring them, and that to the time of the coming of Christ, and the abolishing of the shadows of the ceremonial law, ver. 17.

'The voice of my beloved,' ver. 8. This was the report of Cyrus coming to besiege Babel, and his

mustering together of many nations to that service, which rumour was discerned by the faithful to be the accomplishment of the prophecies given them before of deliverance by Cyrus, Isa. xlv. 28. and xlv. 1. And therefore the church, hearing this rumour, suddenly acknowledgeth in it the promise and voice of Christ, Jer. l. 42, 43, 46; and so it was no less grateful to them than doleful and dreadful to the Babylonians.

'He cometh leaping upon the mountains.'

'My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the window, shewing himself through the lattice, ver. 9.

These words express the great expedition and speed which Cyrus made in his journey against Babel; all the nations lying in the way,

First, Either of themselves setting open their gates to him, as weary of the Babylonian yoke;

Secondly, Or speedily surprised and subdued.

'He standeth behind the wall.' Laying siege to the walls of Babylon.

'He looketh forth at the windows,'—that is, he giveth some glimpse of hope of further enlargement to the church.

'He sheweth himself through the lattice.' As in the original, any place burned through. In the siege of Babel, Cyrus diverting the course of Euphrates another way, which before came through the midst of the city, burning up the reeds, and drying up the water passages, he shewed himself through the place and entered the city, Jer. xxx. 31, 32.

'My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away,' ver. 10,—that is, Cyrus made open proclamation for my departure out of Babel, and return into mine own country, Ezra ii. 1-4. Though Cyrus was a heathen, and knew not Christ the beloved, yet the church in Cyrus saw the hand and voice of Christ, using Cyrus as an instrument for deliverance, Isa. xlv. 4, 5; whence Ezra saith, 'The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus,' Ezra i. 7.

'For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,' ver. 11.

That is, first, Partly it was now spring-time of the year; the winter and rain were now over, which else might have hindered travel.

Secondly, The metaphorical winter of Babel's captivity, and all the storms of it, were blown over ; whence it is the Chaldean word is here used to signify this winter, not the common Hebrew word.

'The flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.' ver. 12.

Which, with the words following, is,

First, Partly a description of the spring-time, which invited them to this journey.

Secondly, Partly a setting before them of such conveniences which, like to the spring-time, might invite them to this journey.

'The flowers appear on the earth ;' that is, even they of the people of the countries amongst whom they sojourned, they both,

First, Praised God for their deliverance, Ps. cxxvi. 1-3.

Secondly, Furnished them with gold and silver, and other useful things, for their journey, Ezra i. 4, 6-8.

'The time of the singing of birds is come.' To wit, that the priests and Levites should now sing and praise God in their own countries, which they thought unseasonable to do in a strange land, Ps. cxxvii. 3, 4.

'The voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;' that is, of Christ the faithful spouse of his church, who is mourning in Judea because he findeth not his mate (the church) there.

'The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell,' ver. 13,—that is, the chief of the fathers and elders of the people, they shew themselves forward to countenance the journey, and to prepare for it.

'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away,' ver. 10, 13. Being twice repeated, it argueth the people were slack to leave their states, which they had planted themselves in at Babel, and therefore stood in need of calling on again and again.

'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely,' ver. 14.

'O my dove ;' that is, my chaste, innocent, and fair spouse.

'That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs.' That now dost worship me in holes and corners.

'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.' Let me see thee assembled into the face of a church in my sanctuary, let me there hear thee calling upon me, singing praise to me, speaking my word.

'For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely.'

First, The voice of the church, at one and the same time,

First, Rejoicing in God's wonderful mercy.

Secondly, Weeping and bewailing, partly,

First, Their own unworthiness.

Secondly, The decays of the church in regard of former times, Ps. xiv. 6, 1-3, with Jer. i. 4, 5 ; Ezra iii. 11-13, 15.

'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines : for our vines have tender grapes,' ver. 15 ; that is, restrain the foxes, the little foxes, the enemies of the church, of greater or less power, such as were the Samaritans, Ezra iv. 2-4, and v. iii ; Neh. iv. 1-3 ; Esther iii. 8, 9. These spoiled the vines, hindered the proceeding of the building of the temple, Ezra iv. 4, 5, 23, 24, and the peace of the church. And therefore Tobiah said truly of himself and his fellows, that they, as foxes, going upon the weak foundation of the walls of Jerusalem, might easily demolish the same, Neh. iv. 3. Yet these foxes in the end were taken and restrained, first, Partly by the edict of Darius, Ezra vi. 11, 13 ; secondly, Partly by the hanging of Haman and his sons, and the destruction of some other of the Jews' enemies, Heb. vii. 10, and ix. 14, 16.

'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' ver. 16. The church enjoyeth familiar and comfortable communion with Christ, these enemies being quelled, Neh. viii.

'She feedeth among the lilies ;' that is, among pure and fair Christians, all corruptions being weeded out, both of strange wives, Ezra x., of usury, of right of the Levites' maintenance and ministration, and profanation of the Sabbath, Neh. xiii.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,' ver. 17.

'Turn, my beloved;' that is, return often to visit and succour me.

'As a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether;' that is, swiftly and speedily, Bether being near to them on the other side Jordan. 2 Sam. ii. 29; as who should say, though thou sometime turn from us, yet be not far, but ready ever and anon to return and succour us.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away;' that is, till Christ come, and the ceremonial shadows vanish.

Use 1. First, This teacheth us that in all the instruments of the church's deliverance we should see and discern Christ speaking and working in them; see here the church looks not at Cyrus so much, but at Christ in him. Do they hear a rumour of a deliverance? Is it the voice of Christ? and it must needs be a strong voice which Christ is the author of. The wisest Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they say it is Christ, and all the rest yield; and the church sees Christ come skipping. Doth it see Cyrus about the walls? She sees Christ there. Doth she see Cyrus shewing himself through the lattice? She sees Christ there. Doth she see when he is possessed there, and makes proclamation to them to go up again to Jerusalem? She looks at it as Christ's voice, saying, 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away,' ver. 13.

So the Holy Ghost teacheth, what favour any doth shew to the church, it is Christ that doth it; so take it, that if any good befall the church it is Christ that doth it; if any lead into captivity, Nebuchadnezzar or any other, it is Christ that leads her into a wine-cellar; if there be any noise or work of deliverance, it is Christ that comes leaping and skipping; so in all the calamities, and in all the blessings that befall the church, ascribe all to Christ. The same hand that gave, the same hand hath taken away, Job i. 21, and xlii. 10; God turned the captivity of Job, and God turned again the captivity of his people, Ps. xii. 6, 11. This is a wonderful stay to God's church, and to every member of it; for man cannot bring it into captivity and bring it out again; man's hand cannot bring hard things upon the church, nor bring her out again of them; for if it were in men's hands, or in Satan's, or in our own hands, it would not go well with us; but being

in Christ's hands alone, it may be a stay and a comfort.

Use 2. Secondly, This teacheth us that when the time of the church's deliverance is come, Christ will come quickly and speedily for her deliverance, leaping and skipping as a roe or a hart. The winter shall not always remain on the church; no, not when she deserves a black winter. 'The patient abiding of the saints shall not always be forgotten,' Ps. ix. 18. Suppose God leads his church into captivity seven years, yea, seventy years, yet it will not always continue. This may serve to comfort us in the distresses of the church at home or abroad. God will not always punish with reproach or desolation, but the time will come these will be gone and flee away.

Use 3. Thirdly, This lets us see the church profited by calamities; she comes out better from them than she went into them; she entered and went into captivity hating God, defiled with many abominations; she returns out 'My love, my fair one.' The church of God, and the members of it, are more lovely in God's sight by the hard times that pass over them. When this church had been seventy years in captivity—a hard time it was—yet they lost nothing by it; they kissed his rod, and sought God, Jer. xii. 7, 8; and now he styles them lovely. He loathed them because they loathed him; they were now tried and purified. Before they were loathsome, but now are lovely; before hated, but now loved. But see what a blessed use chastisements are of to the church: how loathsome soever we go into captivity, when we defile ourselves with lusts and sins, yet when we have been thoroughly humbled with some crosses, how fair come we out! 'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction,' Prov. iii. 11. And why doth God say, Deut. viii. 16, he proved them to do them good? when he saith *my love*, it is more than lovely; it is love, it is love itself; and *fair one* is more than fair. So, 'It is good for me,' saith David, 'that I have been afflicted,' Ps. cxix. 71. So the church before her affliction was loathsome, foul, hated; but now she is fair and lovely.

'Thou art fair, O my love.'

Use 4. Fourthly, This lets us see the church's winter. Storms shall not always lie upon her, but

they shall in the end blow over. 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous,' Ps. cxxv. 3.

Use 5. Fifthly, We may see that outward comforts are easily able to drown in us a longing after God's ordinances. The contentment that some found in captivity made them stand in need of often calling to return to Zion.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may learn here that the face of the church is not always visible and conspicuous in the eyes of men, but always in the eyes of God; for they meet under the stairs, and worship God in holes and corners. And a while after Christ saith, Why dost thou lie thus under the stairs and in clefts of rocks? Let me see thy face and hear thy voice. The church of Rome advanceth herself, that she hath always been conspicuous. But this is no true sign of a true church, for the true church is not always conspicuous: though Christ always sees some to meet in corners and holes, yet not always in solemn assemblies. The dove of Christ Jesus sometimes makes her rest in the rocks, and builds under the stairs, where Christ sees her, but not publicly.

Use 7. Seventhly, See here the church needs not angels and saints to mediate for her; her own voice is sweet, and countenance comely, in God's estimation, ver. 14. 'At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me,' John xvi. 26, 27. Christ tells us he shall have no great need to pray for us, for God himself loveth us, to hear our voice, and to see us. Let us then not be afraid to put forth our voices. Labour then for such a spirit as to grieve for our sins, and to rejoice in God's mercies, for God is pleased with that. He is a true citizen of Zion, that when he abounds in God's mercies, yet he weeps for his sins; and when he weeps for his sins, yet he is thankful for God's mercies.

Use 8. Again, observe, the church shall always be troubled with some enemies: 'Take us the foxes that spoil the vines,' ver. 16. There shall be ever some Sanballat, or Tobiah, or some other, to be nibbling at the church of God. Wonder not at this, for this will be so. But observe, touching these enemies of the church,

First, They shall deal subtly and craftily with her.

Secondly, They may disturb and hinder her peace and proceedings. But,

Thirdly, They shall in the end be restrained, as in Rev. xix. 20, 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, &c. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.' Therefore let such foxes know the time will come when Christ will either take them, and chain them and bind them up, as he did Sanballat, Tobiah, Shethlar-boznai, Ezra vi. 6, 7, or else hang them up, as he did Haman and his sons. Let men then take heed that they do not push at the church, for God will either chain them up, or hang them out of the way.

Use 9. Lastly, Here we may see, when the enemies of the church are restrained or destroyed, and corruptions weeded out of it, the church then enjoyeth sweet, and safe, and full fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and he with her. He gives her pledges of his favour, and she gives him pledges of pure worshipping him. He feeds them with his ordinances, they him with their sacrifices. And they that would procure Christ this, let them provide for weeding out of their sins, as usury, wicked marriages, profanations of God's sabbaths, &c. Such churches shall be sweet, and much sweet solace shall they enjoy one with another, Christ with them, and they with him.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

Ver. 2. *I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

Ver. 3. *The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

Ver. 4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

Ver. 5. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

Ver. 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant?*

Ver. 7. *Behold his bed, which is Solomon's: three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*

Ver. 8. *They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*

Ver. 9. *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*

Ver. 10. *He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.*

Ver. 11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not, &c.*

This chapter setteth forth the estate of the church from after the days of Nehemiah to the time of Christ's sojourning here on earth in a twofold period:

First, Under the Maccabees, ver. 1-6.

Secondly, In John Baptist's time, ver. 6-11.

The state of the church in the Maccabees' time was partly full of calamities, as a time of darkness: 'By night I sought him,' ver. 1; and partly sweetened with some more comfortable issue.

This calamity is set forth,

First, By resemblance to night: 'By night I sought him.'

Secondly, By the absence of Christ, whom she sought in vain, ver. 2.

First, In her bed, ver. 1.

Secondly, In the streets of the city, ver. 2.

Thirdly, Amongst the watchmen, ver. 3.

The comfortable issue of her seeking Christ is set forth.

First, By her finding of him, ver. 4.

Secondly, By her holding of him, ver. 4.

Thirdly, By her bringing of him into her mother's house, ver. 4.

Fourthly, By her charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, to walk circumspectly, that this estate be not interrupted, ver. 5.

'By night,' ver. 1; that is, in time of darkness and public calamity, when Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn, waxed exceeding great, wasted the pleasant land, cast some of the host and stars of heaven to the ground; when he took away the daily sacrifice, and trode down the sanctuary, and cast down the truth to the ground, Dan. viii. 9-12; when he robbed the temple, murdered the people, spoiled the city, made laws for profaning the Sabbath, for offering swine's flesh, for neglecting circumcision; when he set up the statues of Jupiter Olympus, the abomination of desolation, in the holy place; when he burnt the books of the law, and made it death to have a Testament; when he brake down the altar and set up another; when he put women to death who had caused children to be circumcised, and hanged children upon the necks of their mothers, 1 Maccab. i. 23, to the end.

'In my bed.' Not in my bed of ease and sloth, as some take it, for what ease could the church take in the night-time of calamity? But in my bed, chap. i. 16, and iii. 7, that is, in the place and duties of God's worship, the temple and the ordinances.

'I sought him whom my soul loveth;' I desired and endeavoured to have fellowship with Christ; 'but I found him not,' the sanctuary being polluted, and the daily sacrifice taken away, and profane idols set up in the place.

'In the streets of the city,' ver. 2; that is, in the open assemblies of the faithful, in the synagogues, in the cities of Judea and Jerusalem; but behold there altars erected to idols, and incense burned, and the books of the law cast into the fire, 1 Maccab. i. 57-59; yea, behold the citizens of Jerusalem all fled and gone, 1 Maccab. i. 40; and the rest went in procession to Bacchus, 2 Maccab. vi. 7.

'The watchmen that go about the city,' ver. 3—to wit, the Levites, who answered her with silence; but a little after she found succour at Modin, for the priests, Mattathias and his sons, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, and the rest that went about to repair the ruins of the church and commonwealth, to these

the faithful church repairing, and finding deliverance and comfort, 1 Maccab. ii. 42, 43, by Judas especially, or rather by Christ in him, 1 Maccab. iii. 5-8, she left him not till she had brought him into the temple, where she soon after cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the purity of God's worship, and offered sacrifice according to the law, so that she found great comfort and joy in the duties of God's worship, 1 Maccab. iv. 42, 46. Thus again found they Christ in a typical saviour, held him by faith, and, with courage and zeal, brought him into the temple and sanctuary, the house and chamber of her mother,—that is, of the former church of Israel, or of the Catholic church, for the church of the former ages is the mother of the latter; or the whole church is the mother of each part, in usual phrase of Hebrew speech. The temple is the house of both; the sanctuary is the chamber of her that bare her.

'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please, ver. 5.

'I charge you,' &c. See the same words opened, chap. ii. 7. The church chargeth all her daughters, all her members, to take heed, lest by their indiscreet dealing, or any wicked practice, they stir up the neighbour princes of Syria and Egypt, not to disturb the peace of the church, and to provoke Christ again to leave them desolate; which, though Jason and Menelaus and Alcimus broke, 2 Maccab. xiv. 14, yet they prevailed not so far, but Christ was still found in the temple of the faithful till his coming in the flesh.

'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?' ver. 6.

'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?' This is a description of John Baptist, and of the church gathered by his ministry in the wilderness; which is set forth,

First, By the admiration and inquisitiveness of the old synagogue after him and his baptism: 'Who is this that cometh,' or ariseth, &c., which was fulfilled, John i. 19; Luke iii. 15; to whom the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? and all men mused whether he were not the Christ.

Secondly, By the place of his arising, and the

church with him: in the wilderness, Luke iii. 2-4; Mark i. 3, 4.

Thirdly, By the manner of arising: like pillars of smoke, which,

First, Ariseth from fire, as the church arose from zeal and fervency of John's ministry.

Secondly, Ascendeth on high, as the propagation of this church did, even to Jerusalem, Mat. iii. 5, 6.

Thirdly, Fills the country, as the church did, with rumour and increase of it, Mat. iii. 5, 6.

Fourthly, By the excellent fragrantcy and sweetness of the graces thereof perfumed, chap. i. 13, preserving from putrefaction. Such was the powerful zeal of John and his ministry, strongly fragrant as myrrh, and preserving his hearers from Pharisaical hypocrisy, Mat. iii. 7-10. Frankincense is of like strong fragrantcy, and of chief use in making of the holy incense, Exod. xxx. 34; by which prayer was signified, Ps. cxli. 2, to intimate the fragrantcy and fervency of his prayers who taught all his disciples to pray, Luke xi. 1.

'With all powders of the merchant;' to wit, perfumed with the sweet graces of God, filled with the Holy Ghost above all prophets, Luke i. 15, yea, above all that were born of women, Mat. xi. 9-11; whence also he seasoned all sorts of his hearers with graces and directions fit for their several callings, Luke iii. 10-14.

Fifthly, By the doctrine of John, who expressly preached the Lord Jesus manifested in the flesh.

'Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel,' ver. 7.

'Behold his bed, which is Solomon's.' This doctrine the church of that time received and believed. In which doctrine that first church first discerned and believed,

First, The temple of Christ's body; for the bed was taken, chap. i. 16, and iii. 1, as also it is here, for the temple, which was the type of Christ's body, John ii. 19, 20.

Now this, as John pointed, John i. 29, 30, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' as here it is said, 'Behold his bed.' This temple it is the temple of Solomon, of Christ; in him the Godhead dwelleth bodily, Col. ii. 9.

Secondly, The guard of angels attending it, to

prevent the fear of Herod's enmity and others, John i. 51; Mat. ii. 13-19.

Thirdly, The maker of his humanity, ver. 9. King Solomon made himself a couch; the word may be translated couch or couch. This latter I rather take, partly for the etymology of Apirion, fol. 38, to be fruitful as the bride's bed is, and partly for agreement with the former word bed, ver. 7.

No earthly father, but Christ by his own Spirit, made his own body and his own bed in his mother's womb, Luke i. 35.

Fourthly, The matter of it: the wood of Lebanon; for the Virgin Mary dwelt in Nazareth of Galilee, at the foot of Lebanon.

As Solomon's temple, the type of Christ's body, was made of the wood of Lebanon, the cedar which is free from corruption, Hosea i., so was the body of Christ sound from seeing corruption, Ps. xvi. 10.

Fifthly, The ornaments of it; which were,

First, Partly his offices:

1. Priestly, as pillars of silver abiding the fire of God's wrath, and pure as silver tried in the fire, Heb. vii. 26.

2. Prophetical, delivering us a word precious as gold, even as fine gold, Ps. xix. 10.

3. Kingly, whence it is said, ver. 10, 'The covering of it of purple, the royal ornament of kings.

Secondly, Partly the affection wherein he undertook and executed these offices: love of the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 10. All these John declareth, John iii. 29, to the end.

Secondly, He exhorteth and stirreth up the faithful to behold,

First, Christ, John i. 29, to end.

Secondly, The ornaments wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, ver. 11. The day of his espousals was the day when God the Father contracted him with the church, Mat. iii. 13; whence after he is called the bridegroom, John iii. 29, and John the bridegroom's friend, his disciples the children of the bride-chamber. And the church henceforward in this book is called the spouse, not before. The crown wherewith his mother crowned him is the testimony of Christ's sovereignty, which John and the faithful gave him, John i. 33-35, 49, and iii. 29-36.

First, Of the estate of the church under the Maccabees.

Use 1. First, This doth teach us with what intent we are to come before God in the public assemblies, namely, to seek Christ, the love of our souls; not to shew our fine garments, want only to gaze at beauties; not to satisfy the law or friends for fashion's sake, but to seek Christ, instructing us in temptations. Some come to catch something from Christ to entrap him, &c., but it is our duty to come unto him, as a spouse to her husband, for seed. So we must come to Christ that he may cast the seeds of grace into our souls, that we may bring forth fruit unto him.

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see the changeable estate of the church; she that rejoiced in the presence and fellowship of Christ, and could say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' chap. ii. 16, now seeks him everywhere, and with much difficulty and anguish, ver. 1-3. And so it is oft with every true member of the church, as we may see it was with David, Ps. cxix. 25, and 6-8; so it is now with our brethren beyond the seas, whom you might have commended a year or two ago, and have found Christ there. But now he is gone; she seeks him, but finds him not. See the church of God sometime enjoys all the ordinances of God, sometimes none; so a Christian soul sometimes hath Christ's left hand under her head, and his right hand to embrace her, Cant. ii. 6, soon after she finds him not so. We must not condemn the church for this; for they that are tenderly beloved of Christ may sometimes seek him, and not find him.

Use 3. Thirdly, This may comfort such as seek Christ in all his ordinances: they shall either find him in them, or, after the use of them, in some unexpected or extraordinary help. The church here that found not Christ in the temple, nor in the assemblies and recourse of Christian people, nor in conference with the priests, found him soon after in an unexpected and extraordinary help, even Judas Maccabees, ver. 4; for indeed it was extraordinary for the tribe of Levi to take up the sword and sceptre, which indeed belonged to Judah: so you see, when ordinary means fail, God will be found in extraordinary. Whosoever then would find Christ, and seek him everywhere, they shall surely find him, either in his ordinances or out of them.

Use 4. Fourthly, This lets us see the affectionate cleaving of such to Christ, as have long sought him and not found him till at last; such lay hold on him, and will not let him go, ver. 4, which is one reason why Christ sometimes hides himself from us, that we might seek him the more diligently, and, having found him, cleave to him more steadfastly; and this God looks for at the hands of his.

Use 5. Fifthly, This doth exhort Christians that live among bad neighbours to walk the more circumspectly, as the daughters of Jerusalem are here charged upon oath to do, ver. 5, being between the Syrians and Egyptians. It is a charge given by the church to her daughters to take heed they stir not up her love, nor awake Christ till he please.

Two reasons are given for it:

First, It may provoke Christ to bring another estate upon the church which will not be good for it.

Secondly, In regard of fearful Christians, for they will start away. Many are willing to come into the church, but if the profession of Christ be troublesome and hot, they will not abide it; therefore this charge is needful that we may walk holily, that Christ be not stirred up, nor these fearful Christians discouraged. See this handled, chap. ii. ver. 7.

Thus far the first part in the time of the Maccabees. Now,

Secondly, Of the estate of the church in John Baptist's time.

Use 1. This is, first, To shew us that God can raise up a church even in the wilderness, ver. 6, to the admiration of observers; and so he can raise up our neighbour churches, now brought to a wilderness. This may comfort us in regard of them; for though they be now desolate, yet we may hope a time will come when they shall rise again.

Use 2. Secondly, See here is a part of the duty of ancient Christians, not to malign the graces of God in those that come after them, but to admire them. 'Who is it that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,' &c., ver. 6.

Use 3. Thirdly, This shews what gifts and graces are most requisite in a minister, and do most adorn him, even zeal in his ministry and fervency in prayer, and all sorts of sweet graces to season and direct all

sorts of his people in their several callings, ver. 6, as John did, when the people came and said, 'What shall we do?' He answered and said, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none,' &c., Luke iii. 10-14. So John was perfumed with graces for all men; for men must not come into the ministry with judgment and learning alone, for these may come from nature; but they must come perfumed with graces, to keep themselves and others from putrefaction; yea, they must labour for those graces which will give a strong scent to save themselves and others.

Use 4. Fourthly, This shews us the manhood and godhead of Christ. Christ's human nature is the temple or bed wherein the Godhead resteth bodily; and the Godhead made this temple or bed for himself, no earthly father for him, ver. 7, 9.

Use 5. Fifthly, See here the protection and guardance the angels give to Christ, and in him to the church and all his members, ver. 7, 8; Ps. xci. 11, 12, and xxxiv. 7; 2 Kings vi. 16, 17; Heb. i. 14; Rev. v. 11, and vii. 11.

Use 6. Sixthly, We may here see in Christ whatsoever is behoveful for all our salvations. In regard of his priestly office, he is pure as silver, to cleanse our impurity, and to abide the fire. In regard of his prophetic office, he is precious as gold, to enrich our poverty. In regard of his royal and kingly office, he is glorious as purple, and clothed with it, to advance our baseness, ver. 10. His heart or midst is even paved with love of us. His heart is a hearth, for so the word signifieth, whereon the fire of his love towards us burneth continually. Let us then love the Lord Jesus again, and receive the seeds and fruits of his grace, and then shall we see his heart flaming with love to us; and then whatsoever befalls, bloodshed, war, captivity, &c., all comes from love; his whole heart is paved with love.

Use 7. Seventhly, Let us take up our thoughts and meditations about Christ; let us go forth and behold him; let his abundant graces fill our empty souls.

Use 8. Eighthly, If thou beest a daughter of Zion, thou art contracted to Christ, and know it by this: Dost thou read his letters? art thou delighted with them? and dost thou rejoice to speak to him again by prayer? If thou dost, it may be the joy of thy heart, for thy estate is good.

Use 9. Lastly, This doth exhort us all to give up ourselves as spouses to Christ, and that with all gladness of heart, since he is affected to us, who yet hath nothing from us but debts and beggary; and they that do give themselves up to Christ need not fear wanting comfort, for no spouses shall find such comfort as they. Shall he be glad to have us, a company of beggars—yea, as I may say, a company of deaths? And was it the gladness of his heart to be espoused to us, which was when his Father contracted him to us, and shall we think it a day of deadening to set our feet into Christ's bed? All the merchants cannot set forth our excellency when he shall pay all our debts, and adorn us with all his graces. Therefore let us go forth, and bring him home to us; we shall then find him comfortable to us in the day of espousals.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*

Ver. 2. *Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.*

Ver. 3. *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.*

Ver. 4. *Thy neck is like to the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*

Ver. 5. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*

Ver. 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

Ver. 7. *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*

Ver. 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

Ver. 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my*

spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

Ver. 10. *How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse; how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thy ointments than all spices!*

Ver. 11. *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

Ver. 12. *A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

Ver. 13. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*

Ver. 14. *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:*

Ver. 15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

Ver. 16. *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1-6. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead, &c.*

This chapter describes the estate of the church in her periods:

First, In Christ's time, under his ministry, ver. 1-6. Secondly, After his ascension, under the apostles, ver. 7-11.

Thirdly, After their departure, during the first ten persecutions, ver. 12-16.

The church in Christ's time is commended and described,

First, By her beauty in general: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.'

Secondly, The beauty of her several parts, at that time most conspicuous; as,

First, Of her eyes, ver. 1.

Secondly, Of her hair, ver. 1.

Thirdly, Of her teeth, ver. 2.

Fourthly, Of her lips, ver. 3.

Fifthly, Of her temples, ver. 3.

Sixthly, Of her neck, ver. 4.

Seventhly, Of her breasts, ver. 5.

Secondly, The death of Christ falling out in her time, ver. 6.

‘Behold, thou art fair.’ Fair twice repeated implies, by a usual Hebraism, that she was very fair; and beloved twice repeated argues her eminent beauty was very conspicuous. Such was the estate of the church gathered by his ministry and flocking after him.

First, It was fair and beautiful, partly in her flocking after him, Mat. iv. 25.

Secondly, Leaving all to follow him, hanging upon his mouth, and wondering at the gracious words and deeds coming from him, Mat. xix. 19, 27; Luke xix. 48, and ix. 43.

Secondly, In his both,

First, Presence with her, as her light, John iii. 29, and xii. 35.

Secondly, Decking of her by his ministry.

This beauty of the church was well known, yet ought to have been better observed:

First of all, By the children of wisdom, Mat. xi. 10.

Secondly, Of all the Greeks, John xii. 20, 21, even strangers of the pharisees and elders, John xii. 19.

‘Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.’ Doves, as before, chap. i. 15, are noted,

First, For their chasteness.

Secondly, Loathing of uncleanness; but there is withal in their eyes,

1. Cleanness.

2. Simplicity.

This implies that the church at that time,

First, Saw more clearly sundry truths about Christ than the fathers had done, Luke x. 23–25, or the present governors, John ix. 39.

Secondly, Was of a simple and innocent look and demeanour, Mat. x. 16; John i. 47.

Thirdly, Looked with a chaste eye after Christ alone, John vi. 68.

Fourthly, Loathed the uncleanness of pharisaical superstitious, Mat. xv. 1, 2.

‘Within thy locks.’ For their knowledge, though clear in many things, yet perceived not sundry plain points; as,

First, The death and resurrection of Christ, Luke xviii. 32–34.

Secondly, The leaven of the pharisees, Mat. viii. 15; Luke xii. 1; Mat. xvi. 6.

As the eye within locks of hair is hindered from discerning things lying open before it.

‘Thy hair as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.’

Hair, though it hang long upon the head, yet it may in time either,

First, Fall of itself.

Secondly, Be cut off. So were the common Christians of that time, as it were, hair,

1. For multitude.

2. Hanging on Christ, the head.

3. Falling many of them from him:

First, Either of themselves, John vi. 66; or,

Secondly, Cut off by the practices of the priests, Mat. xxvii. 20; John xii. 42, 43. Hence it was that Jesus durst not commit himself to them, John ii. 23–25.

‘As a flock of goats.’ Which are wont,

First, To assemble themselves in companies. So did the people gather after Christ.

Secondly, To be without a shepherd, as this people were, Mat. ix. 36.

Thirdly, To feed afar off, and that somewhat dangerously, upon rocks.

So the people came from far to hear Christ, Mark viii. 3, and were in danger for feeding on him, John ix. 22.

‘Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them,’ ver. 2.

The sheep whereto these teeth are likened are set forth,

First, By their even-shornness.

Secondly, By their cleanness, coming up from the washing.

Thirdly, By their fruitfulness: every one bringeth forth twins, none barren.

First, Even set, none gaping out.

Secondly, White and clean.

Thirdly, Each answering to his fellow in the other jaw; none wanting, as it is a praise to the teeth to be. The teeth are such as chew the meat, and prepare it for the rest of the body. Such in that church were the apostles, whom our Saviour calls a little flock, Luke xii. 32. They were all,

First, Even set, and even shorn, none bursting

out beyond his fellows. Peter's supremacy stretched not beyond the rest of the apostles, Mat. xvi. 19, compared with John xxi. 23; Mat. xviii. 18, and xx. 20, 25; Mark x. 40, 42; Luke xxii. 24, 25.

The teeth of innocent sheep are even set. They that have tusks longer than the other teeth are hurtful and ravenous beasts, as dogs, bears, lions, &c. Ten of the apostles disdained the motion of supremacy.

Secondly, Came up from John's baptism; and therefore, when Judas fell away, they must needs supply his place out of the number of such as had continued with them from John's baptism, Acts i. 21, 22.

Secondly, They were suitable each one to his fellow, and therefore the seventy were sent out by couples, Luke x. 1.

But especially they were fruitful in bringing home many lambs to Christ, and hence the seventy returned with joy to Christ, Luke x. 17, 18; and Satan is said to fall down from heaven before them like lightning.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks,' ver. 3.

'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely.' Both signifying the deliverance or utterance of the doctrine of the church at that time, which was,

First, As a thread, slender, (*tenui filo*), not plump or swelling with human eloquence, but savouring of fisher-like tenuity and simplicity.

Secondly, As a thread of scarlet; for as scarlet or purple is a princely and royal wear, so their doctrine was,

First, Touching the kingdom of heaven, Mat. x. 7.

Secondly, Though tender, yet deeply dyed in grain with royal majesty and authority of the Spirit of God.

'Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.' Temples of the head are they by which the whole body watcheth or resteth; they are such, therefore, as watch over the body, and for it. The pomegranate was of much use in the old tabernacle and temple. Aaron's coat was hanged with pomegranates and bells, Exod. xxviii. 34—bells for sound of doctrine and prayer, pomegranates for re-

straining and healing the distempers and diseases of the people. Pomegranates are commended by Fernelius,¹

First, For repressing the heat of choler.

2. The malignity, rottenness, and acrimony of fevers.

3. The looseness of the belly.

Secondly, For comforting and strengthening the stomach and bowels, to the keeping back all fainting.² This office the ecclesiastical governors of the church do perform to it. They repress the heat of fallings out among brethren, the notorious abuses, the looseness or distemperdness of the people; they comfort the feeble and bind up the weak, and are therefore fitly resembled by pomegranates, yea, by a piece of a pomegranate, for it is not the whole body of the pomegranate that doth this, but it, broken in pieces, by his juice and rind is medicinable.

'Within thy locks.' Because though Christ established discipline, and delivered it to the church in his time, Mat. xviii. 15-17, yet it was not displayed, nor shewed itself in open execution, till after his resurrection, 1 Cor. v. 1-6.

'Thy neck is like the tower of David,' &c., ver. 4. The neck is that part that joineth head and body together; now that which joineth Christ and his church together is our faith: which faith in some of the members of that church in Christ's time was observed to be strong and great, Mat. viii. 10, and xv. 28; and therefore is here fitly compared to the tower of David, for an armoury, whereof we read, Neh. ix. 25, 26, 'whereon there hanged a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.' It seems David's mighty men hanged up their shields in this armoury against times of war; and so in like manner all the worthies of Israel, all the faithful before Christ, hanged their shields of faith upon Christ, in whom the faith of his church was as a strong armoury, Heb. xi. 13. Faith is not so much a tower of strength in itself, as in Christ, whom it apprehendeth.

'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies, ver. 5.

'Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.' The breasts give milk: now the breasts

¹ Fernelius, p. 26.

² Fernel. Method. Medend., lib. v. cap. 3.

that give milk to the church, the sincere milk of the word, 2 Pet. ii. 2, are the ministers, which in the church of Christ's time were first the apostles; secondly, the seventy; and are therefore here called two breasts, and both as roes, because not tied to any certain place within all the people of the Jews; for roes stay not long in a place. And both as twins, because of equal commission, being both sent alike to the whole house of Israel, though, after the resurrection, the apostles' commission was enlarged further than that of the seventy.

'Which feed among the lilies.' For they were sent not only among the Gentiles or Samaritans, but amongst,

First, The lost sheep of the house of Israel, Mat. x.

Secondly, The true-hearted or well-affected of the Israelites, Mat. x. 11.

These faithful are here compared to the lilies,

First, For their whiteness and purity of innocence.

Secondly, For their amiableness.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense,' ver. 6.

'Until the day break, and the shadows flee away;' that is, until the light of the gospel break forth, and the shadows of the Mosaical ceremonies vanish.

'I will get me to the mountains of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense;' that is, to the mounds,

First, Of Olivet; secondly, Of Golgotha, where he suffered in the garden and on the cross, and nailed to his cross all the shadows of the law, and, in fulfilling them, abolished them, Col. ii. 14.

Myrrh and frankincense are wont to be used in embalming, and with suchlike Christ himself at his death was to have been embalmed, if his resurrection had not prevented the women, John xix. 39, 40; Luke xxiii. 46. Besides, the passion of Christ was a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God, and therefore the place thereof is fitly called the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense; though otherwise the mountain of myrrh may well be mount Calvary, or Golgotha, the place of his death; and the hill of frankincense mount Olivet, in regard of his ascension into heaven; yea, even heaven itself, whither he ascended, may be well called the hill of frankincense for sweetness.

Use 1. This, first, doth teach us that a church may be beautiful in God's sight, though consisting,

First, Of mean persons,

Secondly, Of such as were sometimes notorious offenders, as publicans and harlots: and from hence,

First, Poor people,

Secondly, Sinners, yea, ugly sinners, are to be exhorted to repentance and seeking after Christ: it makes them truly amiable in Christ's eyes, though otherwise in themselves never so mean and foul.

From hence also poor sinners may take comfort; though loaden with the sense of their deformities, they in Christ's eyes are very beautiful.

From hence also the Separatists may learn that, notwithstanding many abuses in their teachers, or others of the church, as the scribes and pharisees, whom the people were to hear, Mat. xxiii. 23, yet the church may be denominated from the better part very fair, as a heap of wheat, though covered over with abundance of chaff.

Use 2. Secondly, This may teach ministers how to frame themselves to be amiable in God's sight, viz.:

First, By carrying themselves evenly with their brethren.

Secondly, By cleansing their hearts and lives by the power of baptism.

Thirdly, By fruitfulness, and faithfulness in their ministry.

Fourthly, By not affecting carnal eloquence, but gracious and deep-dyed powerful utterance; for swelling words of human wisdom make men's preaching seem to Christ, as it were, a blubber-lipped ministry.

Fifthly, By restraining abuses and offences amongst the people, and strengthening and comforting the feeble-minded.

Sixthly, By feeding their people with sincere milk, 1 Pet. ii. 2, and not being dry nurses.

Seventhly, By taking most delight in conversing among lilies, their well-affected people, though seeking also to win all, and therefore sometimes conversing with them as the physicians among the sick.

Use 3. This may teach ecclesiastical governors their office in the former virtues of the pomegranate, ver. 3, to repress the heat of abuses, the looseness and distemperedness of the people, to comfort the feeble, and bind up the weak, &c.

Fourthly, This may teach the people how to approve themselves to Christ, in looking after Christ in knowledge, simplicity, chastity of spirit, loathing superstitions, and places of bad resort.

Aspicis ut veniunt ad candida tecta Columbe.

Thou seest how pigeons take their flight,

To houses that be fair and white.

For what should Christians do in filthy taverns, ale-houses, stews, &c. ? in strength of faith rooting and building themselves upon Christ.

‘Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,’ ver. 7-11. In these words we have a description of the estate of the church soon after Christ’s ascension, gathered and built up by the ministry of the apostles, which they call the apostolic or primitive church.

This church is here set forth,

First, By her complete beauty, her full fairness, ver. 7.

Secondly, By Christ’s calling her to behold the calling of the Gentiles, ver. 8.

Thirdly, By the ravishing beauty of a sister church at that time :

1. In one of her eyes, ver. 9 ; 2. One chain of her neck, ver. 9.

Fourthly, By her love, which is set forth,

1. By the fairness of it, ver. 10 ; 2. By the sweetness of it above wine, ver. 10.

Fifthly, By the flowingness, sweetness, and whole-someness of her doctrine, ver. 11.

Sixthly, By the smell of her garments, like that of Lebanon, ver. 11.

‘Thou art fair.’ The fairness of the church was acknowledged before, but never till now the perfect fairness. All complete fairness or beauty standeth in these three things :

First, In the integrity of all the parts and members of the body ; for if any be wanting, it is a maimed, a blemished body.

Secondly, In the symmetry or fit proportion of all the members one to another.

Thirdly, In the good complexion or colour of them all. Look what parts are requisite for the complete integrity of a fair church ; they are all found in the apostolic church, in comely proportion of beauty ; for look,

First, At their doctrine, and it was,

1. Free from all error, so far as it was dispensed by the apostles, prophets, evangelists of that time, Acts xxviii. 22, 23, who likewise suffered no weeds of false doctrine to grow under them, Rev. ii. 2.

2. Their doctrine was complete, even the whole counsel of God, Acts xx. 27.

3. It was dispensed in powerful simplicity, 1 Cor. ii. 4 ; Acts ii. 37, 44, and iv. 4.

Secondly, Look at their worship, and you may see,

1. The purity of God’s ordinances, without mixture of human inventions, 1 Cor. xi. 23, 34, and xiv. 26, 48.

2. Order, decency, edification of all aimed at in all the duties administered.

3. Fervency and frequency in prayer and fasting, Acts iv. 31, xiii. 1-3, and xiv. 23.

Thirdly, Look at their Christian communion, and you may see,

1. Their unity one with another, Acts iv. 32.

2. Love and large-heartedness one towards another, Acts iv. 32, especially to their ministers, Gal. iv. 14, 15.

Fourthly, Look to their discipline, and you may see the apostles, prophets, evangelists, presbyters, pastors, teachers, first, Teaching ; secondly, Exhorting ; thirdly, Ruling : and all by, first, Preaching ; secondly, Writing ; thirdly, Private conference ; fourthly, Good examples. (No churches unprovided of presbyters, in the plural number, Acts xiv. 23.)

Thirdly, The deacons providing for the poor, Acts vi. 3-6.

Fourthly, Both sorts chosen by the church, Acts vi. 3, 5.

Fifthly, Excommunications dispensed upon weighty occasions, and with great reverence, and with good success, 1 Cor. v. 3-5, with 2 Cor. ii. 6-8.

Sixthly, Synods imposing no other but necessary things, either in themselves, or for the present use of the church, Acts xv. 26.

This comely frame and order of the church Paul beholding, joyed in it, Col. ii. 5. The church was now called a spouse, after Christ had taken our nature upon him.

‘Come with me from Lebanon, (my spouse,) with me from Lebanon : look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards,’ ver. 8.

'Come with me from Lebanon.' It is a famous hill in the uttermost border of Israel northward; Amana, a hill more northward, on the west of Syria, looking into Syria, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, and all Asia the less.

'Hermion and Shenir.' Two names of the same hill, though happily given to divers parts, called also Syron or Sien, Deut. iii. 9, and iv. 48.

'The lions' dens and mountains of the leopards.' Jerusalem and the temple in our Saviour's time was made a den of thieves and robbers, Mat. xxi. 13, and xii. 17; Luke xix. 46; but in the apostles' time, after the ascension, the rulers grew more fierce and cruel, spilling the blood of Stephen, and making havoc of the church: so then, in this verse, Christ calls his church of the Christian Jews,

First, To behold from Lebanon, Hermion, Amana, the church of the Gentiles gathered in Antioch, Phenice, Cyrene, Cyprus, &c.

Secondly, To come out from those dens of ravenous persecutors at Jerusalem, and to prepare herself to dwell among the Gentiles. Upon the persecution of Stephen the faithful wandered into these parts, and preached the gospel, partly to the Jews, and after to the Gentiles also, Acts xi. 18-20; where-upon great numbers of the Gentiles believed, Acts xi. 21; which when tidings thereof came to Jerusalem, it was as the voice of Christ calling the church of Jerusalem to send Barnabas to them, to see the churches there and to establish them, ver. 22-24. Afterwards, when the church of the Gentiles increased in number and grace, and the Jews increased and grew up in blasphemy and rage against the gospel, Christ called his church at Jerusalem to leave those dens and mountains of lions and leopards, Acts xxii. 21, and xiii. 46.

'My sister,' ver. 9. This implieth that Christ now speaketh, not to the mother church of the Jews, but to a sister church, the church of the Gentiles; such a sister as is also a spouse, a true church, now first called a sister by reason of the accession of the church of the Gentiles.

'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.'

'Thou hast ravished my heart, thou hast ravished my heart.' This implies that Christ was overcome exceedingly with the love of the church; for such

repetitions imply, in the Hebrew phrase, a superlative excellency.

This church so affecting Christ was Antioch, the first church of the Gentiles, seated between Amana and Lebanon; for Barnabas, seeing the grace of God upon them, was not a little glad of it, so that his spirit was stirred up to exhort them to continue and grow up, Acts xi. 23, 24; yea, he went out and sought Saul, to bring him among them, ver. 25, 26; and they both spent a whole year there, and did win much people, so that that church was first called Christian, they first had their husband's name, the name of Christ, first put upon them, for the forwardness of his love to them, and theirs to him.

'With one of thy eyes.' The eyes of the church are several, according as the church may be severally considered; for if the church be considered as assembled together to public duties, so the ministers of the church are the eyes, amongst whom they at Antioch excelled, as Agabus and others, Acts xi. 27, 28, and xiii. 1; among whom the Lord was especially delighted with Barnabas and Saul, who were sent immediately by the Spirit of Christ to enlighten all the neighbour countries, Acts xiii. 2, to xiv. 27. So they two, joined in one office, were as one eye to enlighten all the parts. But if the church be considered in the members apart, the eyes thereof are knowledge and faith, John viii. 56. In this church faith excelled, resting upon Christ alone without Moses's ceremonies, which the Jews would have thrust upon them, Acts xv. 1-3.

'With one chain of thy neck.' Chains signified laws, binding as chains, chap. i. 10. Now the church of Antioch sending up Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, about the contention which Cerinthus, as the stories think, and others raised at Antioch concerning the necessity of the ceremonial laws, Acts xv. 2, the apostles or elders made a law or decree to abrogate the ceremonies, and yet enjoin some things, partly necessary in themselves, as to avoid fornication; partly necessary to avoid the offence of the Jews, as to abstain from blood, &c. This law the apostles and elders hanged as a chain upon the neck of the church of Antioch and other churches, Acts xv. 23-29; whence that church received great consolation, ver. 31, and the other churches establishment and increase, Acts xvi. 4, 5.

'How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!' ver. 10.

'How fair is thy love, my sister!' Sister implies the same, and suchlike Gentile churches, whose love is here set forth.

First, By the fairness of it.

Secondly, By the strength, sweetness, cheerful-ness, implied in the preferring it above wine.

How fair, and strong, and sweet, and cheerful was the love of the church of Antioch! which aforehand prepared a contribution of their own accord for the poor saints at Jerusalem, even every man according to his ability, Acts xi. 29, 30. The like or greater love seemed in the poor churches of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1-5. A fair love for poor men to send relief to others; a strong love for deeply poor to send rich liberality; yet more strong and sweet to pray the messengers with much entreaty to receive it, and a cheerful love to do all this in abundance of joy, and beyond the apostles' own expectation.

This kind of benevolence the apostle calleth an odour of a sweet smell. Phil. iv. 18; it was sweeter and better than wine. All this love shewed to the poor saints Christ takes here as done to himself, as he will also take it at the last day, Mat. xxv. 35-40. The decays of this first love shew how great this love was at the first, Rev. ii. 2-4.

'The smell of thine ointments than all spices,' ver. 10. Ointments are the graces of God's Spirit, chap. i. 3; these gave a sweet report far and near in those primitive churches, Rom. i. 8; Col. ii. 5; 1 Thes. i. 6-8.

'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon,' ver. 11.

'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue.' This commendeth the doctrine and ministry of those first churches in these four respects:

First, For the readiness and flowingness of it; it dropped forth of itself, it needed not to be pressed and constrained, as a honeycomb.

Secondly, For the sweetness of it, as the honey or the honeycomb.

Thirdly, For the wholesomeness of it, as milk.

'The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.' Lebanon is full of sweet trees of spices growing in it, which yield a fragrant smell even afar off. Garments are,

First, Partly the wedding garments of Christ's righteousness.

Secondly, Partly the gracious carriage wherewith they clothed themselves in their outward conversation: they clothed and decked themselves with Christ, not only to their justification, but with his Spirit to their sanctification; which shews forth itself in their humility, meekness, patience, honesty, faithfulness, diligence, serviceableness of their outward carriage, so far forth as that the heathen smelled a sweet savour in their whole course, Phil. iv. 8; 1 Thes. iv. 9-11; 1 Pet. ii. 12; 1 John iii. 22, 24; Euseb., lib. iii. cap. 30; Plin. Epist., lib. x.; Epist. 97; yea, even in Trajan's time, when the smell of garments was not so strong: yet what a sweet testimony doth Pliny himself, though a persecutor, give of them, when he said he could find no fault with them, but that they rose early, and went into the woods to sing hymns to one Jesus.

Use 1. This, first, is to reform their judgments who speak of the apostolical church as an infant and rude church, whereas Christ, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and who best knew it, commends it for perfection of beauty, and saith it was fair; so that if a church were such, Christ might embrace it with both his arms.

This is the church, excellent for her ministers, excellent for common Christians, which had pure eyes of knowledge and faith; so that by how much nearer any church comes to this, by so much the fairer it is; and by how much any church comes short of it, by so much the fouler it is.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us that not abuses, but the toleration of them, doth blemish a church, and detract from the perfect beauty of it, for otherwise in the primitive churches were found schisms, heresies, a denying the resurrection, uncharitable going to law, incest, love-feasts in the Lord's supper, strange tongues in the public worship, 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 19-22, and xiv. and xv.; and yet, because the apostles stood out against these

and reformed them, the church still retains her perfect beauty. In the church of Ephesus there were false apostles, Rev. ii. 2, yet it was a church; so it is, corruptions not cut off defile a church. As we then desire the church should be pure, leave we all our sins and corruptions which may any way blemish the beauty of the church.

Use 3. Thirdly, This teaches us to be ready to extol and acknowledge, as occasion serveth, other men's labours above our own. Christ gathered a church in his own time which he called fair, ver. 1; but this church, gathered by his apostles, he calleth all fair, ver. 7. It grieveth him not to ascribe thousands to himself, and ten thousands to them; yea, he foretold it, and promised it freely aforehand, John xiv. 12. How far was he from a spirit of envy and emulation, though indeed all their success was by his grace and blessing, as Paul said, 'By the grace of God I am that I am!' 1 Cor. xv. 10. The contrary spirit of emulation hindereth churches from taking that which is their own from one another.

Use 4. Fourthly, Hence we learn in what cases one church may step from another, to wit,

First, When Christ leaveth a church, and goeth away with us from it: 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me;' so when Christ leaves and forsakes a church, we may leave it and go out with him.

Secondly, When a church is become a universal spotted leopard, and a cruel lion, blaspheming and persecuting the gospel of Christ, as Acts xix. 9, and xiii. 50, 51.

These things were found in Rome, from whence we departed; not in England, (blessed be the Lord,) from whom the Separatists would have us to depart: but Christ still vouchsafes to be with us, converting souls, feeding his lambs, hearing our prayers; we may also worship Christ in truth without fear of laws, yea, with acceptance. When Christ goes, let all his faithful spouses go with him; when there are dens of lions, and men cannot keep the profession of Christ, but fall into their mouths, then it is time to go; but are there these causes now? Doth not Christ dwell here in the simplicity of his ordinances? As long as Christ is here in England, let us not go away, but say, as Peter and John, 'Lord, to whom

shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life,' John vi. 68. As long as Christ is pleased to feed us, to drop milk and honey into our souls, let us not depart.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may teach us how to knit the heart of Christ to us in ravishing affection, by cleaving to Christ with settled purpose, Acts xi. 23, by abounding in helpfulness to the saints, by procuring and keeping faithful shepherds, by burdening the church, not with many chains of laws, ver. 9, but only with few, and those necessary: all these are formerly mentioned in the church of Antioch. As ever we desire to have the Lord Jesus Christ to love us, let us grow in knowledge, faith, and all saving graces of his Spirit, and hereby shew our love to him, and then we shall find Christ ravished with our love.

Use 6. Sixthly, This doth teach us what kind of love Christ acknowledgeth and embraceth; to wit, fair, strong, sweet, cheerful, in an enlarging ourselves to the relief of his poor saints, ver. 10.

Use 7. Seventhly, This doth teach ministers how to make their ministry amiable to Christ, not to preach once a month, or quarterly, by the preaching of the law, but to be full as the honeycomb dropping out of itself, ver. 11; to preach sweet doctrine as honey, and wholesome as milk, for the nourishment of Christ's lambs.

The pastors and ministers of the primitive church did this without help of universities; what a shame then is this for us to come short of them in such abundance of outward helps and means! Wouldst thou be a faithful minister? let thy doctrine drop as honey; preach willingly, freely, sweetly, comfortably.

Use 8. Lastly, This may learn and stir up Christians so to walk, and so to furnish ourselves with inward graces, and with outward commendable carriage, as may yield a sweet savour and smell to God and man, that it may be like the smell of Lebanon, that men may smell a sweet savour that come near them: let our hearts be inwardly furnished with the graces of God as with sweet ointments; and our outward garments, our outward conversation, so directed with honesty, integrity, humility, meekness, and love, &c., that our names be not dishonoured, much less God by our means. Cast we aside stinking drunkenness, whoredom,

malice, covetousness, &c. And thus doing we shall take away all offence; so doing, Christ shall look at us as his fair spouse, and say, 'Thou art all fair, my love,' ver. 7.

'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse,' chap. iv. 12 to v. 2.

After the church gathered by the ministry of the apostles, next followeth that under the ten persecutions, which is here described,

First, By her restraint, ver. 13.

Secondly, By her privacy, ver. 14.

Thirdly, By her fruitfulness, refreshing and watering others, ver. 15.

Fourthly, By her prayer in this estate: wherein consider,

1. The petitions; which are three:

First, For the arising of the wind, and coming into the south, ver. 16.

Secondly, For favourable blasts of it, and that for this end, the flowing forth of her spices.

Thirdly, That Christ would come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits, ver. 16.

2. Christ's answer thereunto:

First, He cometh into his garden.

Secondly, He gathereth and enjoyeth the fruits of it.

Thirdly, He fills his church's friends with a large measure of plenty, chap. v. 1.

'A garden,' ver. 12. The church is here so called, as ver. 13, an orchard; or, as it is in the original, a paradise, as if this were the garden of Eden. All the world is as a wilderness, or at least a wild field; only the church is God's garden or orchard, in these three respects:

First, As the garden of paradise was the habitation of Adam in the estate of innocency, so is the church of all those who are renewed into innocency.

Secondly, As in that garden were all manner of pleasant and wholesome herbs and trees growing, so in the church are all manner of useful and savoury spirits.

Thirdly, As a man walketh in his garden to refresh himself, so doth Christ walk in his church, yea, and calleth his friends thither to walk with him.

'A spring, a fountain.' Not because the church is the fountain of grace, but because, Christ being in

it, it is the spring or fountain of the waters of life unto all, Zech. xiii. 1; Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

'A garden, spring, fountain, enclosed, shut up, sealed.' Not by a pale or wall of defence by Christian magistrates, but rather shut up by restraint; for the word signifies to enclose or shut up, as with locks and fetters.

Again, the church prayeth for the enlargement of the flowing of her spices, ver. 16, and therefore her present shutting up was uncomfortable to her.

The church was then said to be shut up,

First, Because under the persecutions it was shut up in prisons, and other places of punishment, as under locks and fetters.

Secondly, Because the church then assembled in private close places, woods, dens, &c., and not in the open places of towns or cities.

Thirdly, Because it was shut up from free access of foreigners, men without; neither were the emperors willing their subjects should repair to them, nor the church willing to admit all promiscuously.

'Thy plants,' ver. 13, 14; that is, thy children or members, as an orchard of pomegranates, camphire; ver. 14, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon. The children of the church are compared to these wholesome and sweet fruits, trees, herbs, in a double respect:

First, Because the virtues of these fruits and spices are especially seen when they are cut and poured out, or beaten, or burned, or bruised; so it is with the graces of God's children, they are chiefly exercised by the hard dealing of persecutors.

Secondly, There was in the faithful then persecuted a resemblance of the virtues of these fruits and spices.

Pomegranates repress and restrain the heat of choler, the malignity of fevers, the looseness of the belly; they also comfort the stomach and bowels, and prevent faintings and swoonings.

Camphire, with his sweetness of smell, delighteth and strengtheneth the spirits, cheereth up the mind, helps the stone, restrains ulcers.

Spikenard stayeth distillations from the head, strengtheneth the stomach, digesteth cold humours, helpeth conception.

Saffron thinneth phlegm, helps lethargies, coughs, and pleurisies, furthereth digestion, comforteth the

heart, redresses the rottenness of the other parts, which also are strengthened.

Calamus helps the passages of the urine, and the faults of the reins, helpeth also the womb and conception.

Cinnamon strengtheneth and cheereth the spirits and mind, drieth up rotten matter, helpeth against poison, warmeth and strengtheneth the stomach to digestion.

Frankincense restraineth and helpeth ulcers, gouts, fluxes of blood, cleanseth and glueth up wounds and ulcers.

Myrrh refresheth the brain, drieth up superfluous humours, helpeth straitness of breath, restraineth ulcers and itchiness, filleth ulcers and wounds with flesh.

Aloes cleanse tough phlegm and choler, dry up raw and cold humours, preserve the rest from putrifying, open obstructions, strengthen the stomach strongly.¹

Suitable to the virtues of these fruits and spices, persecution bred and stirred up in the faithful graces of like efficacy, to restrain heats of emulation, contention, ambition; to repress ulcers of malignity and disaffection one to another; to heal the coldness, hypocrisy, and rottenness of their spirits; to stay distillations of cold raw matters, dropping from the head bishops of Rome; as also to strengthen appetite to the word, to comfort the faint-hearted, to knit the members together.

'A fountain of gardens,' &c., ver. 15. For the church, pouring out her confessions and martyrdoms for the truth, propagated and watered many churches; for *sanguis martyrum* was *semen ecclesie*, a well of living waters, John iv. 10. The church was not then dried up, but plentifully stored with the graces of the Spirit, 'streams from Lebanon.' The churches were stored with such graces of the Spirit as streamed and issued out from the mountains of Israel, the writings of the prophets and apostles.

'Awake, or arise, O north wind,' &c., ver. 16. The church's desire that a wind might arise in the north, and come into the south; to wit, that Constantine, born in York, would come into the southern

parts, and take the empire upon him, ('and blow upon my garden.') driving away the blasts of early persecutions, and breathe favourably and wholesomely upon the church, cooling the tempestuous heats of the persecutions which the church endured. The church prayeth not the south to come, but the north to come into the south, else,

First, The word blow, if it had reference to both winds, should have been of the plural number.

Secondly, North wind and south wind blowing together would interrupt and cross one another by their contrariety.

'That the spices thereof may flow forth,' ver. 16. That the gospel and ordinances of Christ and the graces of his children, which were there restrained from their free manifestation by the persecutions, might have free passage.

'Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat of his pleasant fruits.' Let Constantine come to them, and partake of the benefits of the church's serviceable graces to God and him.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Ver. 2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

Ver. 3. *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*

Ver. 4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 7. *The watchmen that went about the city found*

¹ Fernelius de Method. Medend., lib. iv. cap. 7, 9, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, lib. vi. cap. 12, 13, 14, 12.

me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

Ver. 8. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

Ver. 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?*

Ver. 10. *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*

Ver. 11. *His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven:*

Ver. 12. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set:*

Ver. 13. *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh:*

Ver. 14. *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires:*

Ver. 15. *His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:*

Ver. 16. *His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Constantine came into the church, enjoyed the fellowship of it, did partake in all the parts of it, yea, and richly endowed it; so that the church and all her friends did eat and drink, yea, and did drink abundantly, of wealth, preferments, &c., whence it was that she fell into a deep sleep, chap. iv. 12.

Use 1. First, This serves to stir us up to thankfulness and fruitfulness to God, who hath planted us, not in the wilderness of the world, but in the garden of his church. If we now transgress, as Adam did, eating of the forbidden fruits, Gen. iii. 6, 11, 12, 24, and ii. 17, God will take his garden from us, and cast us out of it.

Use 2. Secondly, This lets us see all the goodly

situations of the earth are but dunghills and deserts in comparison of the church. The church is a garden, and in it are fountains of living waters for every thirsty soul.

Use 3. Thirdly, Though the church be sometimes in open view of all, as a city set on a hill, Mat. v. 14, yet it is sometimes also otherwise, enclosed, shut up, sealed.

Use 4. Fourthly. When the church is shut up in corners and conventicles, the members of it hatch not treasons, schisms, factions, but still remaineth as a garden, orchard, fountain, yielding sweet waters, savoury and wholesome fruits.

Use 5. Fifthly, See the wonderful use of afflictions and persecutions to the church; what savoury, and wholesome, and precious graces are thereby exercised; yea, how mightily doth the church then spread when it is most restrained.

Use 6. Sixthly, See then what the weapons of the church were against their persecutors; not daggers, dags, powder, pistols, rebellions, treasons, &c., but prayers for more seasonable times.

Use 7. Seventhly, We are to be stirred up to pray that God would now stir up a wholesome north wind to blow favourably upon the churches beyond the seas, and strongly against their enemies.

Use 8. Eighthly, This may teach us, whilst we enjoy at home these fair blasts, not to stream forth the unsavoury corruptions of our own spirits, but the sweet graces of God; else we abuse these sweet opportunities we do enjoy.

Use 9. Lastly, It is a time of much rejoicing when God stirreth up kings and princes to come into the fellowship of the church, and to partake of God's ordinances in the same.

'I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,' &c., chap. v. 2 to vi. 4.

Now followeth the description of the estate of the church from Constantine's time to the time of restoring of the gospel, and reforming of the church by the ministry of Luther and other late divines.

After that Constantine had largely endowed the church with peace, and wealth, and honour, it fell into an estate of carnal security, which carnal security is described,

First, By a comparison, resembling it to sleep;

which sleep of hers is amplified by the divers conditions : yet my heart waketh.

Secondly, By the carriage of Christ towards her in this her sleep ; where observe,

1. The means he useth to awake and stir her up, which were,

First, Calling to her and knocking, as ver. 2.

Secondly, Putting in his hand by the hole of the door, ver. 4.

2. The success of those means, or the respect she gave to them, or the use she made of them, which was double :

First, His calling and knocking she neglecteth wholly, upon very slight pretences and excuses, ver. 3.

Secondly, His putting in his hand by the hole of the door ;

1. She is affected with it : 'my bowels were moved for him,' ver. 4.

2. She upon it sought him ; which is further set forth,

First, $\mu\tilde{\nu}$ the degrees of her seeking him :

1. She arose to open to him, ver. 5.

2. Her hands and fingers dropped myrrh upon the handles of the lock, ver. 5.

3. She opened to her beloved, ver. 6.

Secondly, By the fruits or success of her seeking, where is interpreted the fruit or success of these two degrees of her seeking, in regard,

1. Of Christ : 'he was gone, he had withdrawn himself,' &c., ver. 6.

2. Of the watchmen, of whom she asketh not for her beloved ; but they finding her seeking Christ, they

First, Smote her.

Secondly, Wounded her.

Thirdly, Took away her veil from her, ver. 7.

Fourthly, She, not discouraged with this bad dealing and hard usage of the watchmen, added a fourth degree in her seeking of Christ ; she chargeth the daughters of Jerusalem to move Christ for her, ver. 8, the success or fruit whereof is added ; for upon this charge,

1. The daughters of Jerusalem are stirred and occasioned to inquire of her who Christ is, ver. 9.

2. She by their inquiry is occasioned to describe him,

First, By his colours, ver. 10.

Secondly, By his eminency, ver. 10.

Thirdly, By his several members and parts, ver. 11-16.

Fourthly, By his amiableness, ver. 16.

3. The daughters of Jerusalem by this her description of him are stirred up to affect him, and to promise their fellowship in seeking of him with her, chap. vi. 1.

'I sleep,' ver. 2. The church, surfeiting with abundance of prosperity in Constantine's time, neglected the purity and power both of doctrine and worship, and received corruptions, of which were prayers to saints, building of temples to them, superstitious regard of their relics, images, and their worship, ceremonies annexed to their sacraments, choice of meats, affecting and applauding monkish life, purgatory, &c.

'My heart waketh.' The church was still awake,

First, To hearty devotion, according to their knowledge, and beyond it.

Secondly, To discern some such gross heresies as quenched the heart and life of Christianity ; as the impiety of Arius denying the Godhead of Christ ; Macedonius and Eudomius denying the person of the Holy Ghost ; of Nestorius dividing the person in Christ ; of Eutyches, confounding their natures : other straw and stubble built upon the foundation they neglected.

'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open.' Christ used good means to awaken his spouse, and to raise her up from this carnal security.

First, He calleth to her in the voice of sundry good divines, who complained of the intolerable burden of human inventions wherewith the common Christians were defiled and dabbled, as Christ here complains. His locks and hair were full of the drops of the night—drops which coldness of religion and darkness of ignorance engendered.¹

Secondly, He knocked by the raps and blows which Constantius, Valens, and Julian gave to the church, the two former persecuting the orthodox bishops and ministers and other Christians in favour of the Arians, and Julian making flat apostasy from the church, and subtly supplanting the nursing of religion.

¹ August. Epist., 119.

'I put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?' ver. 3.

'I have put off my coat.' Thus upon slight pretence the church refuseth to open to Christ: she pretends religion, and the worship of God would appear too naked if it were not clothed with goodly and comely human inventions; how then should she in so naked a manner open to Christ? Human inventions do not clothe religion, or the church professing it, with any comely ornaments; but, as it were, with warm blankets lap her and hull her asleep in the bed of perfunctory worship and carnal security.

I do not here conceive that the church acknowledgeth she hath cast off her garments of Christ's righteousness; for then how should she remain the spouse of Christ? yea, how then should her heart have been otherwise than asleep too? but only she pleadeth she should appear too naked if she should open to Christ, if she should worship him in the simplicity and nakedness of his simple ordinances.

'I have washed my feet.' Not with the laver of regeneration, for that would have been no impediment, but a furtherance to the pure worship of God; but she had washed her feet, she had freed and cleansed her conversation from defilements of secular affairs; she had taken up a devout regard of virginity, or hermitish or monkish solitary retiredness. She being cleansed and washed in these devices, cannot betake herself to worship the Lord in his simple ordinances, and in the ways of her calling, without some defilement: thus marriage and worldly business, though both allowed by God, yet seem a defilement in comparison of more strict superstitious devotion.

'My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him,' ver. 4.

'My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door:' or, 'My beloved put down his hand by the hole of the door.' Either of which imply that Christ did at first use means for himself to open the door, when she would not, attempting to remove the impediments which hinder him from enjoying his spouse. First, 'Put his hand by the hole of the door' when he stirred up Christian emperors, such as Martianus, and both the Theodosii, to call synods, and to command the fathers

assembled to give all diligence to root out all heresies and depravations of doctrine and worship, that the pure and holy faith might shine forth.

How easily might the church upon such encouragements have broken the bars and bolts of superstition crept into the worship of God, whereby Christ was debarred from drawing near to them! The bishops assembled in those councils of that time condemned those gross heresies which blasphemed the doctrine of the Trinity; but how deeply did they neglect to redress all other enormities and corruptions! Besides, Christ is said to put in his hand by the hole of the door, when he puts his Spirit, which is the power and finger of God, Mat. xii. 28, with Luke xi. 20, into the hearts of his people, whereby they are enlightened to know him better, and stir up men honestly to seek after him. So Christ enlightened and stirred up Leo Isauricus, Constantine's son, and Leo Copronymus, to bend their best endeavours to root out idolatry, and to remove images, which were one of the chiefest abuses in God's worship.

'My bowels were moved for him.' These good princes, and other Christians at that time, were strongly and inwardly affected to the purity of God's worship, in which alone Christ is found.

'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,' ver. 5.

'I rose up to open to my beloved.' The church under these good emperors rose up out of the blankets of these human inventions wherewith she was covered in a bed of sleeping devotion, and endeavoured to restore openly the simplicity of God's worship, rejecting images and idolatry.

'My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.' The endeavours of the church were sweet, and delectable, and acceptable to Christ, and savoury to the people, to preserve them, as myrrh, from further persecution, when Constantine, the son of Leo Isauricus, called the seventh Constantinopolitan council, and there truly and solemnly convinced and condemned the worship of images; as also when Charles the Great did the like some forty years after at a synod in Frankfort.

'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,' ver. 6.

'I opened to my beloved.' This attempt of the church in executing in some places the decrees of these synods was an opening of the door to Christ: images and idolatry being shut forth, there is a door open for Christ to enter.

'But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.' Christ did not delight to reveal himself in their public assemblies, though images were in some places well removed, both because those decrees for removing of images were not generally received and executed, through the coming in of the bishop of Rome; and because the worship of God was still full of heathenish and Jewish superstitions, which Christ took no pleasure in.

'My soul failed when he spake.' The faithful in those times were assembled with fear and grief to consider how Christ now speaketh to them afar off, comes not near to their hearts and consciences; so that now, though they used such means to find him as the times afforded, yet Christ did take no pleasure in those means, in those worships, nor to their sense, in those that used them.

'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,' ver. 7.

'The watchmen that went about the city found me.' These watchmen are the bishops and ministers of that time; as also the keepers of the walls may well be the magistrates: for civil government is a wall of defence to the church of God.

'They found me.' And yet the church inquireth not of them, as she had done before of other watchmen, chap. iii. 3, 'Have you not seen him whom my soul loves?' For she knew these watchmen were of another spirit; rather wolves in sheep's clothing, and more ready to beat her from Christ than to bring her to Christ. They smote me with censures of excommunications, as Gregory the Third pope of Rome did Leo Isauricus for his endeavours. Afterwards, when sundry Christians, having intelligence that the bishops and doctors were assembled in a temple at Byzantium, to give sentence for restoring of images, in the days of the empress Irene,

came upon them, and forced them with weapons to leave off such decrees; these people were afterwards disarmed and banished into sundry islands. Thus were the faithful smitten with the censures of excommunication by the watchmen of the city, of banishment by the keepers of the walls.

'They wounded me.' With the canons of the second council of Nice, whither that council, assembled in the temple of Byzantium, and scattered by the people, was afterwards translated by the counsel of the bishops of Rome. In this council images were again restored, to the great grief of the godly, yea, to the wounding of their hearts. The sentence of a general council in the behalf of any error is no small wound to the whole church.

'They took away my veil from me;' when they forced the bishops of Rhodes, Nice, Neo-Cæsarea, Hierapolis, and others, to recantation, who before had worthily opposed images. To bring men to open recantation, to lay open their nakedness, especially when they recant from the truth, is to take away the veil.

'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love,' ver. 8.

'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem.' The church, finding herself so hardly dealt with by the ministers and magistrates, would not give over her search after Christ, yet now seeketh him in the fellowship of private Christians, and stirreth them up to pray for her.

'Tell him I am sick of love.' That is, in your prayers acknowledge that the church is ready to fail and perish for want of his presence and fellowship in his public ordinances.

'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?' &c., ver. 9.

The Christians, the daughters of Jerusalem, from this day forward to the days of Peter Waldus, of whom the Waldenses took their name, were very ignorant of Christ, and therefore they ask who he was, and wherein better than another. But instead of him they magnified the church; holy mother church was all in all with them; her they acknowledged to be fairest among women, though they see nothing in Christ better than in another.

'My beloved is white and ruddy,' &c., ver. 10.

Thus Petrus Waldus, a citizen of Lyons, opened Christ to the daughters of Jerusalem, to the children of the church, setting before them the white innocency of true holiness in him, and the ruddy scarlet dye of his death. The righteousness and death of Christ, plainly yet powerfully opened by him, brought many to behold Christ, and to profess him, who, when by persecution stirred up against them by the bishop of Rome, they were dispersed into many places—multiplied exceedingly; and being then called Albigenses, in many battles fought against the soldiers which Pope Innocent the Third had sent against them, under conduct of Simon Mounteford and others, signed with the cross; in many of which the Albigenses prevailed, helped by Raymond, Earl of Thelus, and Peter, King of Aragon, though afterwards they were overcome and scattered further into many places of Christendom. So in regard of these troops of many thousands, Christ is here called the standard-bearer, as the word signifieth, or the choice of ten thousand. Again, at that time Christ may be said to be white and ruddy in regard of his members, who were then white with innocency of life, yet ruddy, enduring persecution.

‘His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.’ ver. 11.

‘His head is as the most fine gold.’ Christ comes now to be described in his members more particularly. This head of gold Christ shewed on the earth in the person of Frederick the Second, emperor of Rome, a prince of much purity and worth, as a head of the church of fine gold. He contended with many popes about the headship of the church, advanced the headship of Christ and of himself, his vicegerents, above the counterfeit head of the pope’s supremacy. He wrestled for Christ against them with much difficulty, yet prevailed; so that even in the popish schools his election of God was agreed and condescended unto by sundry.

‘His locks are bushy or curled, and black as a raven.’ Curled black hair is a sign of heat and courage and wit in him that it groweth upon. Such was the emperor himself, and such were the common Christians of that age that did depend upon their emperor; they stuck close to him. Learned men with wit, more than former ages had yielded, and soldiers with courage maintained his person and cause.

‘His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set,’ ver. 12.

Doves diving in rivers of waters, dive their bellies deep into the waters, so that their eyes look close and narrowly upon it.

First, The eyes are here set forth by their care of the church. He is not so far off removed from it that he had need of the pope to be his visible vicar to look to it.

Secondly, By their mild innocency, implied in that they are doves’ eyes and washed with milk; whereas the Pope’s eyes were as hawks’ eyes, looking eagerly after the prey.

Thirdly, By their fit standing, so as they may well look to the whole body; whereas the pope’s eyes cannot possibly watch to look well to the estate of the church so far off him.

To this purpose tended the doctrine of the faithful divines in the following age, such as Michael Cesenus, Petrus de Carbania, Johannes de Poliacco, and such as followed them.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh,’ ver. 13.

‘His cheeks are as a bed of spices.’

Cheeks imply the outward face of the faithful church, for the cheeks are a place most conspicuous, which shews that the faithful of those times were as beds of spices and sweet flowers, to wit, not gathered into any set garden, as afterwards in Luther’s time, but scattered here and there, chap. vi. 2, yet of sweet and precious savour in the nostrils of Christ; yea, one Nicholas de Bibrath, living about that time, compareth faith and piety in the church to spice rare and dear.

‘His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.’ The doctrine of the church at those times was such as, like myrrh, served to preserve the faithful from putrefaction, according to that, ‘That which ye have already, hold fast till I come,’ Rev. ii. 25. In the primitive apostolic church her lips dropped like a honeycomb, being of strong, sweet relish to delight and nourish to full growth, chap. iv. 11. But the lips of this church drop rather myrrh than honey; they rather preserved some truth of grace than yielded any abundant nourishment to procure increase to the church.

'His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires,' ver. 14.

'His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.' Hands are instruments of action; their being set with gold rings implieth their purity and dignity. The beryl cleareth moisture and dim sight, Franciscus Rudis, de Gemma., lib. ii. cap. 8. All these shew that the ministry of the gospel should be then more powerful; and indeed God, about that time, A.D. 1300, stirred up Dantes, Marcellius, Potavinus, Oclum, Gregorius Ariminensis, Petrarchus, Wickliffe, and many more, whose ministry brought on so many, that some have counted it the first resurrection; yea, the magistrates of that time, Ludovicus Bavarus the emperor, Philip of France, Edward the Third of England, stood out in many things against the pope, as those whose hands had got more strength, and better felt their own worth, and whose eyes were cleared to see more light than their predecessors.

'His belly as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.' The belly is a hidden part of the body, yet such from which the rest is nourished; which fitly resembleth the sacraments here, as also chap. vii. 2, which being hid from those that are without, yet nourish the whole body as a heap of wheat. The doctrine of the sacraments, and the pure administration of the same, was at this time restored by John Wickliffe, and embraced by his followers, though condemned in the Council of Constance. These sacraments are said to be overlaid with sapphires, whose property is to strengthen and cherish the principal solid parts, because of the efficacy of the sacraments truly taught and administered, to strengthen and quicken God's graces in us.¹

'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars,' ver. 15.

'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.' These two legs seem to be John Huss and Jerome of Prague, who stood constantly in defence of the truth, even unto death, being established in the truth and grace of God, as it were pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.

'His countenance is as Lebanon.'

¹ Rucus Degilius, lib. i. cap. 2.

The faithful grew so plentiful in Bohemia that they seemed, even to the adversary, to be like a thick wood, as many and firm, which they were not able to hew down; and therefore they were forced in the Council of Constance to allow them the use of the cup in the Lord's supper, because they could not by strong hand keep them from it.

'Excellent as the cedars.' The cedar is a tree eminent for tallness and soundness, or durableness: such was then the face and countenance of the church, observed to grow up in conspicuous eminency, and in soundness of love to the truth, that the popish teachers were not able to corrupt them any longer with their seducements.

'His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem,' ver. 16.

'His mouth is most sweet.'

The doctrine of the gospel was taught more and more savourly by Johannes Rochesana and other ministers in Bohemia.

'He is altogether lovely, or desirable.' Christ then began again so to dispense himself to his church, in giving them the faith and sense of his goodness, that now they saw or found nothing in Christ, or in the profession of his name, but what was wholly desirable. The rebukes of Christ began now to seem greater riches than the treasures of Egypt or Babylon in some former ages, Heb. xi. 26. They that saw the truth were often brought to yield and recant; but these saw nothing to be more desired than Christ. Besides, he is now called holy and desirable, because so many so generally were stirred up to desire and seek reformation. The regions were white and ready to the harvest, else Luther had not found such good success in his ministry.

'This is my beloved, and this is my friend.'

The doctrine of certainty of our adoption, justification, salvation, began now more plainly to be discerned and acknowledged. Christ is not only fair and desirable in himself, but then the church could more boldly say, 'This is my beloved, this is my friend.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

Ver. 2. *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*

Ver. 3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

Ver. 4. *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*

Ver. 5. *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 7. *As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*

Ver. 8. *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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?*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*

Ver. 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.*

THE EXPLANATION.

Ver. 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's affectionate describing and praising

Christ stirred up many then to look after religion and reformation, ver. 1.

Use 1. First, We may here see the danger of surfeiting the church with wealth and pleasures and honour. Constantine had, in the first verse, inebriated the church with wealth and honour, and hereupon the church falleth into a long sleep, which she shook not wholly off for many ages. No wonder then of that speech heard from heaven, *Hodie venenum concidit in ecclesiam*; Now is poison poured or fallen into the church.

Use 2. Secondly, This may let us see that they have not the spirit of the church of Christ, that when they hear many voices in religion carried sundry ways, know not whom to follow, cannot discern which is the true voice of Christ among them. This church here could discern the voice of Christ even in her sleep, how much more easily if she had been well awake!

Use 3. Thirdly, This is to exhort both ministers and other faithful Christians to watchfulness, lest otherwise corruption in doctrine and worship grow amongst the people, till the locks of Christ be wholly dabbled with superstitions; the locks of Christ, to wit, the common Christians.

Use 4. Fourthly, This may teach us to know that they provide not well for the direction of their own judgments, that depend upon the voice of the ancient churches for their chief pattern and guidance in doctrine and worship. Who would build upon the words of a man (though otherwise a good man) when he is half asleep?

Use 5. Fifthly, Hence we may discern it is better the church should open to Christ, appearing before him in the naked simplicity of his worship, than to cover ourselves and his worship with the blankets and inventions of men's weaving, which will but lull the church asleep in drowsy performances of perfunctory worship, and cause Christ to withdraw himself from us.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may teach us to know, to our shame and grief, that our drowsy hearts will neglect to open to Christ upon his calling and knocking, unless he be pleased to put the finger of his Spirit into our hearts, to open an entrance for himself.

Use 7. Seventhly, The faithful must not wonder if, opening their hearts to Christ and seeking after

him, sometimes they find him not; for it was so with the church here, and hath been so with the faithful in all ages. We neglecting to receive him when he offereth himself, we must not wonder if for a time he neglect us.

Use 8. Eighthly, We may from hence learn that bad ministers will sooner bear with any disorder in people than serious seeking after Christ, and after the purity of ordinances.

Use 9. Ninthly, We may here see persecutions alienate not the affections of the faithful, but inflame them to more ardency and earnest pursuit after Christ, as this church did.

Use 10. Tenthly, It may be known the church hath lain in a deep sleep, when common Christians can more acknowledge the church than Christ himself, when they can see her to be the fairest among women, but know not any eminent worth in Christ.

Use 11. Eleventhly, The estate of many churches, in many ages, maketh but one body of Christ; in every of which Christ manifesteth himself, in some members more eminently than in others.

Use 12. Twelfthly, Christ had his faithful people and members in the world before Luther was born; yea, he shewed himself glorious in sundry of them in the darkest times of popery.

Use 13. Thirteenthly, In Christ it is well known there is nothing but what is lovely and desirable; even persecutions for his sake are lovely and glorious.

Use 14. Fourteenthly, It is no comfort, or but small, to know Christ to be every way precious and excellent, unless we can also say he is ours. 'This is my beloved, this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.'

Use 15. Fifteenthly, The affectionate, faithful preaching and setting forth of Christ stirreth up in others a saving knowledge of Christ, and hearty affection to him. The church here describeth Christ affectionately and faithfully, speaketh of him as her own, whence the daughters of Jerusalem are converted and stirred up to seek after him.

Use 16. Lastly, Hearts truly touched with sincere desire after Christ choose rather to seek him in the church, in the fellowship of the church, than by ways of separation, as this church did: 'Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.'

'My beloved is gone into his garden,' chap. vi. 2-9. The Holy Ghost in these words descendeth to set forth the state of the church reformed by the ministry of Luther and other late divines, as in the verse following the calling of the Jews.

This reformed church diversely described,

First, By Christ's visitation of her, together with the ends thereof:

1. To feed in the gardens.
2. To gather lilies, ver. 2.

Secondly, By her mutual fellowship with Christ, ver. 3.

Thirdly, By her degrees of rising, wherein she is likened to be, ver. 4,

1. As Tirzah.
2. As Jerusalem.
3. As an army with banners.

Fourthly, By her members, ver. 5-7.

1. Eyes.
2. Hair.
3. Teeth.
4. Temples.

Fifthly, By comparing the several reformed churches as amongst themselves, and preferring one above the rest of the reformed churches there.

1. As queens, sixty.
2. As concubines, eighty.
3. As virgins without number, ver. 8.
4. As a dove; and who,

First, To Christ is undefiled.

Secondly, To the whole church as an only one, as a choice one.

Thirdly, to the rest,

1. Blessed to the daughters.
2. Praised to the queens and concubines, ver. 8, 9.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden, and to gather lilies,' ver. 2.

'My beloved is gone down into his garden.' The church, which Christ next visited, and wherein he was first found in that general apostasy wherein the church sought Christ and could not find him.

In the former chapter was the church of Wittenberg reformed by the ministry of Luther, which was a garden; being,

First, Stored with variety of godly people, as

sweet flowers set in order, some teaching, some hearing.

Secondly, Fenced in as with a hedge, pale, or wall, by the protection of Frederick, the good Duke of Saxony.

Thirdly, A place wherein Christ walked, as we do in our gardens, to refresh himself and his friends.

‘Is gone down into his garden.’ Descending from those famous cities and eminent places of Rome and Constantinople into a mean country city.

‘To the beds of spices.’ Because in Germany, at that time, sundry Christians were called and sorted into several beds and companies in several places, though not attaining at the first to be so many gardens, so many several churches.

‘To feed in the garden.’ In process of time these several beds of spices (companies of Christians) grew up to the fashion of just and full churches, in Zurich, Strasburg, Brussels, Berne, Geneva, besides those in Hesse and Prussia.

‘To feed.’

First, Both himself, with his people’s prayers, and other worship and obedience.

Secondly, His people, with his word and sacraments, and other ordinances.

‘And to gather lilies;’ that is, to gather and cull more and more faithful Christians out of a wild field of worldly people into the fellowship of his church; as it were, to gather lilies into his garden.

They are called lilies,

First, For their fairness.

Secondly, For excellency or eminency, Mat. vi. 29; Prov. xii. 26.

Thirdly, For God’s care in providing for them beyond their own labour and industry, Mat. vi. 28, 29.

‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.’ ver. 3.

‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine;’ which words imply four things:

First, That the church had familiar fellowship with Christ in his holy public ordinances, especially in the main doctrine of pardon of sins by Christ’s blood alone, and of justification by faith.

Secondly, That she enjoyed this fellowship with him before the time of her deliverance out of a Babylonish or Romish captivity; for the same words are

used upon the deliverance out of Babel, chap. ii. 15, and enjoying God’s ordinances in their own country; but with this difference, there the church saith, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his,’ because, first, he delivered her out of Babel before he gave her the free use of his ordinances; but here the church saith, ‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine,’ because she first found Christ in his ordinances before she enjoyed deliverance from subjection to Rome, for Luther preached against the pope’s pardons before he rejected the supremacy of the pope.

Thirdly, Their open profession of their fellowship with Christ, when the princes of Germany openly protested against the mass and other corruptions in the church, and avowed the defence of the reformation begun, whence they were afterwards called protestants.¹

Fourthly, Christ’s gracious protection of those churches, especially in their first beginnings; for how should Luther, a poor friar, have attempted and gone through with so great a work, against such great and general opposition, and in the end die quietly in his bed, if Christ had not held him, as it were, in his arms?

‘He feedeth among the lilies.’ He refresheth himself and strengtheneth his people, conversing amongst them who strove for whiteness, and purity, and reformation.

‘Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah. comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners,’ ver. 4.

‘Thou art beautiful as Tirzah.’ Tirzah was the chief city of the kingdom of Israel after they had separated themselves from Judah, until Samaria was afterwards builded, 1 Kings xiv. 17, and xv. 33.

The city and governors of it—the people having recourse to it for judgment rather than to Jerusalem—were at first in disgrace and obloquy with the Jews for their schism and separation from the house of David at Jerusalem, and for her rebellion against the king of Judah; but this did not diminish her beauty, because this separation was from God.

Afterward Tirzah lost her beauty by erecting the golden calves, and falling off, not only from the idolatry of Solomon, 1 Kings xii. 24, wherein they

¹ Sleyden, lib. vi. 7.

did well, but from the true worship of God, restored and continued in the temple of Jerusalem. But Solomon here speaketh of Tirzah while she retained her beauty. And indeed the reformed churches were in this like unto Tirzah, at first in disgrace and obloquy for their separation from Rome, and rebellion against the emperor and other princes, and yet nevertheless beautiful, because this separation was from God, in regard of idolatries of the church of Rome, greater than those of Solomon.

Thus the Duke of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse were proscribed as rebels against the emperor, and yet their cause was beautiful and good. The faithful at that time in England were burned, in King Henry the Eighth's days, as heretics and refractory subjects or rebels, yet beautiful in God's sight.

'Comely as Jerusalem.' In process of time the church wore out the suspicion and disgrace of heresy and separation and rebellion, and was countenanced and adorned by royal laws in the days of King Edward the Sixth, and by laws of the empire tolerating the protestant princes, so that the church seemed as Jerusalem, the state of princes, the true church of God, and at unity also within itself, wherein the comeliness consisted, Ps. xii. 2, 3-5; for as Jerusalem had been three cities, Zion, Salem, Millo, and all three were knit together into one Jerusalem, so the three differences between Lutherans and Calvinists in doctrine and discipline at Geneva were all compacted together in brotherly love in their harmony of confessions.

'Terrible as an army with banners.' The church was beautiful as Tirzah in King Henry the Eighth's time, comely as Jerusalem in King Edward the Sixth's time, terrible as an army with banners in Queen Elizabeth's time, when the protestant princes grew formidable to the emperor, England and the Low Countries to the Spaniard and pope. How terrible was that overthrow which the Spaniard in '88 received!

'Turn away thine eyes,' &c., ver. 5. The eyes, as above, chap. iv. 9, of the church assembled, are the ministers or the members considered apart; as, first, Knowledge; secondly, Faith. In both respects the eyes of the church were wonderful amiable, so that Christ speaketh affectionately to the church

after the manner of lovers ravished with the beauty of their spouses.

'Turn away thine eyes, for they have overcome me.'

What worthy ministers did that first age of the reformed churches yield! as Luther, Calvin, Martin Bucer, Cranmer, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, &c.¹ What a wonderful measure of heavenly light did they of a sudden bring into the church! and that out of the midst of darkness and popery, from whence it was that the knowledge and faith of the faithful then was wonderfully enlarged, far beyond the ignorance of former times.

The eyes of the faithful in Christ's time lay under their locks, chap. iv. 1, as hindered from clear sight by many errors; but the eyes of the faithful, now seeing the truth much more plainly, are not hindered by such locks hanging over them. How clear was their faith, that having seen him which was invisible, Heb. xi. 27, feared not the fierceness of their kings and princes, but endured patiently fiery persecutions and bloody massacres!

'Thy hair is like a flock of goats.'

'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep which go up from washing,' ver. 5, 7.

'As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.'

The estate of common Christians set out by the hair, and of the ministers set out by the teeth, and of the church governors set forth by the piece of pomegranate, was the same in the church reformed as in the primitive church, chap. iv. 1-3, where the description of these parts is used, and here repeated; only with this difference, the teeth are not so even cut in reformed churches as in Christ's time; some of them exceed their brethren in authority and jurisdiction, whereas those were framed to more brotherly love in Christ's time. Whence the teeth they are said to be even cut, which in these teeth is here left out; yet both the ministers of higher and lower rank were as sheep flocking and consorting together, washed with the laver of regeneration, fruitful and powerful in their ministry, and therefore are here described as a flock of sheep come up from the washing, 'whereof every one beareth twins, and none is barren among them,' ver. 6.

¹ Peter Martyr.

Use 1. First, We may here learn to behold a different estate of the church. Sometimes it is in a garden, sundry Christians gathered together into beds and knots, and growing up into good order together, delighting and refreshing both God and man with the savour of their sweetness. Such was and is the estate of the church reformed. Sometimes, again, the members of the church scattered abroad in the wild fields, seeking where they may find Christ, as in the former chapter.

The church is here visible as in a garden in some of their eminent and principal members. If then the papists ask, Where was the church visible before Luther? The answer is, It was visible, not in open congregations indeed, as it were gardens, but in sundry members of the church, as sweet spices and flowers, growing here and there, whom the popes and their instruments, like wild boars, sought to root out, and yet God preserveth them.

Sometime the church findeth Christ comfortably in her solemn assemblies, when good Christians are met together to serve him in the simplicity of his ordinances; sometimes, when they can find no such gardens, nor him in any place openly worshipped, yet even then they seek him here and there where they can find him.

Use 2. Secondly, The like uses are here to be made of these gardens, of that chap. iv. 14.

Use 3. Thirdly, To teach us a true description of a church. It is, as it were, a garden, an assembly of many good Christians or saints, as it were sweet spices or flowers set in order, as it were beds or knots, amongst whom Christ walketh, they enjoying fellowship with him in his public ordinances, and he with them.

Use 4. Fourthly, To refute the arrogance or ignorance of the Separatists, who refuse to keep fellowship with reformed churches, whom Christ yet keeps fellowship with. Shall man be more pure than his Maker? or the sons of mortal men more holy than the sons of God?

Use 5. Fifthly, To exclude the popish synagogues from the number of Christ's gardens; the gardens and churches of Christ, as they have Christ walking in them, so they know it, and profess it, and rejoice in it.

'I am my well-beloved's, and my well-beloved is mine,' ver. 3. The church of Rome disdains such a

song as heretical presumption to say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine.'

Use 6. Sixthly, This doth teach us, that when churches keep themselves close to Christ, and to the simplicity of his ordinances, that they can say, 'I am my well-beloved's, and he is mine;' Christ will keep himself powerful and gracious amongst them for their protection and comfort; he will not fail to shew himself theirs, when they fail not to shew themselves his.

Use 7. Seventhly, This may teach us not to wonder if Christian assemblies be at first suspected, as Tizrah, for sedition, separation, &c. It is the lot of God's church, which, when it groweth up to be better known, will appear to be, as it is, comely as Jerusalem.

Use 8. Eighthly, From the description of the church here by her members—eyes, hair, teeth, temples—gather here again in the same uses made of the like description, chap. iv. 1-3, in uses 2, 3, 4, there expressed.

Use 9. Ninthly, Observe the reformed churches to be the same that the primitive church in Christ's time was in sundry principal members and respects, and therefore the same members in the same sort described word for word; yea, such fellowship as the church of the Jews had with Christ coming out of Babylon, the same have the reformed churches with Christ coming out of Romish Babylon, chap. ii. 16, and vi. 3.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number,' ver. 8.

This verse contains the last part of the description of the estate of the reformed churches, which is a comparison of them together amongst themselves; of whom some are,

First, Queens, and they are threescore.

Secondly, Concubines, and they are fourscore.

Thirdly, Damsels, and they without number.

Secondly, One is eminent above them all unto Christ: first, A dove; secondly, Undefined.

Secondly, Herself one.

Thirdly, Her mother, an only choice one.

Fourthly, Her daughter, blessed.

Fifthly, The queens and concubines commended her.

'There are threescore queens, and fourscore con-

cubines, and damsels, or virgins, without number,' ver. 8.

Queens differ from concubines in four respects :

First, Queens, or chief wives, are taken into fellowship with their royal husbands by solemn stipulation, and with consent and solemn rejoicing of friends. The concubines are not so, as Bilhah and Zilpah, &c., Gen. xxix. 22. A man takes such to him rather by right of dominion than by fellowship of wedlock.

Secondly, Queens, or chief wives, bring with them dowries to their husbands, 1 Kings ix. 16 ; Acts iii.

Hence Lesbonius to Lusitoles, in matrimony, would not give his sister *sine dote*, without dowry, lest he should seem to give her *in concubinatum potius quam in matrimonium*. But concubines were taken without dowry for the most part, as Hagar, Bilhah, Zilpah, &c.

Thirdly, Chief wives had the keys of the families in their own hands ; they had government of the house under and with their husbands. Hence it is that Hagar, though called Abraham's wife, yet is said to be in Sarah's hand, Gen. xvi. 3, who also corrected her, ver. 6 ; the angel calleth her Sarah's maid, ver. 7 ; and she calleth Sarah her mistress, ver. 8, as likewise the angel doth, ver. 9.

Concubines, though secondary wives, yet were but as servants, save only they were admitted to the fellowship of the bed.

Fourthly, Chief wives brought forth children, to whom belonged the inheritance ; whereas concubines' children had, for the most part, only some gifts given them, Gen. xxv. 5, 6. That Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, had inheritances among their brethren, was by extraordinary dispensation.

Queens then are such reformed congregations where such properties of queens are found. Christ, indeed, looks for no dowry from us for his own use ; he needeth nothing of ours, neither have we anything to give him, but our own nakedness, filthiness, and beggary, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6. Here therefore look at Christ in the persons of the ministers, whose vicegerents they are, and ambassadors also ; and in whose name they, being married to the churches, do beget children to Christ, 1 Cor. iv. 15 ; though ministers considered in comparison with Christ, they are

but as the friends of the bridegroom, not bridegrooms themselves, John iii. 29. Such churches then, and congregations, are queens, whom the ministers and congregations do, with mutual free consent, choose either the other ; as when the people do give up themselves, first, to the Lord, and then to the ministers by the will of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5. Of this sort are sundry congregations in England, and very many in the reformed foreign churches. Other congregations, which have ministers thrust upon them without their liking and consent, and whom ministers have to them by some clandestine conveyances, are more like to concubines.

Again, such congregations as come to their ministers with a good dowry, and comfortable and honourable maintenance, they are like wives. Others who bring little or no maintenance with them, are like to concubines, though indeed the former condition is more essential to lawful marriage ; to wit, free consent and mutual stipulation on both sides ; for as sometimes lawful wives have but poor dowries, and concubines sometimes bring large maintenance with them, so some congregations that freely consent to the acceptance of their ministers can allow them but slender maintenance, whereas some others upon whom ministers thrust themselves are richly endowed. Furthermore, such congregations as enjoy the power of the keys, they are as queens, lawful wives. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

First, The one of knowledge, Luke xi. 52.

Secondly, The other of jurisdiction, Mat. xviii. 18, and both of them mentioned, Mat. xvi. 19.

Where, then, a congregation enjoyeth a faithful ministry, opening an entrance into the kingdom of heaven to penitent believers, and shutting it against impenitent hypocrites and scandalous livers, there the power of the keys is not wanting ; and if withal they have liberty exercising jurisdiction, there is their queen-like or wife-like authority more complete. Of this sort are divers, both English and foreign churches, though sundry German churches, dispensing the keys of knowledge more corruptly in their doctrine of the sacrament and predestination, and neglecting the use of excommunication, do rather turn to the condition of concubines.

But such churches as have no preachers, or such

as have no power in their gifts to open and shut the kingdom of heaven to the conscience and souls of men, they are as concubines.

Lastly, Such congregations where the people remain still ignorant in darkness, and are not brought on to be begotten of God by the lively word of regeneration, but continue altogether ignorant, worldly, and profane, they are as concubines, whose children inherit not, though God may give them outward blessings; but such congregations where the word is lively to the begetting of souls to an immortal inheritance, they are lawful wives, yea, queens. Of this sort our English and foreign churches have many, God be blessed, though the church of Sardis hath but a few names, Rev. iii. 4.

'Damsels are without number,' &c. Damsels or virgins in this marriage song are of less reckoning, as being yet either not spoken to in way of marriage by Christ and his ministers, or coyly refusing him. Of this sort there were many churches at the first reforming of the gospel, to whom, for want of ministers, readers were sent; whence one of the martyrs wished that every able minister might have ten congregations committed to his charge, till further provision could be made; so that such churches there were, even ten to one, abundantly many, that scarcely heard of Christ's knocking at their hearts by any conscionable ministry; yea, and how many be there at this day that either do want such ministers as do espouse them to Christ, or else do coyly deny their motions, and stand out against Christ and their ministers?

Of queens he reckoneth threescore, of concubines fourscore. A certain number put for an uncertain; and of churches, the less pure the greater.

Damsels he reckons without number:

First, Partly because they have been exceeding many of them, and are still too many.

Secondly, Partly because Christ maketh no account of them, as if they were with him *nullius numeri*, not worth the reckoning.

'But my dove, my undefiled is one,' &c., ver. 9. A dove is noted,

First, For her chastity;

Secondly, Mildness, or innocency, Mat. x. 10. Such are those churches which go not a-whoring after any superstition or idolatry, nor exercise that cap-

tivity of tyranny over their sister churches which the popish watchmen are taxed for, chap. v. 7, that smote and wounded the members of the churches for seeking after Christ, and took her veil from her, which are unspotted, undefiled, either,

First, Of Romish pollutions, or,

Secondly, Of worldly courses.

'Is one.' Such congregations are,

First, Few, as one to sixty or eighty.

Secondly, At unity, or brotherly love one with another, as one body, though scattered into many places, as England, Scotland, Germany, &c. In all Christendom some churches are more chaste, mild, and unspotted than others, even of the same country; and yet such are but few, and though few, yet at entire unity, as one body.

'The only one of her mother, the choicest one of her that bare her,' ver. 9. In the Hebrew phrase the whole is the mother, the parts are the members. The true catholic church of Christ is the mother of all reformed daughters; and these daughter-churches that are most chaste and mild, and undefiled, they are best esteemed, and best beloved of the mother catholic church, as coming nearest to her in chastity, innocency, purity, &c.

'The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her,' ver. 9. These daughters, whether they be the members of the unspotted churches mentioned in the former verse, either of both, together with these churches that are as queens and concubines, do give honourable testimony of these congregations that are most reformed, and with them all prosperity, the good things of this life, and a better.

To bless is more than to praise: praise is the acknowledging of any good thing in her, but blessing is the acknowledgment,

First, Of divine good things; and,

Secondly, Those drawing the churches and themselves therein nearer to God.

'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?' &c., ver. 10-13. In these verses the calling and arising of the church of the Jews is described by six arguments:

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising, joined with the admiration of it: 'Who is she that looketh forth?' ver. 10.

Secondly, By the place of her arising: the morning, or the east countries.

Thirdly, By the degrees and beauty of her grace:

First, Fresh as the morning.

Secondly, Fair as the moon.

Thirdly, Bright and clear as the sun.

Fourthly, 'Terrible as an army with banners,' ver. 10.

Fourthly, By Christ's visitation of her, with the end of it, ver. 11.

Fifthly, By the unexpected helps which this church found for her return, ver. 12.

Sixthly, By the earnestness of her calling given her: Return, return, four times repeated.

'Who is this that looketh forth?' These words express the unexpected admirable arising of a new church, chap. iii. 6; and that after the reformed churches of the Gentiles. She is a Shulamite, alluding to Salem, the ancient name of Jerusalem, the mother city of the Jews.

This church then thus arising is that of the Jews which we look for; whose beginning, for sudden conversion of multitudes, shall be admirable to themselves and others, Isa. lxvi. 8, and xlix. 12.

'As the morning.' Her arising is resembled by the morning.

First, Because this church shall arise from the eastern countries, Rev. xvi. 12.

Secondly, Her arising shall be like a new resurrection from the dead, Rom. xi. 15.

Thirdly, Her arising shall be speedily, as the same phrase intimates, Isa. lviii. 8, and lx. 19, 20.

'Fair as the moon, bright as the sun.' The moon is fair by beauty communicated to her from the sun,' Isa. vi. 12, 20, and xxiv. 23. In the sun's brightness is light, heat, refreshing, and all in a glorious manner, Isa. xxxiii. 24, and lx. 21. The citizens of that church shall all at that time, or at least the body of them, have their sins forgiven them by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, Isa. lix. 21; Zech. xiv. 20, 21. They shall enjoy abundant light of heavenly knowledge. They shall excel in purity of holiness. They shall abound in consolations, to the refreshing of themselves and others, Isa. lxvi. 10, 11.

'Terrible as an army with banners.' Read Rev. xix. 14, 21. The armies of the Jews shall be terrible

to the Turks and Tartars, Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix., and to the false prophet then driven from Rome by ten Christian princes, and associating himself to the Turk for succour.

'I went down into the garden of nuts.' The Jewish synagogues, so called because of that veil of hardness and blindness drawn over their hearts, as it were a hard nut-shell over the kernel, Rom. xi. 8, 10; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

'To see the fruits of the valleys.' Valleys lying in the shade between two mountains bring forth fruit late: so the Jews are long before they bring forth fruit unto Christ.

'To see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.' The Jews, that for hardness of heart are like a garden of nuts, yet when their conversion shall be wrought, will be as vines and pomegranates, bring forth sweet and wholesome fruits to the refreshing of God and man, Judges ix. 13.

'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.' Or set me upon the chariots of a willing people; not that anything cometh at unawares to Christ in his own person; but because to his ministers, that in his name shall go into this garden of nuts, the Jews shall appear unexpectedly, prepared to embrace Christ's calling: they shall find the Jews as chariots of willing people, ready to march with them whithersoever in Christ's name they shall call; their soul should no sooner desire it, but they should be set in all readiness. Where also is intimated the willing readiness of a willing people among the Gentiles to convey the Jews into their country, with chariots, and horses, and dromedaries, Isa. lxvi. 20, and xlix. 23, 24.

'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,' ver. 13.

'Return, return, O Shulamite; return.' This call, so often repeated, Isa. lxii. 6, 7, doth imply,

First, The earnestness of the ministers that shall call them.

Secondly, The haste that they would have them to make in going through with their conversion.

'That we may look upon thee, or behold thee.' It is the desire of the ministers, and of all the faith-

ful, to behold this glorious church when she shall be called.

'What will ye see in the Shulamite?' But, as it were, the company of two armies, or the host of Mahanaim, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

This is spoken, either because the Jews shall, presently upon their conversion, marshal and rank themselves into armies against Gog and Magog, ver. 10, where she is said to arise 'terrible as an army with banners.' Or else, taking the word properly, the Holy Ghost compareth the Jews to a host of angels, which Jacob saw at Mahanaim, Gen. xxxii. 1; Zech. xii. 8; as indeed the feeble at that day shall be as valiant as the angels of God. This interpretation seemeth to me to be the more likely, because her warlike provision was before mentioned, ver. 10. Or otherwise, the Holy Ghost may allude to the host of Israel and Judah, which went to bring up David from Mahanaim to Jerusalem, after the Israelites were brought to see their errors in casting him off for Absalom, 2 Sam. xix. 9, 10, 14, 43; so shall the Jews at their conversion assemble for the establishment of the kingdom and throne of Christ among them, after they shall be brought to see their soul errors in casting off Christ so unworthily so long a time.

Use 1. The first use of this is for discerning a different estate of all Christian churches and congregations, and trial of our own parishes. In one of these ranks every congregation is found, either a queen, a concubine, or a damsel, or a dove: if we have freely consented to the entertainment of a faithful ministry, coming to us in the name of Christ; if we bring with us to him a sufficient dowry for his maintenance; if the word of God shall be powerfully dispensed amongst us, and the opening and shutting of the kingdom of heaven, and withal the key of discipline be not neglected; if our congregations bring forth many children to God, partakers of the heavenly inheritance; then are our congregations as chief wives, as queens to Jesus Christ. But if our ministers find not conjugal and free acceptance from us; if we be not willing to provide for them comfortable and honourable maintenance; if the word be not so dispensed that the people may find themselves in good or evil estates; if our congregations bring not forth regenerate Chris-

tians to partake of the heavenly inheritance, then are they but as concubines in the sight of God; if we have yet no ministers that woo us, and beseech us to be reconciled to Christ, 2 Cor. v. 20; or if they do, yet we coyly put them off with delays, or refuse, then are we damsels, but neither queens nor concubines. But if we find all the properties of queens belonging unto us, and withal find a love and care to keep ourselves chaste to Christ, and innocent to man, and undefiled, and unspotted, both of the world and of Rome, then are we doves to Christ Jesus, choicest children of the true catholic church.

Use 2. A second use is for a discerning of a different estate of all Christian souls, and trial of our own estates before God. If our hearts have never yet been called and knocked at by the lively word of God's ordinances, or if we have coyly put off our repentance to this day, or refuse to hearken to Christ, then are we damsels. If we bring forth seed of righteousness to Christ, by reason we are under the government of such who will require it, and well may command it of us, we are but as concubines. But if we freely condescend to receive and embrace Christ into our hearts with entire conjugal affection, and give up ourselves to him to bring forth the fruits of his Spirit, and are enabled to govern ourselves and families after his will, then are we royal spouses unto Christ Jesus, and keep ourselves to Christ chaste, innocent, and undefiled, and endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1; then are we as doves unto Jesus Christ.

Use 3. A third use, to direct and instruct ministers and people how to approve themselves and their congregations in best sort unto Christ. Let not ministers thrust themselves upon their people against their consents, but let their people freely accept them, and comfortably maintain them; let the ministers be faithful in dispensing God's ordinances, and the people obedient to give up themselves to Christ and his truth, till both grow up to heavenly and holy purity of worship and life; so shall our congregations be as queens and doves to Jesus Christ.

Use 4. A fourth use may be to encourage men to ways of spotless innocency; they are not disgraced,

but blessed of the faithful, and praised even of them that are without.

Use 5. Fifthly, To reprove the children of the separation, who reproach the church instead of blessing or praising them.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may teach us to expect a powerful and glorious calling of the Jews in all the particulars before described: say, They be now, as Gideon's fleece, dry; when the Gentiles are moistened with heavenly dew, they shall again be moistened when we shall seem dry in comparison of them. Though Leah step first into Jacob's bed, and so the less comely church of the Gentiles into the fellowship with Christ, yet the church of the Jews, as beautiful as Rachel, shall in the end find fellowship with Christ.

The glory of their calling appears in the text, because the Holy Ghost describes her by comparisons, not fetched from earthly flowers, or metals, or jewels, but from heavenly lights, the morning, moon, sun.

It appeareth further in their unexpected and free readiness to embrace Christ.

The power of their calling appears in their earnestness and zeal of their ministry, in breaking the hard shell of their hearts wherewith they were formerly enclosed, ver. 11; in stirring them up to fight manfully and terribly God's battles against the enemies of the church, ver. 13.

The Lord speedily hasten the coming of this Shulamite, that we may behold her! Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 2. *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*

Ver. 3. *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*

Ver. 4. *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes are like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath*

rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

Ver. 5. *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.*

Ver. 6. *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*

Ver. 7. *This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*

Ver. 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;*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 10. *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

Ver. 11. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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.*

THE EXPLANATION.

This chapter, to the end of the fourth verse of the eighth chapter, describeth a fourfold estate of the Jewish church. When they shall come to be converted unto the Lord; to wit,

First, As it shall be in gathering and growing up, ver. 1, 5.

Secondly, As it shall be grown up to her stature and maturity, ver. 6, 7.

Thirdly, As it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, ver. 8, 10.

Fourthly, As it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, and throughout the land of Israel, ver. 11; ver. 4 of chap. viii.

That in ver. 11 the church inviteth Christ, and with him herself, to have recourse into the country villages, is plain in the words of the former verses, which set forth a threefold estate of the Shulamite converted, is evident by the repetition of the verses,

ver. 3, 7, 8, and all with some difference; and the breasts are so described, ver. 3, and set forth an unsettled ministry, quickly stirring up and down to gather this church and the scattered members of it.

This church then in gathering is described by ten parts; feet, joints of thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, hair.

‘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.’ ver. 1.

‘How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!’ In her feet shod with shoes there is a threefold beauty; for it implieth,

First, Her return out of captivity; as, on the contrary, bare feet is a sign of going into captivity, Isa. xx. 1-4; Deut. xxv. 9.

Secondly, Her challenging and recovery of her lost inheritance in Israel, Ruth iv. 7, 8.

Thirdly, Her walking in that peace of conscience which the gospel prepareth, Eph. vi. 15; whereas he that walketh barefoot either gathereth a thick brawny skin upon the soles of his feet; or if his feet be more tender, he pricketh them ever and anon with thorns, or little sharp stones, as scruples. A conscience not furnished with true peace, either waxeth senseless and brawny, or else scrupulous and anxious. All the three things are beautiful and glorious; as, on the contrary, it is a great disturbance and deformity to go into captivity, to sell and forego a man’s inheritance, to walk unquietly and uncomfortably. And if it be beautiful and glorious to return out of bodily captivity, and to recover the earthly inheritance, how much more is it together with these outward things to join a return out of spiritual captivity, and recovery of an everlasting inheritance, as the Jews shall do at their conversion!

‘O prince’s daughter!’ So called,

First, Because they are born of God, the Prince of princes.

Secondly, The Jews converted shall be of much glory and authority, even as the kings of the earth, Rev. xvi. 12.

‘The joints of thy thighs,’ &c. The word signifies whole bones of the thighs; they, for their apt and ready turning in their conversion to God, are like well-wrought precious jewels, the work of the hand

of God, the spiritual workman of all the works of the church.

‘Thy navel,’ &c.; ‘thy belly is like,’ &c. The navel and belly are both hidden parts, not conspicuous to them without, and therefore set forth the two mysteries or sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord’s supper. The navel, serving for the nourishing of the infant in the womb, resembleth baptism, nourishing infants, and new-born babes in the womb of the church.

It wanteth not liquor,

First, Of the Spirit of Christ to sanctify and cleanse us from sin.

‘The belly,’ to wit, the Lord’s supper, ‘is as an heap of wheat,’ for store of excellent, and sweet, and fine nourishment, ‘set about with lilies,’ because only the faithful, pure Christians shall be admitted to partake in that sacrament.

The Lord’s table shall not be set about with weeds, profane and scandalous sinners, but with lilies, worthy communicants.

‘Thy two breasts (the teachers of that church) are like two young roes.’ For their agility, skipping up and down to suckle the converts, implying that the first ministry of the Jews, at the conversion of that people, shall rather be as the evangelists, bound to no certain place, than as pastors fixed to any settled congregation, which yet outwardly they shall be.

‘That are twins.’

First, For their likeness in disposition.

Secondly, Brotherly equality.

‘Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus,’ ver. 4.

‘Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.’ The neck, as above, chap. iv. 4, is the faith of the church, joining Christ and his church together, as the neck doth the head and body.

As a tower, for strength; of ivory, for preciousness, for which faith is commended, 1 Pet. i. 7; 2 Pet. i. 1.

‘Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.’ For the abundance of water, meaning teachers, that they shall yield, even tears of repentance, at their conversion, partly for the great wrong they had done our Saviour, partly

to consider the unspeakable and undeserved kindness of God towards them, Zech. xii. 10; Jer. iii. 8, 9, and l. 4.

'Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.' There was a double house of the forest of Lebanon, the one in Jerusalem, built by Solomon, so called by way of resemblance, in which he put his golden shields, whence Shishak taking them, is said to take them out of Jerusalem, 1 Kings vii. 2, x. 17, and xiv. 25, 26: of this house speaketh Isaiah, chap. xxii. 8.

There was another house built in the forest of Lebanon, as appeareth by this place, which is said to look toward Damascus, to distinguish it from the other which is in Jerusalem.

Lebanon itself stood in the utmost confines of Israel, northwards towards Syria; and therefore this house built in Lebanon is said to look toward Damascus, the chief city of Syria. Now Lebanon being full of all manner of sweet and fragrant trees, and shrubs, and spices, the tower built in Lebanon must needs be compassed with the sweet-smelling odours, to the great refreshing and delight of such as should lodge in it.

Hence the nose of this pure church is compared to this tower, because they that dwell in this church shall be wonderfully refreshed with the sweet odours of the ministry, 2 Cor. ii. 15, which is the sweet savour of life unto life; as also with the savoury conference of good Christians, and their faithful and godly conversation.

'Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries,' ver. 5.

'Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.' Carmel excelled for fruit, and fulness in feeding cattle, and therefore is reckoned, with Lebanon, and Sharon, and Bashan, famous for fertility, Isa. iii. 39, and xxxv. 2; 1 Sam. xv. 17.

The head of the church under Christ is the civil magistrate. The meaning then is, that the magistrate of this church shall yield store of sound and sweet nourishment to the people, by giving and maintaining free passage to each holy ordinance of God, and also by wholesome laws; and, lastly, by good example of godly life.

'The hair of thy head like purple.' The hair,

whether it be the common Christian's of the church that hang upon Christ, or the officers or servants that hang upon the magistrates of that church, they are like purple.

First, Not only dyed in crimson blood of Christ, Isa. xxxiii. 24, and lxiii. 1;

Secondly, But also of a royal hue, as purple is a princely dye; all of them as princes, chap. vii. 1; Zech. xii. 8; Rev. xvi. 12; Isa. lx. 17, 18.

The officers and exacters shall be peace and righteousness.

These officers shall not basely shark for bribes, nor exact for fees, nor oppress for filthy lucre, nor pick holes in men's estates to trouble the people and enrich themselves; but, like purple-clothed princes, be like their ministers, and honour both their ministers and themselves with peace and righteousness.

'The king is held in the rafters,' chap. i. 17. For so the word is turned before, where the rafters were understood partly of the temple. *Held* is always, to my remembrance, used for holding by constraint, bound as a prisoner. The meaning may be, then, that the king or chief magistrate is bound to be present at the ordinances of God in the temple. The prince is commanded to go in with them; when they go out, he shall go out with them together, Ezek. xlvi. 10, he shall come in with the first and go out with the last. Or what if it imply that their greatest magistrates shall submit themselves to be bound with the censures of the church, according to that where the psalmist telleth of binding of kings with the ordinances of God in the church, Ps. cxlix. 6, 8, and ix. 5. And Isaiah foretellet that kings and queens shall bow down their faces towards the earth unto the church, and lick the dust of their feet, Isa. xlix. 21. Both their interpretations stand well together.

Use 1. First, This doth shew us how to come and appear beautiful in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, which is when we turn our feet from the estate and ways and bondage of sin and Satan, and come out of the captivity into the liberty of his children, when we claim our inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, seeking after it above all earthly blessings, and walking towards it; when we walk confidently in a Christian course, then Christ admireth our beauty. How beautiful are thy goings with shoes, O prince's daughter! Yea, Christ then esteemeth us as princes'

children: what matter then if foolish men account us peasants, and our going with shoes as strait in the instep? But we stand not nor fall not to their judgments, but to his who shall judge us to eternal happiness or misery at the last day, Mat. v. 18. His word must stand when heaven and earth shall fall. If he account us vessels of honour, we are so indeed; who is it that dishonoureth us? 2 Tim. ii. 21. If men should cast a vessel of gold or silver into the mire and trample upon it, yet the vessel is still a vessel of honour, good, and rich, and precious; the mire may easily be washed off from such vessels. Be not discouraged, then, from Christian courses, by foolish fears of reproach. The truth is, if we go on in sin, Christ esteemeth of us as base peasants, as ugly and abominable in his sight; naked, bare, deformed, and defiled; yea, he esteemeth our goings as going barefoot, which either, first, brawneth our feet with a thick skin, that thereby we grow insensible and feel nothing; or, secondly, pricketh us with unnecessary scruples and fears.

Use 2. Secondly, We may from hence observe to whom the praise of the conversion of the forwardest Christians is due; to wit, to the hands of a cunning workman, the God of power and peace. We might be also called as often to return as the Shulamite in the last verse of the former chapter; and yet, unless this cunning workman put the bones of our thighs into joint, we shall not return to him.

Use 3. Further, See here the use of baptism, even to infants. The Anabaptists object that infants can receive no benefit by it, because they yet receive no understanding, no benefit by the word; as if infants cannot receive nourishment by the navel, though they can neither take, nor chew, nor suck meat with hand or mouth. Baptism is the navel by which infants are nourished in the church.

Use 4. Fourthly, From this navel never wanting liquor; observe, there doth never want just matter of instruction and comfort to be fetched from our baptism against all temptations. Doth Satan detain thee from obeying thine effectual calling? Remember in baptism from thine infancy thou wast admitted into the family of Christ. Doth he trouble thee with fears and doubts that thy sins are not pardoned? Behold thy baptism is full of liquor of Christ's blood to justify thee from all thy sins.

Doth Satan tempt thee to defile thyself with any sin? Behold thou art washed solemnly in baptism from all sin, and wilt thou defile thyself against thy baptism?

Use 5. Fifthly, In the Lord's supper see what plenty of excellent, sound, and sweet nourishment is offered to us, even a heap of wheat. Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, John vi. 55. There is all-sufficient nourishment for a hungry soul; this serveth to quicken our appetite to this heavenly banquet.

Use 6. Sixthly, Observe what manner of persons should be admitted to the Lord's table, and how we should prepare ourselves thereto. This heap of wheat is not to be set about with stinking weeds, but with fair lilies. Cleanse ourselves then from all scandalous sins, yea, and from all secret sins, to our best endeavours, so shall we be set about this heap of wheat, the Lord's table.

Seventhly, Note that ministers, to be like roes, skipping up and down to gather and suckle the children of the church, is fitter for a church in gathering than convenient in a church constituted; for then the breasts hang in their place like clusters of grapes upon the branches of the vine, ver. 7, 8. But they must be breasts giving suck, not dry nurses; that is their duty in every estate of the church. Or, if their people be grown up in Christ to fitness for strong meat, then they to be full in a stronger liquor than milk, as clusters of grapes, full of wines.

Eighthly, See the beauty and commendation of three cardinal graces:

First, Faith, to be,

First, Strong.

Secondly, Precious; applying the precious promises, and making us rich with them.

Secondly, Repentance, to abound in brokenness of spirit through godly sorrow, melting into abundance of tears, or other affections suitable thereto.

Thirdly, Obedience, to be,

First, Fragrant.

Secondly, And that with all manner of sweet fruits and good, that all that converse with us may smell a sweet savour from our conversation.

Use 9. Ninthly, Mark here a lesson for magistrates to be as Carmel, yielding some sweet and plentiful nourishment to the people.

First, By procuring free passage to God's ordinances, whence Jehoshaphat's nobles are said to teach, 2 Chron. i. 7, and vii. 9.

Secondly, By making wholesome laws.

Thirdly, By giving good example of life, to have no officers hanging about them of base demeanour, exacters, promoters, contentious persons, but such as may execute it themselves and their ministers. And for public ordinances of God's worship, it is no disparagement to magistrates to behave themselves reverently in them, and to submit themselves unto them as unto Christ.

Use 10. Tenthly, From this complete description of the beauty of the church in all her parts, observe,

First, That the church was never so completely beautiful in all her parts as it shall be when the Jews are called. The apostolic primitive church, though all fair, yet wanted this head-like Carmel, a Christian magistrate, yea, and some purity of the sacrament, 1 Cor. xi. 20.

Secondly, In that he beginneth this description from the feet, and so ascendeth to the head in order. It may seem the calling of the Jews shall begin at first rather with some of the lowest people, and so ascend higher and higher to more eminent persons.

Thirdly, In that the church neither here, where so many of her members are set forth, nor in all this song, is described by the beauty of her hands or fingers, we must not gather that therefore this church will be barren of good works. God forbid; but rather conceive Christ concealeth the mention of her hands, to wit, her works, partly,

First, Because the harlot of Rome so delighteth so much to boast of her hands, of her works, which indeed she wants. Christ had rather his church should abound in good works in silence than boast of them, especially when they are wanting.

Secondly, Because it is he alone, and not we, that worketh all our works for us, Isa. xxvi. 12; Hosea xiv. 8; John xv. 5.

'How fair,' &c., chap. vii. 6, and viii. 4.

In these verses the Holy Ghost goes on to describe the second estate of the Jews' church, as is spoken above, chap. vii. 1, in ver. 6, 7, as grown up to her full stature and maturity.

For, first, Beauty is not observed till full growth; now here her beauty is admired, ver. 6.

Secondly, Her stature is expressly mentioned to be a palm-tree, ver. 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts are here mentioned again, ver. 7, to shew that he speaketh not of the same estate of the church as afore. Besides, the breasts yielding wine instead of milk, it is a sign the church shall then be grown to more maturity and fitness to be fed with stronger meat.

The church of the Jews, then come to her fuller growth, is here described:—

First, By her beauty, which is admirable: 'How fair!' and joined with pleasure: 'How pleasant art thou!' especially for public worship so described, ver. 6.

Secondly, By her stature, resembled to a palm-tree, ver. 7.

Thirdly, Her breasts resembled to clusters of grapes, ver. 7.

The third estate of this church, as it shall be further enlarged by the access of the Gentiles, is described, ver. 8, 10; and that,

First, By Christ's climbing this palm-tree, and taking hold of the boughs of it, ver. 8.

Secondly, By the rich supply of nourishment from her breasts, ver. 8.

Thirdly, By the smell of her nose, resembled to apples, ver. 8.

Fourthly, By the power of her doctrine, ver. 9.

Fifthly, By her familiar fellowship with Christ, ver. 10.

The fourth estate of this church, as it shall multiply and stretch itself into the country villages, is described, ver. 11, to the fourth of the next chapter, and that,

First, By the occasion of this increase, the church's invitation of Christ to visit the country villages, ver. 11, 12.

Secondly, By the affectionate service of this church to Christ, chap. viii. 1, 2.

Thirdly, By Christ's affectionate embracing of her, ver. 3.

Fourthly, By the church's desire for the continuance of this estate without interruption, ver. 4.

'How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!'

'How fair!' The fairness and beauty of the church implieth suitably to what is found in the natural beauty of the body.

First, A complete integrity of all the members of this church; where any member is wanting, there is deformity, beauty is blemished. This church shall want then no ordinances of God, nor any such members to whom the dispensation of each ordinance belongeth.

Secondly, A fit proportion of all the members of the church one to another; no swellings, no convulsions.

Thirdly, A good colour in the outward face of things, all carried decently and in order. 'How fair!' It implieth admirable beauty in all these respects.

'How pleasant for delights!' This word implieth a ready willingness of this church to the public worship of God, which is here called delights, as being the marriage-bed wherein Christ most familiarly solaceth himself with his church.

This ready willingness of this church was foretold, Ps. ex. 3; and the willingness of this people to any service of his is pleasant to him, 2 Cor. ix. 7.

'O love!' As if the church were so lovely that it were even love itself.

The five former verses described the church in her several members apart. This verse considereth the whole body met together in public duties.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes,' ver. 7.

'This thy stature is like to a palm-tree.' This tree is eminent,

First, For her straightness.

Secondly, For her tallness.

Thirdly, For her perpetual greenness and fruitfulness, Jer. xvii. 8, as that,

Fourthly, For her thriving under weight pressing it down.

Fifthly, For her easiness to be climbed, having many boughs whereon to stay hands and feet. So shall the church be eminent for uprightness therein, for growing up even against all oppositions of Gog and Magog, for ready entertaining of all the faithful that shall come to her.¹

'Thy breasts are like the clusters of the vine-grapes.' Their ministers such like in four respects:

First, Not few, as afore, two young roes, but many, as clusters.

Secondly, Not stirring up and down, as roes, from place to place, but hanging in their places.

Thirdly, Full of strong liquor of sound doctrine.

Fourthly, Requiring some pressure in urging, though little, before they empty themselves, but upon easy pressure doing it plentifully.

'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,' ver. 8.

'I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof.' Christ speaks of himself, to imply the readiness of his members to resort and flock to this church of the Jews; for what Christ's members do by the guidance of his Spirit, he accounteth it his own action. This forwardness of the Gentiles to ascend and resort to Jerusalem is elsewhere foretold more plainly, Zech. viii. 23; Isa. lx. 8-11.

'Now also thy breasts as the clusters of the vine.' And that is, notwithstanding the plenteous access of the Gentiles to the church, there shall be no defect of ministers to teach and feed them all; but there shall be still a large supply of store, sweet and plentiful teachers, as clusters of grapes to refresh them all.

'And the smell of thy nose like apples.' Notwithstanding this plenteous access of the Gentiles, the life of common Christians untainted with heathenish and popish unsavoury pollutions, yet the church herself, and they that live in it, shall smell a fragrant savour of the good conversation of the people.

'The smell of thy nose.' Not which the nose yieldeth, but which is yielded to the nose, to thy savoury discerning shall be sweet and comfortable, as that of apples.

Before, when this church consisted of her own people, her smell was as that of Lebanon, ver. 4; and now, by the access of the Gentiles, it shall not be corrupt. Indeed, when the Israelites came out of Egypt, the mingled of the Gentiles with them drew them away to murmuring and lusting; for this compare Exod. xii. 38 with Num. xi. 4. But no such contagion shall accrue to this church by the mingling of the Gentiles with them.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine

¹ Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 4.

for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak,' ver. 9.

'And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine,' Heb. Like good wine going to my beloved most straightly and rightly. That is, the doctrine of the church shall be as ever any most sweet, and powerful, and comfortable, and generous wine; it shall ever go or tend directly to Christ, always aiming at the preaching of him.

To go rightly or straightly implied the strength and generousness of wine when it sparkleth upward in the cup, as Prov. xxiii. 31, which here expresseth the lively vigour of the church's doctrine in her preaching of Christ, 'causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.' Such shall be the sweet and powerful efficacy of the doctrine of the church then, as shall cause the sleepy and drowsy professors, whether amongst us Gentiles or amongst the Jews, to open their mouths and speak plentifully to God's praise. When the apostles spake the wonderful works of God in strange tongues, some of the people thought them to be full of new wine; but they were deceived, and were willing so to account of them in mockery, Acts ii. 11-13. But these people shall be full of new wine of the Spirit and word of God, to open their mouths to speak, as the apostles did, the wonderful works of God.

'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me,' ver. 10.

This profession of the church, that she is her beloved's, argueth,

First, Her familiar fellowship with Christ.

Secondly, Her faith or confidence of her interest in him, or his in her.

Thirdly, Her open profession of the same.

That his desire is towards her argueth the strength of his affection toward her, and it is the same word used, Gen. iii. 16, and iv. 7, which there implieth two things:

First, The strength of their affection to their husband and their elder brother.

Secondly, The subordination and dependence thereof upon their will. The former is here also meant; the latter doth not stand with the sovereignty and headship of Christ over his church, Eph. v. 23, 24, unless thus far, to intimate Christ's tender regard of the will and desire of his church,

as he would be as unwilling to deny them as loving husbands be to deny their wives anything.

'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages,' ver. 11.

In these words the church inviteth Christ to visit the country villages about her, implying,

First, Her prayers to Christ that with her he might lodge there, plant and set churches there.

Secondly, Her care to take and observe all opportunities to advance such a work.

'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,' ver. 12.

'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish.' Meaning, if any opportunity should offer itself to plant religion amongst them, then Christ and she might be forward to further the same.

Thirdly, Her promise to Christ to employ her best endeavours to such a service.

'There will I give thee my loves.' The love of the church to Christ is especially seen in feeding his lambs and sheep, John xxi. 15. She therefore offereth to Christ free use of her dearest and best affections to set forward such a work.

Fourthly, Her discerning of some good beginning of such a work.

'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,' ver. 13.

'The mandrakes give a smell;' which is a country field herb, Gen. xxx. 14, yet amiable; which argueth some fruits to be gathered in the country.

'And at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old.' And therefore, out of the abundance of her own store, she can supply the country with all fit helps to her further gathering and establishment.

'Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.' She professeth her desire to employ all her store to Christ's advantage, and therefore abounding with ministers and other fit officers for gathering and establishing the country churches about her, she expresseth her readiness to bring them out to his service and use, as if they were some good household provision laid up by her for such a use. The access

of the whole land of Israel to the city is profitable. The land shall be called Benlah. Isa. lxii. 4, as well as the city Hephzibah, ver. 10. A causeway is cast up for a mutual recourse of country to city.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TEXT.

Ver. 1. *Oh 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.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 3. *His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*

Ver. 4. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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?*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 10. *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as that found favour.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 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.*

Ver. 13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

Ver. 14. *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

THE EXPLANATION.

The church of the Jews, both in city and country thus gathered, do here express her ardent affection to Christ, and due respect of him, which the old synagogue shewed towards her¹ whilst he was conversant amongst them in the flesh. Since, saith she, 'O that thou wert as my brother,' &c. Christ was made our brother by taking our nature upon him at his incarnation, and then he sucked the breasts of the church, attending to the ministry of Johu and other Jewish teachers: she therefore, to shew her affection, desireth that he were now amongst them, conversant in their streets again in bodily presence, she would not do then as the old synagogue did, be ashamed of him, or come to him by night; but she would kiss him, and embrace him in the open streets, and yet no man should then despise her for her so doing, as they did. John iv. 48, 49; but every one should encourage her in her obsequiousness to him. She would not reject him, and thrust him out of the synagogue, as her old ancestors had done, Luke iv. 28, 29; but if she found him without, she would lead him, and invite him into their synagogue, or temple, there to instruct her, and teach her the will of her Father. She would not give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink, as her forefathers had done, Mat. xxvii. 34; but she would cause him to drink of the best delicate spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate.

'His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me,' ver. 3.

The left hand of Christ is the Christian magistrate, which shall in those days support and advance the church, and hold up her head.

His right hand is the faithful ministers, which shall speak comfortable things to her heart, and so embrace her, Isa. lxii.; Ezek. xxxiii. 23-25; Dan. vii. 27; for this also see chap. ii. 6. 'I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.'

The church, enjoying these great mercies and

¹ Qu. 'Shewed not towards him?'

blessings from Christ, chargeth all her daughters, members, to walk so thankfully and fruitfully towards God, and lovingly and helpfully one towards another, and so circumspectly and inoffensively to them which are without, that no occasion be given of their alteration of their happy estate. When the church gave this charge before, it was in regard of the roes and hinds of the field, chap. ii. 7, and iii. 5; fearful Christians coming on towards religion, willing to flock, and feed, and converse with the sheep, yet ready to start and flee away upon any fear of danger of persecution; but now no regard is had of these fearful ones; for they that shall then remain fearful, when the church shall enjoy so great light and safety, they shall be quite excluded from conversing with the church, Isa. lxxv. 25.

For use we may here learn,

Use 1. First, Since the church of the Jews shall attain to so great beauty, it ought to kindle our desire to pray earnestly for their conversion, that we may behold the admirable fairness thereof, and be delighted with her consolations, Isa. lxvi. 11, 12.

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us how to approve ourselves pleasant and fair in Christ's eyes, even by keeping his ordinances in integrity and simplicity, and by a willing readiness to frequent the same.

Christ may see all the world, as he did when Satan shewed it to him, Mat. iv. 8, 9; Luke iv. 5, 6, and yet not admire it; yea, condemn it for vanity, as it is, Eccles. i. 2, 14, and ii. 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26; but a well-ordered church, and ready, he admireth.

Use 3. Thirdly, Here learn the more straight and sincere, the more patient and meek, the more faithful, the more fruitful in all holy obedience, &c., the more do we attain to a palm-tree-like full stature of Christianity.

Use 4. Fourthly, It may learn and direct ministers to apply themselves to the estate of their people. If they be babes in Christ, to be as breasts of milk to suckle them; if they be grown to ripe years, to be as clusters of grapes to refresh them with stronger liquor, be ready to pour out sweet and comfortable liquor; but see some good calling to pressing you to it, let all your doctrine direct to Christ, and dispense it with such powerful efficacy of the Spirit, that the drowsy sluggard may be raised up to some

fruitfulness, and more holy walking towards God.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may teach towns well provided for to lend their best care and help for the edifying and calling home of country villages: grudge not then at their ready resort to the gate of your assemblies, but rather encourage them, that they may be partakers with them.

Use 6. Sixthly, This lets us see that time shall come when forward profession shall be no disgrace; yea, men shall kiss Christ openly, and shall not be despised.

Use 7. Seventhly, The malignity of our ancestors against Christ and his gospel must provoke us to more embracing of him, and more subjection to him.

Use 8. Eighthly, We may here see that a faithful ministry and godly magistracy is a pledge of Christ's tender love, and kind embracing of the church.

Use 9. Ninthly, We are hence to take notice, that when a church enjoyeth many gracious and sweet blessings from Christ, it is good for her to see it and acknowledge it, and to be careful that all her members may so walk as their happiness be not interrupted. In the fourth verse the charge runneth thus, 'That ye stir not up,' &c.; but in the Hebrew, 'Why should you stir up,' &c. As who should say, When all things are thoroughly and fully reformed and settled, why should you go about any innovation? This manner of charge was never uttered before, chap. ii. 7, to the end.

'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.'

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?' In these words the Holy Ghost setteth out the calling and estate of two other churches after the calling of the Jews:

First, The one arising out of the wilderness, ver. 5, 7.

Secondly, The other a little sister, ver. 8, 10, together with the estate of the whole church, as it shall then stand, from that time to the end of the world, ver. 11, 14.

This church coming up from the wilderness is described,

First, By the unexpectedness of her arising,

together with the admiration of the Jewish churches there, ver. 5. 'Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness?'

Secondly, By the place of her arising, the wilderness.

Thirdly, By her familiar fellowship with Christ, joined with her confidence on him, leaning upon her beloved.

Fourthly, By the means of the gathering and raising of this church: 'I raised thee up under an apple-tree,' &c., ver. 5.

Fifthly, By her earnest desire of his deep affection to her, and continual remembrance of her: 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm,' ver. 6; which petition of hers is urged by a motive, taken from the strength and depth of her affection to him, which she proveth.

First, By comparing her affection as equal to three things most strong:

First, Death.

Secondly, To the grave.

Thirdly, To vehement flames of fire, ver. 6.

Secondly, By comparing it to two things as less than her affection, though they be also of great force:

First, To many waters, which cannot quench her affection of love.

Secondly, To the whole substance of any man's house, which would be contemned if it were offered to withdraw her from Christ, ver. 7.

The calling and estate of the other church, the little sister, is described by three passages:

First, By the consultation of the elder sisters; to wit, of the Jewish churches, and of that church coming up out of the wilderness, what they shall do for her when she shall be spoken of, ver. 8.

Secondly, By a resolution what they shall do for her, suitable to what her condition, as they shall find her, shall require, ver. 9.

Thirdly, A satisfaction given by this little sister to the elder, how her estate standeth, together with the cause thereof, God's favour, that they may the better know what courses to take for her, ver. 10.

The estate of the whole church, as it shall stand after the conversion of the Jews, and of those other churches, is set forth,

First, From Christ's care for them, expressed,

First, In his watchfulness over them in his own

person, which he amplifies by the less care which Solomon had of his vineyard, committing the keeping of it to others, ver. 11, 12.

Secondly, In his charge to the church, that he may hear her companions hearkening unto her, ver. 13.

Secondly, By the church's prayer unto Christ, that he may hasten the translating of them into heaven in the end of the world, ver. 14.

'Who is this that cometh?' &c. Who these churches should be that remain to be called after the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles, we cannot conceive any more fitly than the churches of Assyria; secondly, Of Egypt, of which we read, Isa. xix. 23, 25. When a church shall be elected among the Jews, signified by Ezekiel's goodly temple, Ezek. xlviii. 1, 9, the water of God's Spirit shall flow from thence eastward, go down into the desert, and from thence spread themselves far and near.

This desert or wilderness, eastward from Judah, is the wilderness of Arabia, whither spiritual graces shall be conveyed by some coming from Jerusalem, and from thence they shall be further carried into the east countries, to the gathering and conversion of the Assyrians and others: whence it is that church arising from the wilderness of Arabia, is said to lean upon her beloved in an Arabian word; as when the Holy Ghost was to speak of the Babylonian captivity, or winter being past, he useth the Babylonian or Chaldean word, chap. ii. 11. So then, when the churches of Judea shall see such a goodly church spring from some small help, out of the wilderness of Arabia, beyond their expectation, they shall say of her, 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' trusting by faith on him, and thereby attaining and enjoying fellowship with him; for to lean is put as an act of faith or trusting, Prov. iii. 5, and the gesture impleth familiar love, John xiii. 23, and xxi. 20.

'I raised thee under an apple-tree.' Christ, or the church of the Jews by his power, raised up his church by the means of some inferior magistrate, resembled here by an apple-tree, as before, chap. ii. 3; for though he was not so high and mighty as the cedars of Lebanon, or the oaks of Bashan, yet eminent he was, and his shadow good, and his fruit cordial and comfortable.

And the means of the gathering of this church, being at first but an inferior magistrate, the church had more need and use of faith to lean upon her beloved, when sovereign authority did not countenance the work.

'There thy mother brought thee forth;' to wit, the mother-church of the Jews, or the catholic, which is the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 26.

'Set me as a seal upon thy 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,' ver. 6.

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.' That is, let me be deeply engraven as a seal is into thine heart, or affection, and as a seal on thine arm, let me be continually in thy sight and remembrance. And because the heart is the seat of the will, and the arm of strength, therefore she desireth his deep affection and mighty strength and power always to be present with her for her comfort and peace.

'For love is strong as death.' Death sheweth his strength,

First, In subduing all sorts of people, high and low, young and old.

Secondly, Accepting no compassion, nor yielding to any opposition, but going through with his work; such strength of love shall this church shew to Christ, subduing all before her to the obedience of Christ, and not suffering any impediment to detain her from him.

'Jealousy is cruel as the grave.' Jealousy is a mixed affection of zeal or fervent love, and carries at any co-rivals a rage with wrath against them: so fervent then shall the zealous love of this church be to Christ, that she may not endure any such things as shall steal away the people's hearts from Christ, or alienate or lessen his affection to her, but as the grave,

First, She shall devour all such things, and bury them out of sight; and,

Secondly, There hold them under for ever.

'The coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame.' The ardency of this love shall, as coals of fire,

First, Enflame her in all her services to Christ.

Secondly, Burn up as stubble all impediments.

First, All inward green lusts.

Secondly, Outward entanglements.

'Vehement flame.' Heb., Flames of God—that is, excellent or extraordinary; for in Scripture phrase the things of God are transcendently excellent, as the harps of God, Rev. xv. 2, the trees of God, Ps. i. 3.

Flames of God, divine and vehement; and indeed this vehement love, being kindled by God's heavenly Spirit, cannot be quenched with earthly things.

'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,' ver. 7.

That is, neither adversities, though never so many, or deep, or strong, as many waters and floods, shall withdraw this love from Christ; nor all the treasures, and pleasures, and credit which the substance of any man's house might procure us, shall be of any reckoning in comparison of Christ, to withhold our hearts from him.

'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?' ver. 8.

'We have a little sister,' &c. The church of Judea and Assyria, hearing of some good people growing up and coming on in Egypt, they are solicitous what course to take for them for their growth and establishment.

'A little sister.' In comparison of the Jews or Assyrians, for but five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and one of them shall be called the city of destruction, Isa. xix. 18.

'And she hath no breasts.' No ministers to give to them the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2, or the means of consolation in their oppressions and distresses, Isa. ix. 20.

'In the day when she shall be spoken for.' When the fulness of time shall come, that she shall grow up to such a multitude of professors, as may be fit to have a settled church established amongst them; for there is a company grown up to be a fit spouse for Christ, when there are so many good Christians as may constitute a well-ordered church.

'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,' ver. 9.

'If she be a wall, we will build.' That is, if she have a Christian magistracy; for the magistrate is a wall:

First, High, to keep out invasions of enemies; even so doth he keep out foreign evils from breaking in upon his people.

Secondly, Close, to keep in his people within bounds from breaking out into disorder.

Thirdly, Firm, whereon to rear, if occasion be, a silver palace, whereon to lay the frame of a good motion or course to be taken for public good.

Fourthly, A wall of partition, to divide between right and wrong, to give every man his own.

'We will build upon her a silver palace.' We will make her garment honourable and wealthy.

'If she be a door'—that is, if she have faithful ministers, which as a door open the way to Christ, that the people may go in and out, and find pasture in him—'we will inclose her with boards of cedar.' Cedar is a timber that will neither rot, nor breed worms, and so will endure always; whence it was that the heathen made their *Simulacra deorum*,¹ images of their gods, of this wood, to make them seem eternal. These sister-churches then promise, that if their little sister of Egypt have any faithful ministers, they will provide for their safety and peace, that they be not discouraged nor disturbed in their function.

'I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour,' ver. 10.

The little sister of Egypt resolveth her sisters that she wants neither Christian magistrates nor faithful ministers; so full of wholesome doctrine, as that her breasts swell like towers; which yet she acknowledgeth to be a singular mercy and favour of Christ, and ascribeth all her store to his praise: 'Then was I as one that found favour in his eyes.'

'Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon,' ver. 11. A place so fruitful, that for excellency it was called the Lord of a multitude, or the owner of great increase. He let out the vineyard to keepers, who paid him a great rent, even thousands, for the fruit of it, and yet had a good portion, certain hundreds, for their own pains.

'My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou,

O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred,' ver. 12.

To wit, I let not out my vineyard to others, but I kept it myself always; let Solomon take his thousands for his fruits of his vineyard, and the reapers their hundreds, I will not so do, but take all the pains to keep my vineyard, and reap all the gains of the fruits thereof to myself. The meaning is, when Christ hath gathered all these churches of the Jews, Assyrians, Egyptians, and neighbour nations, he will then keep his church with his mighty power, that neither dragons, nor wild boars, nor foxes shall hereafter root it up, or make havoc of it, as in time past they have done. This is expressly foretold, and shall come to pass after the destruction of Leviathan, the great Turk, Isa. xxvii. 1-3.

'Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it,' ver. 13.

'Thou that dwellest in the gardens.' The participle being of the feminine gender, sheweth that it is the church, not Christ, that is here spoken to, who is said to dwell in the garden; to wit, in the particular churches, as the sea dwelleth in each particular country sea—the German Sea, the Spanish Sea, the Baltic Sea, &c. So the catholic church is divided into particular churches, or the Jewish mother-church dwelleth by her authority and directions in all other churches.

'The companions hearkening to thy word (or voice) cause me to hear it.' So the words in the original, which implieth either that church would have the mother-church of the Jews take care of all other Christian churches, and give directions unto them, and yet not as unto her handmaids, but as to her companions; or else, if the words be read according to the translation, 'The companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it;' they imply that, after the calling of these churches, this shall be their constant estate to the world's end, as they shall all,

First, Embrace one another as companions, not claiming Romish supremacy.

Secondly, Hearken to the voice and directions of the mother-church in Solomon's days for wisdom to him.

Thirdly, Continue in calling upon the name of Christ without dissipation and interruption to the end.

¹ Plin., lib. xiii. cap. 5.

'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountain of spices,' ver. 14.

This is the prayer of all the churches; now that all things are accomplished, the which prophets and apostles have foretold, that Christ would hasten his last coming as swiftly and quickly as the swiftest of the creatures, the roe, or young hart, to take them up with himself into the highest heavens of the mountains of spices, where are all manner of spices, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. Thus in the end of the Revelation: 'The Spirit and the bride,' and every faithful soul saith in like sense, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 17, 20.

Use 1. The use of this is, first, To teach us that the nations of the Gentiles shall not be cast off from the fellowship of the church when the Jews are called, as the Jews were cast out of the church that the Gentiles might be grafted in, Rom. xi. 19, 20; but even after their calling, new churches of the Gentiles shall be brought in; yea, their conversion shall bring life from the dead into the world: 'What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?' Rom. xi. 12, 15; yea, the Gentiles shall bring their glory to it, Rev. xxi. 24; yea, the cursed Canaanite shall not be excluded from partaking in this blessing, Ezek. xvi. 55, 60, 61. How much more may we hope then that these churches of Christendom, which have suffered so much with Christ, and for him, under the dragon, the beast, and the Turk, shall partake with the glory of these churches of the Jews when the time shall come?

Use 2. Secondly, This doth teach us how to attain fellowship and holy familiarity with Christ, even by faith, leaning upon him as our beloved; infidelity and doubting hinder our sweet communion with Christ, labour we therefore to abandon it from us.

Use 3. Thirdly, We may here see the duty of inferior magistrates what it is, even to see that the church be raised up under them, how much more to countenance and protect it with their shadow, and to comfort it with the fruit of their sweet and wholesome laws and examples!

Use 4. Fourthly, This may serve for trial of the goodness of our affections to Christ; if we thirst

after his deep affection to us, and continual remembrance of us, if we labour to subdue ourselves and all ours to him, if we jealously war against all that which might impair our love to him, if we burn up all our impediments, if no afflictions can discourage us from him, if no prosperity can shake our entire desires after him, we are then well affected to him as this church is. If we desire to have such deep place in Christ's heart, it is a plain sign Christ hath a deep place in our hearts.

Use 5. Fifthly, This may shew us a means how to consume all base and kitchen loves and lusts in us, set upon these sensual worldly things; grow up in this spiritual love to Christ, and it will swallow up and consume these lesser fires; the greater light will extinguish the lesser, as the sun will put out the kitchen fire; so this strong fire of Christ's love in us will burn up, and eat out all lust in us.

Use 6. Sixthly, This may comfort the true church and children of God, in assurance of their perseverance. If our love to him be so unchangeable, that many waters of afflictions cannot quench it, nor floods of temptations drown it; if it be so strong as death, that it will devour all before it, how much more is his love to us!

Use 7. Seventhly, This lets us see that the churches that are well-established themselves must not condemn their weak neighbour churches, but take care, and use all good means for their establishment and growth. How far should greater churches be from cutting off the breasts, or breaking down the walls of their small neighbour churches!

Use 8. Eighthly, This may teach magistrates to be as walls to keep out all disorder. Stand up as a wall if there come in disorders; stand so high that they cannot come over. If any would go a-begging, keep them in; restrain beggary, idleness, drunkenness, whoredom, and profaneness, all evil courses; be as a wall, whereon to rear a silver palace for ever; whereon to lay the frame of a good motion, course, or order, to be taken for the public good; any good motion made, or to be made, is as a wall to divide equally to all men their right.

Use 9. Ninthly, This may teach ministers to be as doors to open a wide entrance for the people to come to Christ; not as those scribes and pharisees which Christ complains of, Luke xii. 52, which

neither enter in themselves, nor would suffer others: such are rather portcullises, yea, gates of hell.

Use 10. Tenthly, This may let us see the duty of magistrates. If ministers be doors, it should be their care to hem them in with boards of cedar, to provide for their security; it is the duty of every magistrate and member to hem them in, that no enemy may be able to oppose them, but that they may be without fear among them; as it is, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 'see that Timothy be without fear among you.'

Use 11. Eleventhly, This may let us see, a church enjoying a faithful ministry and a Christian magistracy, enjoyeth a special favour from Christ.

Use 12. Twelfthly, This lets us see what great care Christ will one day have of his church, though lions, dragons, and bears have broken in upon the church to devour it; and besides, many foxes have sought to subvert it, and to cut the sinews of it asunder, yet when Christ shall take the government of it into his hands, there shall be no enemy to offer violence to it; when the great leviathan shall be punished, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and the dragon that is in the sea shall be slain: 'In that day sing ye unto her. A vineyard of new wine,' Isa. xxvii. 1, 2; yea, the Lord will keep it, he will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, he

will keep it night and day; yea, Christ will one day free his church from all oppression, and give free passage to all his ordinances.

Use 13. Finally, This serves to teach us all what affection we should have to the coming of Christ to judgment; to desire him to be as the 'roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices;' to take us up into the highest heavens, where are all manner of sweet and fragrant and pleasant things, even fulness of joy for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

The faithful spouses of Christ do earnestly desire his coming to judgment, but harlots would put off his coming. A chaste wife and a loyal spouse desires her husband to send no more letters, but to hasten his return, and come home; but a harlot would have her husband's coming deferred; so they whose hearts are a-whoring after the world, neither desire Christ's coming, nor love his appearing. That we may therefore shew and approve ourselves to be the true spouses of Christ, desire his hasty coming, and say, as Rev. xxii. 20, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.' The Lord work this good work and frame of grace in our hearts, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. 'Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!' Num. xxiv. 23.