

SOLOMON'S SONG

Chapter 1

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 1:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The Song of Songs.** Not a light love Song—as some profane persons have fancied, and have therefore held it no part of the sacred canon—but a most excellent *Epithalamium*, a very divine ditty, a heavenly allegory, a mystical marriage Song, called here the Song of Song s, as God is called the God of gods, (**Deuteronomy 10:17**) as Christ is called the King of kings, (**Revelation 19:16**) as the Most Holy is called the Holy of holies, to the which the Jewish doctors liken this canticle, as they do Ecclesiastes to the holy place, and Proverbs to the court, to signify that it is the treasury of the most sacred and highest mysteries of holy Scripture. ⁽¹⁾ It streams out all along under the parable of a marriage, that full torrent of spiritual love that is between Christ and the Church ⁽²⁾ "This is a great mystery," saith that great apostle. (**Ephesians 5:32**) It passeth the capacity of man to understand it in the perfection of it. Hence the Jews permitted none to read this sacred Song before thirty years of age. Let him that reads think he sees written over this Solomon's porch, "Holiness to the Lord." ⁽³⁾ *Procul hinc, procul este profani, nihil hic nisi castum.* If any think this kind of dealing to be too light for so grave and weighty a matter, let them take heed, saith one, that in the height of their own hearts they do not proudly censure God and his order, who in many places useth the same similitude of marriage to express his love to his Church by, and interchangeably her duty toward him, as in **Hosea 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25**, with **Ephesians 5:22-24**, where the apostle plainly alludeth and referreth to this Song of Song s in sundry passages, borrowing both matter and frame of speech from hence.

Which is Solomon's. He was the penman, God the author. Of many other Song s he was both author and instrument. (**1 Kings 4:32**) Not so of this, which therefore the Chaldee paraphrast here entitleth "Song s and hymns," in the plural, for the surpassing excellence of it, "which Solomon the prophet, the King of Israel, uttered by the spirit of prophecy before the Lord, the Lord of all the earth." A prophet he was, and is therefore now in the kingdom of heaven, notwithstanding his foul fall, whereof he repented. For as it is not the falling into the water that drowns, but lying in it, so neither is it the failing into sin that damns, but dying in it. Solomon was also King of Israel, and surpassed all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom, (**2 Chronicles 9:22**) yea, he was wiser than all men. (**1 Kings 4:31**) And as himself was a king, so he made this singular Song, as David did the 45th Psalm, "concerning the King," Christ and his spiritual marriage to the Church, who is also called Solomon, (**Solomon's Song 3:11**) and "greater than Solomon." (**Matthew 12:42**) If, therefore, either the worth of the writer or the weightiness of the matter may make to the commendation of any book, this wants for neither. That is a silly exception of some against this Song, as if not canonical, because God is not once named in it; for as oft as the bridegroom is brought in speaking here, so oft Christ himself speaketh, who is "God blessed for ever." (**Romans 9:5**) Besides, whereas Solomon made "a thousand Song s and five," (**1 Kings 4:32**) this only, as being the chief of all, and part of the holy canon, hath been hitherto kept safe when the rest are lost, in the cabinet of God's special providence, and in the chest of the Jews, God's faithful library keepers. (**Romans 3:2; John 5:39**) It being not the will of our heavenly Father that any one hair of that sacred head should fall to the ground.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 1:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.** It must be premised and remembered that this book is *penitus allegoricus et parabolicus*, as one saith, allegorical throughout, and aboundeth all along with types and figures, with

¹ Theodoret. lib. v. *De Provid. Sic caena a Dionysio caeremonia caeremoniarum, et ab alio Pascha celebritas celebritatum dicitur.*

² Jerome, *Proaem. in Ezek.*

³ T. W. on *Cantic.*

parables and similitudes. *Quot verba, tot sacramenta*, So many words, so many mysteries, saith Jerome of the Revelation, which made Cajetan not dare to comment upon it. ⁽⁴⁾ The like may be truly affirmed of the Canticles; nay, we may say of it in a special manner, as Possevinus doth of the whole Hebrew Bible, *tot esse sacramenta, quot literae, tot mysteria, quot puncta, tot arcana, quot apices*. so much is sacred, how many books, so much is mysterious, how many marked with vowel points, so much is secret, how many marked vowels. ⁽⁵⁾ Hence Psellus in Theodoret asketh pardon for presuming to expound it. But *difficilium facilis est venia; et, in magnis voluisse sat est*: In hard things the pardon is easy, and in high things let a man show his goodwill and it sufficeth. The matter of this book hath been pointed at already; as for the form of it, it is dramatic and dialogistical. The chief speakers are not Solomon and the Shulamite, as Castalio makes it, but Christ and his Church. Christ also hath his associates, those friends of the bridegroom, (**John 3:29**) viz., the prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers, who put in a word sometimes; as likewise do the fellow friends of the bride—viz., whole churches, or particular Christians. The bride begins here abruptly, after the manner of a tragedy, through impatience of love, and a holy impotence of desire after, not a union only, but a unity also with him whom her soul loveth. "Let him kiss me," &c. Kissing is a token of love, (**1 Peter 5:14; Luke 7:45**) and of reconciliation. (**2 Samuel 14:33**) And albeit *καταφιλεῖν οὐκ ἔστι φιλεῖν*, as Philo observeth, love is not always in a kiss—Joab and Judas could kiss and kill, *Caveatur osculum Iscarioticum*, consign their treachery with so sweet a symbol of amity (**1 Peter 1:22**)—yet those that "love out of a pure heart fervently," do therefore kiss, as desiring to transfuse, if it might be, the souls of either into other, and to become one with the party so beloved, and in the best sense suaviated. (*kissed*) That, therefore, which the Church here desireth, is not so much Christ's coming in the flesh—that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners had spoken in times past unto her by the prophets, would now speak unto her by his Son," (**Hebrews 1:1-2**) as some have sensed it—as that she may have utmost conjunction to him, and nearest communion with him, here as much as may be, and hereafter in all fulness of fruition. "Let him kiss me," and so seal up his hearty love unto me, even the "sure mercies of David." "With the kisses of his mouth"; not with one kiss only, with one pledge of his love, but with many—there is no satiety, no measure, no bounds or bottom of this holy love, as there is in carnal desires, *ubi etiam vota post usum fastidio sunt*. Neither covets she to kiss his hand, as they deal by kings, or his feet, as they do the pope's, but his "mouth"; she would have true kisses, the *basia*, the *busses* of those lips, whereinto "grace is poured," (**Psalms 45:2** and *wherehence those words of grace are uttered* (**Matthew 5:2-12**) "He openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his lips is the law of kindness." (**Proverbs 31:26**) Hence her affectionate desires, her earnest pantings, inquietations, and unsatisfiabilities. She must have Christ, or else she dies; she must have the "kisses of Christ's mouth," even those sweet pledges of love in his Word, or she cannot be contented, but will complain, in the confluence of all other comforts, as Abraham did, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (**Genesis 15:2**) or as Artabazus in Xenophon did, when Cyrus had given him a cup of gold and Chrysantas a kiss in token of his special favour, saying that the cup that he gave him was nothing so good gold as the kiss that he gave Chrysantas. The poet's fable, that the moon was wont to come down from her orb to kiss Endymion. It is a certain truth that Christ came down from heaven to reconcile us to his Father, to unite us to himself, and still to communicate unto our souls the sense of his love, the feeling of his favour, the sweet breath of his Holy Spirit.

For thy love is better than wine. Heb., Loves. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it *ubera*, thy breasts; but that is not so proper, since it is the Church that here speaks to Christ, and by the sudden change of person shows the strength and liveliness of her affection, as by the plural "loves," she means all fruits of his love, righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance

⁴ *Apocalypsin fateor me nescire exponere, &c., exponat cui Deus concesserit.—Cajet.*

⁵ *Possev. in Biblioth. Select.*

of heaven, which Mr Latimer calls the deserts of the feast of a good conscience. There are other dainty dishes at that feast, but this is the banquet, this is "better than wine," which yet is a very comfortable creature, (**Psalm 104:15**) and highly set by. (**Psalm 4:7**) Plato calls wine a music, *miseriarum humanarum* μαλακτικά, the chief allayments of men's miseries.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 1:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Because of the savour of thy good ointments.** Or, To smell to, thy ointments are best. *Odoratissimus es*. As the panther casts abroad a fragrant savour; as Alexander the Great is said to have had a natural sweetness with him by reason of the good temperament of his body; so, and much more than so, the Lord Christ, that sweetest of sweets. He kisseth his poor persecuted people, as Constantine once kissed Paphnutius's lost eye; ⁽⁶⁾ and departing, for here he comes but as a suitor only till the marriage be made up in heaven, he leaves such a sweet scent behind him, such a balmy verdure, as attracts all good hearts unto him, so that where this all-quickenning carcass is there would "the eagles be also." (**Matthew 24:28**) The Israelites removed their tents from Mithcah, which signifies *sweetness*, to Hashmonah, which signifies *swiftness*; (**Numbers 33:29**) to teach us, saith one, that the saints have no sooner tasted Christ's sweetness, but they are carried after him presently with incredible swiftness. Hence they are said to have "a nose like the tower of Lebanon," (**Solomon's Song 7:4**) for their singular sagacity in smelling after Christ, and to flee to the holy assemblies, where Christ's odours are beaten out to the smell, "as the clouds," or "as the doves to their windows." (**Isaiah 60:8**) For what reason? they have "their senses habitually exercised to discern good and evil," (**Hebrews 5:14**) and "their love abounds yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (**Philippians 1:9**)

Thy name is an ointment poured forth. There is an elegant allusion in the original between *Shem* and *Shemen*—that is, *name*, and *ointment*. And Christ hath his name both in Hebrew and Greek from ointment; ⁽⁷⁾ for these three words in signification are all one, Messiah, Christ, Anointed. See the reason, **Isaiah 61:1**, "The spirit of the Lord,"—that oil of gladness (**Hebrews 1:9**)—"is upon me, because he hath anointed, and appointed, me to preach good tidings to the meek"; **2 Corinthians 2:2, 14-16**, &c. Now when this is done to the life, when Christ crucified is preached, when the Holy Ghost in the mouth and ministry of his faithful servants shall take of Christ's excellencies, as it is his office to do, (**John 16:14**) and hold them out to the world; when he shall hold up the tapestry, as it were, and shew men the Lord Christ, with an *Ecce virum*, Behold the man, that one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; (**1 Timothy 2:5**) see him in his natures, in his offices, in his works, in the blessed effects of all; this cannot but stir up wonderful loves in all good souls; with hearty wishes, that "if any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he may be Anathema Maranatha," (**1 Corinthians 16:22**) accursed upon accursed, and put over to God to punish.

Therefore the virgins love thee. *i.e.*, All that are adjoined to me in comely sort, as chaste damosels to their mother and mistress. The elect and faithful are called virgins for their spiritual chastity. They are God's hidden ones, as the word ⁽⁸⁾ here used signifieth, as they are called; (**Psalm 83:3**) they are not defiled with the corruptions that are in the world through lust, for they are virgins; (**Revelation 14:4**) else the bride would not suffer them about her. (**Psalm 45:14**) Of Queen Elizabeth it is said, that she never suffered any lady to approach her presence of whose stain she had but the least suspicion. ⁽⁹⁾ "These follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth," (*ib.*), as the other creatures follow the panther for his sweet odours; as

⁶ Eusebius.

⁷ הישם, Χριστός.

⁸ תומלע, *puellae absconditae; propter secretiorem educationem.*—*Riv.*

⁹ Speed, 1236.

birds of prey are carried after carcases. "Whom having not seen, yet ye love," and can do no less, (**1 Peter 1:8**) "because he first loved you," and hath "shed abroad his love in your hearts by his holy Spirit." (1 John **4:19**; **Romans 5:5**) *Amate amorem illius*, oh love his love, saith Bernard, and cry out with Ignatius, Ὁ ἔρως ὁ ἐμὸς ἐσταύρωται, My love was crucified. If the centurion in the Gospel were held worthy of respect because he "loved our nation," said those Jews, "and built us a synagogue," (**Luke 7:5**) what shall we say of Christ, who "loved us, and washed us with his own blood" &c.? (**Revelation 1:5**) "Herein was love," &c. And should not love be the whetstone of love? ⁽¹⁰⁾ should we not reciprocate? shall we be worse than publicans? shall not the love of Christ constrain us? &c. (**2 Corinthians 5:14**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 1:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Draw me.** Those very virgins, though they love Christ, and are affected with his incomparable sweetness, to the slighting of earthly vanities, and all tasteless fooleries of this present life, yet are they sensible of sundry obstacles and back-biasses, which cause them to call for help from heaven, "Draw me," &c., *scil.*, by the effectual working of thy mighty Spirit, and by "the cords of kindness," (**Hosea 11:4**) that irresistible grace of thine, whereby thou dost *fortiter*, but yet *suaviter*, powerfully, but yet sweetly work upon the wills of them that belong to thee; and by a merciful violence pull them out of Satan's paws, yea, bring them from the jaws of hell to the joys of heaven. (**Jeremiah 31:3**)

We will run after thee. We will not only follow thee, as the straw follows the jet, or as iron the loadstone, as the seaman's needle doth the north pole, or as the hop in its growing follows the course of the sun from east to west, winding about the pole, and will rather break than do otherwise; but we will "fulfil after thee," ⁽¹¹⁾ as Caleb did; (**Numbers 14:24**) we will "run after thee," as David did; yea, we will so "run," (**Psalms 119:32**) that we may obtain, "finish our course, and receive our crown," (**2 Timothy 4:7-8**) whereof we shall not fail, if we run regularly, run forthright, (**Proverbs 4:25**) run after Christ, as the Church here promiseth to do, and not step before him, as Peter presumed to do, and therefore heard, "Get thee behind me, Satan." (**Matthew 16:23**) Christ is our "forerunner, gone before us into heaven." (**Hebrews 6:10**) We must "come after him," (**Luke 9:23**) press his footsteps, (**1 Peter 2:21**) follow him close, (**Matthew 16:24**; **Ephesians 5:1**) and, having him ever in our eye, "run with patience the race that is set before us." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**) Rubs and *remoras* (*delays*) we shall be sure to meet with, but that must not make us stop or step back. Christ ran with a courage, though he ran with the cross upon his shoulders all the way. "Gird up your loins," (**1 Peter 1:13**) and do likewise. Run to get the race, said blessed Bradford to his fellow sufferers, you are even almost at your journey's end. If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by the cross. Look to the joy that is set before you, as Christ did; "steal a look from glory," as Moses did, ἀπέβλεπε, (**Hebrews 11:26**) "lest ye be wearied and faint," or "loosened," ἐκλυόμενοι, (**Hebrews 12:3**) as the nerves are in a swoon or palsy. "Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." (**Hebrews 12:12**) Lift up your feet, as Jacob did, (**Genesis 29:1**, *marg.*) after the vision at Bethel, and take long strides to Christ. Think thou hearest him say, as Cicero did once to his friend, *Quamobrem, si me amas tantum, quantum profecto amas, si dormis, expergiscere; si stas, ingredere; si ingrederis, curre; si curris, advola. Credibile non est quantum ego in amore et fide tua ponam*, ⁽¹²⁾ i.e., Wherefore if thou lovest me, as I am sure thou dost, if thou be asleep, wake thyself; if thou standest still, set forward; if thou art upon thy way, run to me; if thou art a-running, fly to me: little dost thou think how much I set by thy love and faithfulness. Therefore haste, haste, haste. "The joy of the Lord shall be thy strength," (**Nehemiah 8:10**) so that thou shalt "walk and not be weary, run and not faint." (**Isaiah 40:31**)

¹⁰ *Cos amoris amor.*

¹¹ "John fulfilled his course." (**Acts 13:25**).

¹² Cicero, *Epist. Fami'*.

The king hath brought me into his chambers. Into the bridechamber of heaven, and hath "made me sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," mine head and husband, (*Ephesians 2:6*) yea, into the inward part of the bedchamber, as the word here used signifieth, (*Solomon's Song 3:4*) there to have familiarity with him, that I may be filled with his graces, (*John 1:16*) and bring forth fruit to God. (*Romans 7:4*)

We will be glad and rejoice in thee. Be glad inwardly, and rejoice *outwardly*; not in thy love tokens so much as in thyself. *Vix diligitur Iesus propter Iesum*. They that rejoice in anything but Christ, "rejoice in a thing of nought" (*Amos 6:13*, with *Solomon's Song 1:4-6*). The beginning of epistles and letters anciently was *Gaudete in Domino*, rejoice in the Lord.

We will remember thy love. Or, Rehearse it. Men cannot but think and speak much of what they love and like. If David's "heart be inditing a good matter," a Song of love, his "tongue" will soon be the "pen of a ready writer." (*Psalms 45:1-2*) And as people, when drunk with wine, wherein is excess, are apt to sing and shout; so those that are filled with the Spirit cannot but utter those *magnalia Dei*, the wonderful works of God, (*Acts 2:11*) yea, express their spiritual jollity in "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual Song s." (*Ephesians 5:18-19*)

The upright love thee. Heb., Uprightness; the abstract for the concrete, as *pride* for *proud*, (*Jeremiah 50:31*) *rebellion* for *rebellious*. (*Ezekiel 2:7*) This seemeth to be added to exclude hypocrites, those hangers on. They seem to love God, none more, but it is from the teeth outward only; and Christ may well say to them, as she did to Samson, "How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me?" (*Judges 16:15*) Their hearts are upon their covetousness, then when with their mouths they make love, (*Ezekiel 33:31*) as the eagle hath his eye upon the prey when he soareth highest toward heaven. They follow Christ more for the loaves than for love, (*John 6:26*) they "serve not God, but serve themselves" (*Romans 16:18*) upon him; they serve him for gain, as children will not say their prayers unless we promise them their breakfasts. *Sincerity* is an utter enemy to *sinisterity*.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 1:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I am black, but comely.** Heb., Black as the morning, or day dawning, which hath light and darkness, dimness at least, mixed together. It is not Ἡὼς ῥοδοδάκτυλος, wherein there is more light than darkness, but κροκόπεπλος, wherein there is more darkness than light, as the grammarians distinguish. ⁽¹³⁾ This morning light is lovely, though not pure; so is the Church comely, though not dear. The coy daughters of Jerusalem might make a wonderment, that so black a dowdy, as the Church appeared to them that saw not her inward beauty, should ever hope to have love from the "fairest among men." We read how Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses, who was "fair to God," ⁽¹⁴⁾ because of the brown skinned woman whom he had married. (*Numbers 12:1*) For answer to whom the spouse here grants that she is black, or blackish at least:—(1.) As having some hypocrites in her bosom, that as that blasted grain ⁽¹⁵⁾ (*Matthew 13:25*) smutcheth and sullieth the better sort; (2.) As being not fully freed from sin till after death. Sin is dejected, indeed, in the saints, but not utterly ejected while they are here. For what reason? It is in them as the spots of the leopard, not by accident, but by nature, which no art can cure, no water can wash off, because they are not in the skin, but in the flesh and bones, in the sinews and the most inward parts. Howbeit the Church is freed from the damning and domineering power of sin. And whereas (3.) She is looked upon as "black," (*Job 30:30; Lamentations 4:8; Jeremiah 8:21*) because of her afflictions, those fruits of sin, and seems to have lain among the pots, as the Psalmist hath it, places where scullions use to lie, and so are black and collied, yet shall she be "as the wings of a dove that are covered with silver," &c. (*Psalms 68:13*) Though she "sit in darkness, the

¹³ Eustath. in Hom. *Odyss*.

¹⁴ ἁγιώτατος τῷ θεῷ. (*Acts 7:20*).

¹⁵ ζιζάνιον, frumentum adustum.

Lord shall give her light." (**Micah 7:8**) And as black soap makes white clothes, so do sharp afflictions make holy hearts, where God is pleased to set in with his battle door, as that martyr said. ⁽¹⁶⁾ *Puriores caelo afflictione facti sunt*, saith Chrysostom of those that were praying for Peter. (**Acts 12:13-17**) And "some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white," saith the prophet of those suffering saints. (**Daniel 11:35**) The face of the Church is never so beautiful as when it is washed with its own tears; as some faces appear most orientally fair when they are most instamped with sorrow. Christ did so. (**Isaiah 52:14**)

But comely. Or, Goodly, lovely, desirable, delectable, viz., for my double righteousness, those righteousnesses of the saints, (**Revelation 19:8**) imputed and imparted. Hence the Church may better sing than Sappho did—

*"Si mihi difficilis formam natura negavit,
Iustitia formae damna rependo meae.
Ingenio formae damna rependo meae."*—Ovid. Epist.

As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Kedar signifieth black; and the Kedarens, a people of Arabia, descended from Ishmael, dwelt in black tents, made of hair cloth, and had no other houses; ⁽¹⁷⁾ they also dwelt not far from the Ethiopians, or blackmoors. (**2 Chronicles 21:16**)

As the curtains, &c.. i.e., As his costly tapestry and other sumptuous household stuff, whereof read **1 Kings 10:1, 2**, &c. Josephus ⁽¹⁸⁾ also makes mention of the Babylonish rich furniture wherewith Solomon's rooms were hanged. These are to set forth the Church's comeliness, as the other did her homeliness. Let none be despised for his outward meanness; for within that leathern purse may be a pearl. Christ himself was hidden under the carpenter's son and a poor outside. (**Isaiah 53:2**)

"Saepe sub attrita latitat sapientia veste."

Often under the surface lies hidden the vesture of wisdom.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 1:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Look not upon me, because I am black.** "Look not upon me," viz., with a lofty look, with a coy countenance; fix not your eyes upon mine infirmities and miseries so as to disdain me, or to disesteem me for them. Blackish I am, I confess, tanned, and discoloured. The old Latin translation renders it "brown"—lovely brown we call it; *belle brunette*, the French; others "somewhat black,"—*q.d.*, My blackness is not so much as you may think for; judge not, therefore, according to the appearance; stumble not at my seeming deformities. A faithful man may fall far, but the seed abideth in him; the new nature cannot be lost; the oil of God's Spirit, wherewith he is anointed, setteth the colours, which are of his own tempering, so sure on, and maketh them cleave so fast together, that it is impossible he should ever return to his own hue, to be coal black, as before. Howbeit he is subject to much affliction, anguish, and distress, as it were to the scorching of the sun; and that, with many that have not senses exercised to discern good and evil, renders him despicable; but that should not be. Of Queen Elizabeth it is said that she hated, no less than did Mithridates, such as maliciously persecuted virtue forsaken of fortune; ⁽¹⁹⁾ as when a deer is shot, the rest of the herd push him out of their company.

Because the sun hath looked upon me. By "sun" here some have understood the Sun of

¹⁶ *Acts and Mon.*, 1486.

¹⁷ Plin., lib. vi. cap 28; Solin., cap. 26; **Isaiah 13:20**;

¹⁸ Joseph., *Antiq.*, lib. viii. 5.

¹⁹ Camden's *Elizabeth*.

righteousness, whom, when the Church looks intently upon, she is bedazzled, and sees her own nothingness, in comparison to his incomparable brightness. Others by "sun" here will have original sin to be meant; which, indeed, hath brought the blackness of darkness upon the spirit of our minds, and bored out the eye of our understandings. The same original depravity they understand by the following words, "Sons of the same mother"; and by being "kindled with wrath," they understand sin increasing and raging, as it were; and by appointing the Church to "keep other vineyards," they understand the committing of the works of the flesh and the deeds of darkness with which she was, as it were, holden, so that she could do nothing else till the Lord had loosed her out of these chains. But they do best that by "sun" in this place understand the heat of persecution, and the parching of oppression, according to **Matthew 13:6, 21; Lamentations 1:6, 13-14**, &c. What bonfires were here made in Queen Mary's days, burning the dear saints of God to a black coal, lighting them up for tapers in a dark night, as they did in Nero's days! After John Huss was burnt, his adversaries got his heart, which was left untouched by the fire, and beat it with their staves. The story of the Maccabees' persecutions, prophesied of in **Daniel 11:32-35**, and recorded in **Hebrews 11:35**; to the end, is exceeding lamentable. Opposition is—as Calvin wrote to the French king—*evangelii genius*, and *ecclesia est haeres crucis*, saith Luther. ⁽²⁰⁾ The Church hath its cross for its inheritance. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus," if they be set upon it so to do, "shall suffer persecution"; there is no avoiding it. (**2 Timothy 3:12**) When Ignatius came to the wild beasts, Now, saith he, I begin to be a Christian, and not till now. That Christian, saith Mr Bradford, hath not yet learned his A B C in Christianity that hath not learned the lesson of the cross, ⁽²¹⁾ &c. *Omnis Christianus crucianus*. ⁽²²⁾ This the worldling cannot away with; and although he "make a fair show in the flesh," or *εὐπροσωπῆσαι*, "set a good face" on it, as the word signifies, as if he had set his face toward Sion, yet when it comes to a matter of suffering, he stumbles at the cross, and falls backwards. He will not "suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." (**Galations 6:12**) He looks at the Church with a vulture's eye, as though he would behold nothing in her but corruption and carrion. He makes an ill construction of her infirmities, and will not stick to say, if he have a mind to shake her off, that she is black and despicable, that she provides but poorly for her followers, that the great ones favour her as little as the lords of the Philistines did David, &c. *Cicero veram religionem splendore imperii, gravitate nominis Romani, maiorum institutis, et Fortunae successibus metitur*, ⁽²³⁾ Cicero's marks of the true religion were the largeness of the Roman empire, their spreading fame, their ancestors' ordinances, and their singular success. The Papists have the like arguments for proof of their Church. But what saith Luther? *Ego non habeo aliud contra Papae regnum robustius argumentum, quam quod sine cruce regnat*: ⁽²⁴⁾ I have no stronger argument against the Pope's kingdom than this, that he reigns without the cross.

My mother's children were angry with me. *i.e.*, Worldly men, that are of the same human race that I am; these fretted at me, as Moab did at Israel, because they were of a different religion, (**Numbers 22:3-4**) or as Tobiah and his complices did at Nehemiah and his Jews. (**Nehemiah 6:1**) It was quarrel enough to Jerusalem that it would not be miserable. Hypocrites and heretics especially are here understood, as some conceive, such as pretend to be children of the Church, and her greatest friends as the Donatists would be the only Christians, and after them the Rogatian heretics called themselves the only catholics. So did the Arians, and so do the Papists, whose anger against the true children of the Church is far hotter than

²⁰ Luth. in **Genesis 29**.

²¹ *Acts and Mon.*

²² Luth.

²³ Cic. pro. L. Flavio.

²⁴ Luth., tom. ii.

Nebuchadnezzar's oven after it had been seven times heated for those three constant worthies. *Hypocritis nihil est crudelius impatientius et vindictae cupidius*, saith Luther, who had the experience of it, *plane sunt serpentes, &c.*: There is not a more cruel creature, more impatient and vindictive, than a hypocrite. He is as angry as an asp, as revengeful as a serpent, &c. He is of the serpentine seed, and carries the old "enmity," (**Genesis 3:15**) Cain's club. (**Genesis 4:8; Joel 3:12**) "Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified." (**Isaiah 66:5**) Here was a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand. *In nomine Domini incipit omne malum*, In the name of God began all wickedness, was grown to a proverb here in times of Popery. ⁽²⁵⁾

They made me the keeper of the vineyards. No marvel, therefore, that I am sunburnt, since I have "borne the burden and heat of the day"; (**Matthew 20:12**) it hath been my task to keep out boars, foxes, and other noisome creatures; yea, it hath been my lot to be put upon some servile offices—as those poor vinedressers were (**2 Kings 25:12**)—not so suitable to my place and station assigned me by God; yea, although I am "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, yet as though living in the world," I have by these impostors and impositors been made to dogmatise (δογματίζεσθε) after the commandments and doctrines of men. (**Colossians 2:20, 22**)

But mine own vineyard have I not kept. *q.d.*, Being burdened with human rights and traditions, and having been the "servant of men," (**1 Corinthians 7:23**) I have departed from the duty that God prescribed unto me. *Sane bene*, "Full well truly have I rejected or slighted the commandment of God, that I might keep men's tradition." (**Mark 7:9**) Thus she shames and shents (*hesitates*) herself; she blusheth and bleedeth before the Lord for her carelessness in duty. Yea, she tells the world the true reason of her present blackness; somewhat she had to say against others, but most against herself. "After I was made known to myself," ⁽²⁶⁾ said Ephraim—*scil.*, by looking in the glass of God's law—"I repented." (**Jeremiah 31:19**) Get thee this law, as a glass to look in, said Mr Bradford, so shalt thou see thy face foul arrayed, and so shamefully saucy, mangy, pocky, and scabbed, that thou canst not but be sorry at the sight thereof. Thus he. ⁽²⁷⁾ Physicians, in some kind of unseemly convulsions, wish their patients to look themselves in a glass, which will help them to strive the more, when they shall see their own deformities. It is fit we should oft reflect and see "every man the plague of his heart," (**1 Kings 8:38**) the "error" (**Psalms 19:12**) of his life, keeping our hearts soft, supple, and soluble; for softness of heart discovers sin, as blots do run abroad and seem biggest in wet paper. When the cockatrice's egg is crushed, it "breaks out into a viper." (**Isaiah 59:5**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 1:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth.** The sins of God's elect turn to their good—*Venenum aliquando pro remedio fuit*, saith Seneca, ⁽²⁸⁾ poison is by art turned into a medicine—make them cry more upon Christ, love him more with all their soul, desire more earnestly to be joined unto him, use all holy means of attaining thereunto; and that with such affection, that when others are at their rest or repast, the Christian can neither eat nor rest, unless he be with Christ.

Where thou feedest. This Book of Canticles is a kind of pastoral, a Song of a beloved concerning a beloved. The Church therefore gives, and Christ takes oft herein upon himself, the term and office of a loving and skilful Shepherd, that feeds his flock daily and daintily, feedeth them among the lilies and beds of spices, makes them to "lie down in green pastures,

²⁵ *Acts and Mon.*

²⁶ *Postquam ostensum fuerit mihi.—Trem.*

²⁷ *Serm of Repent.*, p. 26.

²⁸ *De Benef.*, lib. ii. cap. 18.

and leads them beside the still waters" (**Psalm 23:2**)—his Word and sacraments; makes them also to lie down at noon, *i.e.*, as the chief pastor of his sheep, he wholly ordereth them in all their spiritual labours, toils, and afflictions, giving them safe repose in the hottest seasons. (**Isaiah 49:10**) See **Ezekiel 34:13**; **John 10:1-2**; **1 Peter 5:2**; **Jeremiah 30:10, 13**.

For why should I be as one that turneth aside. *q.d.*, This would be no less to thy dishonour than my disadvantage, if I miscarry, thou wilt be no small loser by it. To urge God with the respect of his own glory lying now at stake, is a most effectual way of speeding in prayer. "If thou destroy this people, what will the Egyptians say?" (**Exodus 32:12**) how will the very banks of blasphemy be broken down, and they speak evil of thee with open mouth? If the Canaanites beat us, "what shall become of thy great name." (**Joshua 7:9**) *Interpone, quaeso, tuas preces, apud Deum pro me, et ora Christum cuius est causa haec, ut mihi adsit: quam si obtinuerit, mihi obtenta erit: sin veto causa exciderit, nec ego eam obtinere potero: atque ita ipse solus ignominiam reportabit.* ⁽²⁹⁾ Please pray for me, saith Luther to a friend of his that feared how it would fare with him when he was to appear at Augsburg before the cardinal; pray for me to Jesus Christ, whose the cause is, that he would stand by me: for if he carry the day, I shall do well enough; as, if I miscarry, he alone will undergo the blame and shame of it.

By the flock of thy companions. Why should I have fellowship with thy pretended fellows, and so incur the suspicion of dishonesty. Christians must "abstain from all appearance of evil," (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**) shun and be shy of the very shows and shadows of sin, *Quicquid fuerit male coloratum*, as Bernard hath it, whatsoever looks but ill favouredly; "providing for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but in the sight of men; and avoiding this, that no man should blame us," (**2 Corinthians 8:20-21**) avoiding it, **στελλόμενοι**, as shipmen shuns a rock or shelf, with utmost care and circumspection. Joseph would not breathe in the same air with his mistress, nor John the evangelist with the heretic Cerinthus, but "sprang out of the bath" ⁽³⁰⁾ as soon as he came into it. St Paul would not give place by subjection to those false brethren, "no, not for an hour," (**Galatians 2:5**) lest the truth thereby should suffer detriment. Constantine would not read the Arians' papers, but tear them before their eyes. And Placilla the empress besought her husband, Theodosius senior, not once to confer with Eunomius, lest being perverted by his speeches he might fall into heresy. ⁽³¹⁾ Memorable is the story of the children of Samosata, that would not touch their ball, but burnt it, because it had touched the toe of a heretical bishop, as they were tossing it and playing with it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 1:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**If thou know not, O thou fairest among women.** So Christ is pleased to style her, who erst held and called herself black and sunburnt. (**Solomon's Song 1:5**) Nothing more commends us to Christ than humility and lowly mindedness. (**1 Peter 3:5**) The daughter of Zion, for this is likened to "a comely and delicate woman," her enemies to shepherds with their flocks. (**Jeremiah 6:2-3**) False prophets also have their flocks, seducers drag disciples after them. (**Acts 20:30**) *Faciunt favos et vespae, faciunt Ecclesias et Marcionitae*, saith Tertullian; wasps also have their honeycombs; apes imitate men's actions. These conventiclers the Church must studiously decline, and not *viam per avia quaerere*, seek truth by wandering through the thicket of errors, as Junius saith one in his time did, who confessed he had spent twenty-two years in trying religions, pretending that Scripture, "Prove all things." The spouse is here directed by the archshepherd to repair to the foddering places, to frequent the public assemblies, to tread in that sheep track, the footsteps of the flock, the shepherds' tents. There Christ hath promised to feed his lambs (that have golden fleeces, precious souls), to call them by name, as he did Moses, (**Exodus 33:12, 17**)

²⁹ Scultet. *Annal.*

³⁰ ἐξήλατο τοῦ βαλανείου.

³¹ Sozom., lib. vii. cap. 7.

Cornelius **Acts 10:1-2**), &c., to "teach them great and hidden things, such as they knew not," (**Jeremiah 33:3**) to give them spiritual senses, ability to examine what is doctrinally propounded to them, to try before they trust—for all Christ's sheep are rational, they "know his voice from the voice of a stranger" (**John 10:5**)—to be fully persuaded of the truth that they take up and profess, (**Colossians 2:2; Luke 1:1**) to feel the sweetness and goodness, the life and power of it within themselves, (**Colossians 1:9; Job 32:8**) to hate false doctrines, and those that would persuade them thereunto, (**Psalms 119:104**) buzzing doubts into their heads. (**Romans 16:17; John 10:5**) So that, though man or angel should object against the truth they have received, they would not yield to him. (**Galatians 1:8-9**) They know that Satan can, and doth, "transform himself into an angel of light," (**2 Corinthians 11:14**) and can act his part by a good man also, as he did by Peter once and again, (**Matthew 16:23; Galatians 2:11-13**) and as he did in our remembrance by Mr Archer, a holy man, who yet held and broached hellish opinions. *Swenckfeldio non defuit cor bonum, sed caput regulatum*, saith Bucholcerus: Swenckfeldius had a good heart, but a wild head, and so became a means of much mischief to many silly, shallow headed people, whom he shamefully seduced. This to prevent, Christ hath given gifts to men; pastors and teachers after his own heart; guides, to "speak unto them the word of God," (**Hebrews 12:7**) to "set in order for them acceptable words, "words of truth that may be as "goads, and as nails fastened by those masters of the assemblies which are given from one Shepherd": (**Ecclesiastes 12:10-11**) in fine, to "take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood," (**Acts 20:28**) that they might go in and out, and find pastures, such as will breed life, and life in more abundance. (**John 10:9-10**)

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock. Add endeavour to thy desire; up and be doing: for affection without action is like Rachel, that ancient shepherdess, beautiful, but barren. "Get thee forth therefore by the footsteps of the flock"; tread in the same track that good old Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Paul, &c., did, who followed the Lamb whithersoever he went. Keep to that "good old way," the way that is called holy, "and ye shall find rest to your souls." (**Jeremiah 6:16**) Walk in the footsteps of faithful Abraham, and ye shall one day rest in the bosom of Abraham. "Walk in the same spirit," in the same footsteps with Paul and Titus, (**2 Corinthians 12:18**) so shall you shortly and surely "receive the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (**1 Peter 1:9**)

And feed thy kids. The Church also is a shepherdess, as were Laban's and Jethro's daughters, and hath a little little flock of young goats, that is, of green Christians, who are to be fed with "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." (**1 Peter 2:2**)

Beside the shepherds' tents. Turn to the undershepherds, the godly ministers, and so "return to the great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (**1 Peter 2:25**) Hold you close to these, and "hold fast the form of wholesome words," (**2 Timothy 1:13**) and linger not after unsound and unsavoury doctrines, so rife abroad—those murdering morsels that fat men indeed, but it is to the day of slaughter. Silly sheep do eat no grass more greedily than that which rots them. "But thou, O man of God, fly these things, and from such stand off." (**1 Timothy 6:5, 11**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 1:9]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I have compared thee, O my love,** &c. My pastoral love, or shepherdess companion, my fellow friend, or familiar associate in the function of spiritual feeding; my neighbour, or next, as the Greek renders it. For the saints are not only like unto Christ, (**1 John 3:2**) but also next unto him, (**Luke 22:30**) yea, one with him, (**John 17:21**) and so above the most glorious angels, (**Hebrews 1:14**) as being the spouse, the bride; whereas angels are only servants of the bridegroom: and as being the members of Christ, and so in a nearer union than any creature. This the devil and his angels stomached, and so fell from their first principality.

To a company of horses. Or, To my troop of horses in the chariots of Pharaoh. The saddle horse his, the chariots Pharaoh's, saith an interpreter. "What is this, but that the spirit of strength and speed it is Christ's; and the untoward flesh, which is to be drawn by the same divine Spirit, it is of the world, and the very chariot of Satan. Soul and body, as wheels and axle, do run which way the devil drives, till the stronger man Jesus have freed our chariot nature from that power of hell, and joined himself by his own Spirit unto our nature, that so, with Ezekiel's chariot, it may go forth and return as his divine Spirit directeth." Thus he.

⁽³²⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 1:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy cheeks are comely.** *i.e.*, Thy whole face, by a synecdoche, though the cheeks are instanced, as being the seat of shamefacedness modesty, and beauty—such as was found in Esther, whose son, Artaxerxes Longimanus, was held the fairest man alive; ⁽³³⁾ Aspasia Milesia, the wife of Cyrus, who was styled καλή καὶ σοφή, fair and wise and the Lady Jane Grey, whose excellent beauty was adorned with all variety of virtues, as a clear sky with stars, saith the historian, ⁽³⁴⁾ as a princely diadem with jewels. Hence she became most dear to King Edward VI, who appointed her his successor. But nothing so dear to him, nor so happy in her succession, as the Church is to Christ, who lively describes her inward beauty, which he looks upon as a rich pearl in a rude shell, or as those "tents of Kedar" aforementioned, (**Solomon's Song 1:5**) which though coarse and homely for the outward hue, yet, for the precious gems, jewels, and sweet odours that were couched in them, were very desirable.

With rows of jewels. A metaphor from fair women richly adorned. Holy women may be costly attired, *gratior est pulchro, &c.*, though Seneca thinks that he was in an error that said so, since virtue needs no garnish, but is *magnum sui decus, et corpus consecrat*, its own greatest glory, and consecrates the body wherein it dwelleth. St Peter also prescribes ladies an excellent dress. (**1 Peter 3:3-4**) Tertullian comes after with his *Vestite vos serico pietatis, &c.*, Clothe yourselves with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, with the purple of purity. *Taliter pigmentatae Christum habebitis amatorem*, Being thus arrayed and adorned, you shall have Christ to be your suitor.

Thy neck with chains. *scil.*, Of pearl or precious stones, that is, of heavenly graces drawn all upon that one thread of humility, which is the ribbon or string that ties together all those precious pearls. Humility is τῶν ἀρετῶν θησαυροφυλάκιον, saith Basil, the treasurers of the rest of the virtues. It is σύνδεσμος τῶν ἀγαθῶν, saith Chrysostom, the bond of all good things, the "bond of perfection," as St Paul saith of charity. Hence St Peter's word, ἐγκομβώσασθε, (**1 Peter 5:5**) Be ye clothed with humility, comes of κόμβος, for a knot; and it signifies not only *alligare*, to knit the graces together, and to preserve them from being made a prey to pride, but also *innodare*, say some, to *tie knots*, as delicate and curious women use to do of ribbons to adorn their necks, or other parts; as if humility was the knot of every virtue, and the ornament of every grace. On the contrary, pride is said to "compass evil men about as a chain," (**Psalms 73:6**) which, oh how ugly and unseemly is it on the neck of beauty, back of honour, head of learning!{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 1:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.** We, the whole Trinity, will join together, as we do in all our works ad extra, in framing for thee these glorious ornaments, in putting upon thee our own comeliness, (**Ezekiel 16:11-14**) in increasing and embellishing thy graces, thy pure gold of holiness, with silver specks, studs, or embroidery. Thus the spouse promiseth, to make his bride, though he find

³² Clapham.

³³ *Omnium hominum pulcherrimus.*—*Aenil. Prob. Aelian*, lib. 12, cap. 1.

³⁴ Sir John Heywood.

her fair and fine, much fairer and finer by an addition of more and more graces and gifts, both ordinary and extraordinary, till she be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." He will spare for neither gold nor silver to beautify her, such is his abundant love unto her. He clothes her with the particoloured ⁽³⁵⁾ garment of a great variety ⁽³⁶⁾ of graces, and this he borders with gold, and bespangles with silver. Her clothing is of "wrought gold," far more stately and costly than that of Esther in all her beauty and bravery; than that of Dionysius, whose mantle was sold to the Carthaginians for a hundred and twenty talents; ⁽³⁷⁾ than that royal robe of Demetrius, King of Macedonia, that was so massive and magnificent that none of his successors would ever wear it, *Propter invidiosam impendii magnificentiam*, for the unparalleled sumptuousness thereof.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 1:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**While the king sitteth at his table,** &c. Heb., At his round table, or ring sitting. *In accubitu circulari: in orbem enim antiquitus ad mensam sedebant.* "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit round till he come hither." (**1 Samuel 16:11**) The manner of the Turks to this day is to sit around at meat on the bare ground, with their legs gathered under them. ⁽³⁸⁾ By the king is here meant "Messiah the prince," (**Daniel 9:25**) "Christ the Lord." (**Acts 2:36**) *Et omnes sancti in circuitu eius*, All his saints sit round about him; (**Psalms 76:11**) as the twelve tribes were round about the tabernacle; (**Numbers 2:2**) as the twenty-four elders are round about the throne (**Revelation 4:4**)—they are "a people near unto him"; (**Psalms 148:14**) they are those "Blessed that eat and drink with him in his kingdom," (**Luke 14:15**) first of grace, and then of glory. And while they thus sit with their King—a sign of sweetest friendship and fellowship—it was held a great honour and happiness to "stand before Solomon" (**1 Kings 10:8**) in his circled session.

My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. Saith the Church; that is, my faith is actuated, and all mine other graces exercised and increased, at the Lord's table, that heavenly love feast: *Ubi cruci haeremus, sanguinem sugimus, et inter ipsa redemptoris nostri vulnera figimus linguam*, ⁽³⁹⁾ whereat we climb the cross, as it were, suck Christ's blood, "suck honey out of the rock," (**Deuteronomy 32:13**) feed heartily and hungerly upon his flesh, as eagles do upon the slain. (**Matthew 24:28**) This Luther calls *crapulam sanctam*, a gracious gormandise; ⁽⁴⁰⁾ whiles we lean upon his bosom and "feed without fear"; sending forth our sweet odours, our pillars of incense, by lifting up many a humble, joyful, and thankful heart to him, living by his laws, and being a savour of life to others. But what shall we think of those that stink above ground, poison the very air they breathe upon, defile the visible heavens, which must therefore be purged by the fire of the last day; and by their rotten communication and unclean conversation spread their infections, and send the plague to their neighbours, as those Ashdodites, Gittites, and Ekronites did. (**1 Samuel 5**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 1:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved,** &c. The bride proceeds to return all the glory to her bridegroom (of all that good that he had praised her for before) by a second similitude here, and by a third in the next verse; for in this argument she thinks she can never say sufficient. It is the manner of maids to wear nosegays of sweet flowers in their bosoms, and to make no small account of them. Myrrh is marvellous sweet and savoury (**Psalms 45:8; Proverbs 7:17**. See Plin., lib. xii., cap. 15, 16), but nothing so

³⁵ Shortened from parti-coloured, esp. in reference to a dog's coat, marked in patches of two distinct colours. Cf. *rose-colour*, etc. Also as n., esp. a dog whose coat is coloured in this way.

³⁶ πολυποίκιλος. (**Ephesians 3:10**).

³⁷ Athenaeus.

³⁸ *Turkish History*.

³⁹ Cyprian.

⁴⁰ Indulgence or connoisseurship in 'good eating'.

sweet as the Lord Christ is to those that have spiritual senses; Whom therefore the spouse here placeth between her breasts, that there hence the sweet savour may ascend into her nostrils. Again, Myrrh hath a bitter root; (**Mark 15:23**) Christ seems bitter at first because of afflictions, but if "we suffer with him, we shall also reign together with him." (**2 Timothy 2:12**) Thirdly, Myrrh was very precious; hence the wise men offered it to Christ at his birth. (**Matthew 2:11**) Christ is of that esteem with his people, "elect and precious," (**1 Peter 2:6**) that, as wise merchants, they make a thorough sale of all to purchase him. (**Matthew 13:44-46**) Lastly, Myrrh is of a preserving nature, and was therefore made use of at funerals. (**John 19:39**) In like sort Christ, as he doth by his Spirit's heat, exsiccate, or dry up the superfluity of our degenerate nature, whereby body and soul is preserved to eternal life; so, after our bodies are turned to dust, he still preserves a substance, which he will raise again at the last day. Hence the saints are said to "sleep in Jesus," to be "dead in Christ," who shall "raise our vile bodies, and make them like unto his own glorious body," (**Philippians 3:21**) in beauty, brightness, grace, favour, agility, ability, and other angelical excellencies.

He shall lie all night between my breasts. This is Christ's proper place: "My son, give me thine heart." Christ should "dwell in the heart by faith." (**Ephesians 3:17**) But too too often he is shut out, and adultery found between the breasts; (**Hosea 2:2**) there they carried the signs of their idolatry (as Papists now do their crucifixes), to testify that the idol had their hearts. But what saith Mr Bradford, martyr, in a certain letter? ⁽⁴¹⁾ As the wife will keep her bed only for her husband, although in other things she is content to have fellowship with others, as to speak, sit, eat, drink, go, &c.; so our consciences (which are Christ's wives) must needs keep the bed—that is, God's sweet promises—alonely for ourselves and our husband to meet together, to embrace and laugh together, and to be joyful together. If sin, the law, the devil, or anything would creep into the bed, and lie there, then complain to thy husband Christ, and forthwith thou shalt see him play Phinehas's part, &c. And again, in another letter, Think on the sweet mercies and goodness of God in Christ. Here, here is the resting place—here is the spouse's bed, creep into it, and in your arms of faith embrace him. Bewail your weakness, your unworthiness, your diffidence, and you shall see he will turn to you. What said I?—you shall see? Nay, I should have said, you shall feel, he will turn to you, &c. ⁽⁴²⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Song 1:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire.** "My beloved," and "unto me." This particular application is the very quintessence and pith of faith. Ἡ πίστις ἰδιοποιεῖται τὸν Χριστόν. It is the property of true faith to individuate Christ, to appropriate him to herself, as if he were wholly and solely hers. She adjudgeth him in special to herself, with "My beloved," "My strength, and my Redeemer," "My Lord, and my God." This, when Thomas did, "Now thou believest," said our Saviour. (**John 20:29**) Were it not for this word of possession, mine, the devil might say the Creed to as good purpose: as any of us. He believes there is a God and a Christ; but that which torments him is, he can say my to never an article of faith. Wicked men likewise may *Credere Deum, et Deo, sed non in Deum*; they may hear with joy, and have a *taste*, yea, and apply the promises, but they do it presumptuously and sacrilegiously; because they accept not Christ upon Christ's terms, take not whole Christ in all his offices and efficacies—would have him as a Saviour but not as a Sovereign—they make not a total resignation of themselves to Christ as Paul did (**Galations 2:19, 20**)

As a cluster of camphire. Or, As the cypress berry, within its white flower—sweet, pleasant, and very fragrant. ⁽⁴³⁾ They that talk here of the island Cyprus are as far from the sense as that

⁴¹ *Acts and Mon.*, 1503.

⁴² *Acts and Mon.*, 149.

⁴³ *Plin.*, lib. xii. cap. 14.

island is from Engedi, which was a place in the land of Canaan, in the tribe of Judah, near unto the Dead Sea. Here fled David one time when Saul pursued him; and here Jehoshaphat had that notable victory over his enemies by the power of prayer. (**2 Chronicles 20:1-28**) This was a fruitful soil for gardens and vineyards. (**Ezekiel 47:10**) Now the cypress tree, as also other aromatic trees, grow best in vineyards; and the Church, forgetting herself, as it were, and transported with love to Christ, heaps up thus one similitude upon another. *Amor Christi est ecstaticus, neque iuris se sinit esse sui.* R. Solomon Jarchi doth out of their *Agada* note that this *cophir* in the text is a tree that bringeth fruit four or five times yearly. Christ is that tree of life, that yields fruit every month, (**Revelation 22:2**) being more fruitful than the lemon tree, or the Egyptian fig tree, that bears seven times a year, as Solinus reporteth.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Our English Bibles call it *camphire*, which being smelled unto, doth naturally keep under or weaken carnal lust, saith one. Now, if that should be here intended, how fitly is it here placed among the vines of Engedi, that is a medicine for bridling lust too soon stirred up by wine, which one well calls *lac Veneris*, the milk of Venus:—

"Et Venus in vinis, ignis ut igne, furit."

Even Venus in wine, so rages fire by fire.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Song 1:15]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Behold thou art fair, my love.** Or, My fellow friend. (*as Solomon's Song 1:9*) And as she is his love, so he is her beloved, (**Solomon's Song 1:16**) and as he commends her, so she him no less. This should be all the strife between married couples, who should outstrip the other in mutual melting heartedness, and all loving respects either to other, in all passages, carriages, and behaviours whatsoever between them; accustoming themselves, as here, to speak kindly and cheerfully one to the other. This is that which will infinitely sweeten and beautify the married estate; it will make marriage a merry age, which else will prove a mar-age. And here let "husbands learn to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church," (**Ephesians 5:25**) celebrating her beauty in a Song, repeating her just praises, to show his heartiness therein, and inviting others with an *Ecce*, Behold, to the due contemplation thereof. "Behold, thou art all fair, my love! behold, thou art fair!" *Non est ficta aut frigida haec laudatio*, This is no feigned or frigid commendation, but such as proceeds from entire affection, and breathes abundance of goodwill. Full well might the prophet tell the Church, "Surely, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (**Isaiah 62:5**) And again, "The Lord thy God will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love (and seek no further), he will joy over thee with singing." (**Zephaniah 3:17**) The Church had acknowledged (**Solomon's Song 1:5**) that she was "black," or at least blackish, and yet, by way of apology too, she had pleaded that she was "comely," and so not to be slighted. But Christ affirms her "fair," yea, "twice fair," yea, the "fairest among women"—*sic suum cuique pluchrum*, so doth he even "err in her love," as the wise man phraseth it (**Proverbs 5:9**)—as himself is said to be the "fairest among men," (**Psalms 45:2**) where the Hebrew word likewise is of double form—Thou art fair, thou art fair above the sons of Adam, to note out double, that is, excellent beauty, such as draweth love and liking.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Now it is a maxim in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*, The wife shineth with her husband's beams, so doth the Church with Christ's graces, wherewith she is decked, as Rebecca did wish Isaac's jewels. Read **Ezekiel 16:2-5**, &c., and you will see that all the Church's beauty is borrowed. The maids that were brought to Ahasuerus, besides their own native beauty, they were first purified and perfumed before he chose one (**Esther 2:3**) But here it is otherwise altogether, for when the Church was "in her blood, in her blood, in her blood"—three several times it is so said, that we might the better observe it, and be affected with it—Christ "sanctified and cleansed her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, holy and

⁴⁴ Sol., cap. 45.

⁴⁵ ὅτι καλὸν φίλον.—*Theog.*

without blemish." (**Ephesians 5:26, 27**) But a bloody spouse she was to him, who "loved her, and washed her with his blood." (**Revelation 1:5**)

Thou hast doves' eyes. Sweet, amiable, single, and chaste. In the eyes beauty sits, and shines more than in any part of the body besides, **γλαυκῶπις βοῶπις**, &c., *apud Homerum*. The Turks tell their desperate devotees of beautiful women, with full eyes, in their fools' paradise; and thereby hearten them on to bold attempts. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ The Hebrews say that in *oculis, loculis, poculis*, the heart of a man shows itself. The Church is here said not to have eagles', vultures', foxes', apes' eyes, but doves' eyes. Now,

*"Felle columba caret, rostro non caedit, et ungues
Possidet innocuos, puraque grana legit."*

The dove hath her name in the Hebrew, ⁽⁴⁷⁾ from a root that signifieth to *oppress* and make a prey of any, as poor people, strangers, fatherless, &c., (**Jeremiah 50:16**) because, belike, this creature is subject to the prey and spoil of hawks; when pursued, they save themselves by flight, not fight;—the prophet Jonah was so called, as some think, *quod columbae instar aufugeret*, because he fled as a dove, when God sent him to Nineveh, but not with the wings of a dove—sometimes sitting in their dove cotes they see their nests destroyed, their young ones taken away and killed before their eyes, never offering to rescue or revenge, which all other fowls seem in some sort to do. This is very applicable to the persecuted Church, as may be seen in the Lamentations and Martyrologies. In Greek, the dove hath her name from her exceeding love to her mate and young ones. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ **Κύουσι γὰρ ἀλλήλους**, saith Aristotle, they kiss one another; the Church likewise kisseth Christ, and is interchangeably kissed of Christ, (**Psalms 2:12; Solomon's Song 1:2**) being drawn together by a mutual dear affection, as the apostle's word ⁽⁴⁹⁾ imports. (**Hebrews 11:13**) As if at any time the dove and her mate fall out and fight; shortly after,

*"Qum mode pugnarunt, iungunt sua rostra columbae,
Quarum blanditias, verbaque murmur habet."*

Differences may arise between Christ and his spouse (she may thank herself, for he grieves her not willingly (**Lamentations 3:35**)—*Ille dolet quoties cogitur esse ferox*), and some household words she may have from him; but soon after he takes her "into the wilderness, and speaks to her heart," (**Hosea 2:14**) yea, he takes her unto his wine cellar, (**Solomon's Song 2:4**) then when one would think he should carry her into a dungeon rather. He kisses her, as doves do one another, with the "kisses of his mouth"; then when one would think he should, upon such high provocations, kick her, nay, kill her; then he shows her matchless mercy, such as no man would show his wife. (**Jeremiah 3:1, 22**) "For he is God, and not man," yea, such a "sin pardoning" God as never was heard of. (**Micah 7:18**) If there be but a dove's eye in the heads of any of his, a columbine simplicity, if simple to do evil, bunglers at it, and have nothing to say in defence of it when it is done, (**Romans 16:19**) the amends is made; and love with her long mantle "covers a multitude of sins." (**Proverbs 10:12**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Song 1:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant.** Behold thou art fair, my love, &c., said he to her ⁽⁵⁰⁾ It were fitter a fair deal for me to

⁴⁶ Blunt's *Voyages*.

⁴⁷ **הני** *Jonah* of **הני**

⁴⁸ **περιστερὰ παρὰ τὸ περισσῶς ἔρᾶν.**

⁴⁹ **ἀσπασάμενοι** *ab a simul et* **σπάω**, *traho*.

⁵⁰ *Inter Romanos dicebatur, Tu Caius ego Gaia*. Between Romans it was said, You are Gaius since I am Gaia. So here the spouse, I am Japha, because thou art Japhe. Joppa, a fair haven town, had its name from this root; like as "the fair heavens," (**Acts 27:8**) and the beautiful "gate." (**Acts 3:2**).

say so to thee, saith she here to him, since all my beauty is but borrowed of thee; it is but a spark of thy flame, a drop of thine ocean. If I shine at all, it is with thy beams only; if I be any whit comely, it is with the comeliness that thou hast put upon me. Christ as a man (how much more as God blessed for ever?) was "fairer" by far "than all the children of men," (*Psalms 45:2*) because free from sin, and "full of grace and truth," as in *Ezekiel 28:7*; there is mentioned "beauty of wisdom." And the heathen philosopher ⁽⁵¹⁾ could say, that if moral wisdom (how much more spiritual?) could be seen with mortal eyes, it would draw all men's hearts unto itself. But besides his inward beauty, which was inconceivable, inasmuch as in him, as in a temple, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, that is, personally, in the body of Christ, there was a most fair form and a divine face. He had a good complexion, and such a comely countenance as did express a divinity in him. If St Stephen's face, when he stood before the council, shone like an angel's face, (*Acts 6:15*) and if his eye could pierce the heavens, (*Acts 7:55*) how much more may we think Christ did? True it is, that by reason of his sufferings in the flesh, "his visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men." (*Isaiah 52:14*) And "he had no form nor comeliness"—viz., in the eyes of his perverse countrymen, who when they saw him they could discern no such beauty wherefore they should so desire him; "He was despised and rejected of men," For what reason? "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," which had so drank up his spirits, and furrowed his fair face, that at little past thirty years of age he was reckoned to be towards fifty; he seemed to the Jews to be much older than he was indeed, as some are of the opinion. See *John 8:57*.

Yea, pleasant. Sweet as a flower, sweet as a honeycomb, ⁽⁵²⁾ *Mell in ore, melos in aure, iubilum in corde*, "sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." (*Proverbs 16:24*) He that hath once but lightly tasted how sweet the Lord Christ is, doth soon disrelish, yea, loathe, in comparison, all this world's homely fare, tasteless fooleries.

*"Clitorio quicunque sitim de lento levarit,
Vina fugit, gaudetque meris abstemius undis."
—Ovid. Met. lib. 15.*

Yea, our bed is green. Our bridal bed, which was wont to be decked with garlands and green boughs. Or, "our bedstead"—so it may be rendered—"is green," made of green and growing timber, as Christ's house is built of living and thriving stones. (*1 Peter 2:5*) There is a perpetual greenness—the fruit of the vegetative Spirit of God within them—upon all Christ's olive trees. (*Psalms 52:8*) And these "green things must not be hurt." (*Revelation 9:4*) Or if they be by a wound at the root, so as that they suffer a fit of barrenness, or seem to be sapless, yet they shall *revirescere*, recover their former greenness, as the Philippians did, and had a new spring after a sharp winter; they had deflourished for a time, but now reflourished. (*ἀνεθάλετε, Philippians 4:16*){field-off:Bible}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Song 1:17]]{field-on:Bible} **The beams of our house are cedar.** Not my, but our house, as before, our bed, and after, our galleries. All is common between the bridegroom and the bride—bed, board, house, all. It should be so between married couples, who should not have several purses, interests, &c., but both bring in what they have or get to the common hive. The Church is Christ's house, and every faithful soul is God's building; (*1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6*) he "plants the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, that he may say to Zion, Thou art my people." (*Isaiah 51:16*) The great Architect of the world doth as wonderful a work in converting a soul to himself as he did in setting up this goodly edifice of the universe. This stately structure of the new creature he makes of the best materials, cedar, cypress, boratine, &c. A mud wall may be made up of dirt, straw, stones of the street,

⁵¹ Plato.

⁵² ὠπαιῖος, Sept., The spring or flower of beauty.

&c.; not so a stately palace, a marble monument. Solomon's temple was built of cedar wood; so was the temple of Diana of the Ephesians, as Vitruvius testifieth: the devil will needs be God's ape. He knew that cedar is a tree strong and durable; and for the dryness of it, the timber chawneeth not, rotteth not; yea, it hath a property to preserve other things from putrefaction. A late writer observeth of it that *viventes res putrefacit et perdit, putridas autem restituit et conservat*.⁵³ The Church is also stable, and cannot be ruined; it is founded upon a rock; the elect cannot be finally deceived the faithful ministers, by preaching law and gospel, kill the quick Pharisee, and quicken the dead publican; (**Romans 7:9; 2 Corinthians 2:16**) they "declare unto man his righteousness," (**Job 33:23**) and show him how he may be "found in Christ" (viz., when sought for by the justice of God), "not having his own righteousness," (**Philippians 3:9**) those filthy garments, (**Zechariah 3:4**) but the bride's "fine white linen, and shining," (**Revelation 19:14**) and after a few turns taken here with Christ in the terrace or galleries of the Church militant made of fir, he shall have places given him in heaven, to walk among "those that stand by"; (**Zechariah 3:7**) that is, among the seraphim, as the Chaldee paraphrast expounds it. {{field-off:Bible}}

⁵³ *Hinc. Horat., Cedro dignum, et cerite cera.—Scribon. in Physic., lib. ii.*

Chapter 2

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 2:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I am the rose of Sharon.** The Greek renders it, "the flower of the field," that grows without man's labour, having heaven for its father, earth for its mother. So had Christ, "made of a woman," "manifested in the flesh," without father as man, without mother as God. (**Hebrews 7:3; 9:11**) The tabernacle of Christ's human nature—so called because therein "the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily" (**Colossians 2:9**)—was "not made with hands"; that is, not by man's help; it was "not of this building," by the power of nature. But as matter in the beginning of time was taken from man to make a woman, so matter in the fulness of time was taken from woman to make the man Christ Jesus. And as Eve was a true woman without woman, so Christ was a true man without man. He is called *filius hominis*, but it is only of the feminine gender. He is the "flower of the field," as here; the "stone cut out without hands"; (**Daniel 2:45**) the phoenix that hath no parents; the pearl that is not made through any earthly copulation, but is begotten of the dew of heaven. For as pearls are bred in shell fishes of a celestial humour, so was Christ, by heavenly influence, in the Virgin's womb. But let us weigh the words as they are commonly rendered. Sharon was a most fruitful place, situated under the hill Lebanon, (**1 Chronicles 27:29**) coupled with Carmel for excellence, (**Isaiah 35:2**) not more afield than a fold for flocks. (**Isaiah 65:10**) To a rose, that queen of flowers, here growing doth the Lord Christ fitly compare himself. This flower delights in shadowy places—and thence borroweth its name ⁽⁵⁴⁾ in the original; it is orient of hue, cold of complexion, but passing redolent, and of comfortable condition. Such a flower is Jesus, saith an expositor ⁽⁵⁵⁾ here, most delighted in temperate places, for hue white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand; a cooler to the conscience, but passing savoury, and comfortable to the distressed patient.

And the lily of the valleys. Or, "Low places," which are most fat and fertile. Christ is both rose and lily, which two put together make a gallant show, and beautify the bosoms of those that bear them; but nothing like as Christ doth those that have him dwelling in their hearts by faith. These flowers do soon fade, and lose both beauty and sweetness; but so doth not Christ or his comforts. *Tam recens mihi nunc Christus est, ac si hac hora fudisset sanguinem*, saith Luther, Christ is as fresh to me now as if he had shed his blood this very hour. He purposely compareth himself to a vine, to a door, to bread, and many other excellent and necessary creatures, everywhere obvious, that therein (as in so many optic glasses) we may see him, and be transformed into him. For this it is also that he here commends himself, not out of arrogance or vain affectation of popular applause, but for our sakes doubtless, that we may take notice of his excellencies, and love him in sincerity. The spouse also praiseth herself sometimes, not out of pride of her parts, but to show her thankfulness to Christ, from whom she had them.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 2:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As the lily among the thorns.** The lily is white, pure, and pleasant, having six leaves (and thence its name ⁽⁵⁶⁾ in Hebrew), and seven golden-coloured grains within it. In **Psalms 45**, (of like argument with this Song) is dedicated to him that excelleth upon Shoshannim, or upon this six-leaved flower, the lily. Moreover, the chief city of Persia was called Shushan, from the multitude of lilies growing there. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ Here Alexander found fifty thousand talents of gold; the very stones of it are said to have been joined together with gold. ⁽⁵⁸⁾ The Church is far richer, and fuller of beauty and bravery, but

⁵⁴ Habaste eth.

⁵⁵ Clapham.

⁵⁶ Shoshannah.

⁵⁷ Schindler.

⁵⁸ Cassidor., lib. vii. var. Ep. 15.

beset with thorns, such as Abimelech was; a right bramble indeed, that grew in the base hedge row of a concubine, and scratched and drew blood to purpose. Wicked men are called briers, (**Micah 7:4**) thorns twisted and folded, (**Nahum 1:10**) that hurt the earth and those that handle them. Indeed, they cannot "be taken with hands," but the "man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear." But God shall "thrust them all away," *scil.*, into hell, and "they shall be utterly burnt with fire in the same place." (**2 Samuel 23:6, 7**) In the mean space, "who will set the briers and thorns against me in battle?" saith the Lord Christ, being jealous for his spouse with a great jealousy (**Zechariah 1:14**)—who dare do it? "I would march against them, I would burn them together." (**Isaiah 27:4**) Sin or Sinai, a thorny place in the desert, where it rained down quails and manna from heaven, was a type of the Church flourishing in the midst of her enemies, "like a lily among thorns."

So is my love among the daughters. *i.e.*, False sisters, *quae dicuntur spinae propter malignitatem morum; dicuntur filiae, propter communionem sacramentorum*, saith Augustine; ⁽⁵⁹⁾ these are called thorns for the malignity of their manners, and daughters for their profession and outward privileges. These prick, sting, and nettle the Church; they cannot but do their nature, till God take an order with them, till he "bind them in bundles, and cast them into the furnace." (**Matthew 13:40**) But as the lily is fresh and beautiful, and looks pleasantly (even that wild lily that we call woodbine) though among thorns; so should we amidst trouble. God hedgeth us about with these briers, that he may keep us within compass; he pricks us with these thorns, that he may let out our ill humours. *O felices tribulos tribulationum!* ⁽⁶⁰⁾ O happy thorns of tribulation, that open a vein for sin to gush out at! "Be not weary, my son, of God's correction," saith Solomon. (**Proverbs 3:11**) *Nehemiah eius castigationes ut spinas quasdam existimes tibi molestas*, so Kabvenaki renders and expounds that text. Feel not God's corrections troublesome to thee, as thorns in thine eyes, or prickles in thy sides. Especially since, as Gideon, by thrashing those churls of Succoth with thorns and briers of the wilderness, "taught" them better behaviour; (**Judges 8:16**) so God deals by his people. His house of correction is his school of instruction. (**Psalms 94:12**) See my Love Tokens, p. 144, 145, &c. God sets these thorns, as he did those four horns (**Zechariah 1:18-21**) to afflict his people which way soever they fled. Howbeit, when they had pushed them to the Lord, there were four carpenters set a-work to cut them short enough for ever doing any further hurt. (**Zechariah 1:19-21**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 2:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As the apple tree among the trees,** &c. Among wild trees, moss begrown trees, trees that bring not forth food for men, but mast for hogs. Such is every natural man. (**Romans 11:24**) "Ephraim is an empty vine, he beareth fruit to himself," (**Hosea 10:1**) paltry hedge fruit. Oaks bring forth apples, such as they are, and acorns. But what saith our Saviour; **John 15:2**, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away"; and "without me ye can do nothing." (**John 15:5**) That is a true saying (though Spiera the expositor censures it for a cruel sentence), *Omnis vita infidelium peccatum est, et nihil bonum sine summo bono*, ⁽⁶¹⁾ The whole life of an unbeliever is sin, neither is there anything good without Christ the chiefest good. Here he is fitly compared by the Church to an "apple tree," which yields both shade and food to the weary and hungry traveller, furnisheth him with whatsoever heart can wish or need require. Christ is *cornucopia*, a universal good, all-sufficient and satisfactory, proportionable, and every way fitting to our necessities. It is not with Christ as with Isaac, that had but one blessing, for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom," (**Colossians 2:3**) and whatsoever worth. So that, as a friend of Cyrus in Xenophon, being asked where his treasure was, answered, **ὅπου Κύρος φίλος**, where Cyrus is my friend;

⁵⁹ Aug., Epist. 48.

⁶⁰ Augustine.

⁶¹ Aug. *De Vera Innocen.*, cap. 56.

so may a Christian better answer to the like question, ὅπου Κύριος φίλος, where the Lord Christ is my friend; for as *sine Deo omnis copia est egestas*, without Christ all plenty is scarcity, so with him there can be no want of anything that is good. "In the fulness of his sufficiency he is in want," saith Job of a wicked man. Contrariwise the godly, in the fulness of his want, is in an all-sufficiency; because he is in Christ, who hath filled πάντα ἐν πᾶσι (*Colossians 3:11*)—the neuter gender, not only all the hearts of his people, but all things; he hath filled up that emptiness that was before in the creature, and made it satisfactory.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight. Heb., I delighted and sat down. The Church, being scorched with troubles without and terrors within, ran to Christ for shelter, and found singular comfort. (*Psalms 91:1; Isaiah 25:4*) *Tua praesentia, Domine Laurentio ipsam craticulam dulcem fecit*, saith an ancient. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, being a long time prisoner under Charles V, was demanded what upheld him all that time? *Respondit, divinas martyrum consolationes se sensisse*, he answered, that Christ came in to him with such cordials as kept up his spirits above belief. There be divine comforts that are felt by the suffering saints that others taste not of, nor themselves neither at other times. When the child is sick, out come the preserves and deserts; never sits he so much on his mother's lap and in her bosom as then.

And his fruit was sweet to my taste. *i.e.*, His word and promises, which I rolled as sugar under my tongue, and sucked therehence more sweetness than Samson did from his honeycomb. (*Psalms 19:10; 119:103; Jeremiah 15:16*) Luther said he would not live in paradise if he might without the Word, *at cum verbo etiam in inferno facile est vivere*, saith he, ⁽⁶²⁾ but with the Word he could live even in hell itself. True it is that those that have not the spouse's palate find no such sweetness in Christ or his promises. Most men are so full gorged with the devil's dainties, so surfeited with sin's deserts, that they find no more relish in the good Word of God than in the white of an egg, or in a dry chip. These feed upon that now that they must, without repentance, digest in hell; ⁽⁶³⁾ there will be bitterness in the end. Whereas they that, by sucking those full strutting breasts of consolation, the promises, have "tasted and seen how good the Lord Christ is," as their souls are satisfied with fat things, full of marrow, with the very best of the best, (*Isaiah 25:6*) so he shall make them to "drink abundantly of the river of his pleasures," (*Psalms 36:8*) he shall take them into his wine cellar and fill them with gladness.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 2:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**He brought me to the banqueting house.** Heb., To the house of wine, where he giveth me that which is better than apple drink, as **Solomon's Song 2:3**. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. (*2 Corinthians 1:5*) The lower that ebb the higher this tide, as is to be seen in the martyrs, who went as merrily to die as ever they did to dine; sang in the flames, and felt no more pain than if they had lain upon beds of roses. This their persecutors counted stupidity and vainglory; but they knew not the power of the Spirit and the force of faith. As Mr Philpot told scoffing Morgan, who, coming to confer with him, asked him, "How know you that you have the Spirit of God?" Mr Philpot answered, "By the faith of Christ which is in me." "Ah! by faith," quoth Morgan: "do ye so? I think it is the spirit of the buttery which your fellows have had that have been burned before you, who were drunk the night before they went to their death, and I think went drunk unto it." Whereunto Philpot replied, "It appears, by your communication, that you are better acquainted with the spirit of the buttery than of God. Methinks you are liker a scoffer in a play than a reasonable doctor to instruct one. Thou hast the spirit of illusion and sophistry, which is not able to countervail the spirit of truth. Thou art

⁶² *Oper. Lat., tom. iv.*

⁶³ *Multi in terris manducant quod apud inferos digerunt.—Aug.*

but an ass in the things of God, &c. God shall surely rain fire and brimstone upon such scorers of his word and blasphemers of his people as thou art." ⁽⁶⁴⁾ The like censure was passed upon Nicholas Burton, martyr, in Spain, who, because he went cheerfully to the stake, and embraced death with all gladness and patience, his tormentors and enemies said that the devil had his soul before he came to the fire, and therefore his sense of feeling was past. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ These carnal creatures meddle not with the true Christian's joy, neither know they the privy armour of proof, the joy of faith, that he hath as an *aes triplex* about his heart, making him insuperable, and "more than a conqueror." (**Romans 8:37**) True grace hath a fortifying, comforting virtue which the world knows not of; like as true gold comforts and strengthens the heart that alchemy gold doth not. And as a man that by good fare, and plenty of the best wines, hath his bones filled with marrow and his veins with good blood, and a fresh spring of spirits, can endure to go with less clothes than another, because he is well lined within, so it is with a heart that by oft feasting with Christ in his ordinances, and by much reading and ruminating upon the Scriptures, called here the banqueting house or wine cellar, as most are of the opinion, hath got a great deal of joy and peace, such a one will go through troubles and make nothing of them—yea, though outward comforts utterly fail. (**Habakkuk 3:17, 18**)

And his banner over me was love. As a standard erected, as a banner displayed, so was the "love of Christ shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost," (**Romans 5:15**) who had also, as a fruit of his love, set up a standard in her against strong temptations and corruptions, (**Isaiah 59:19**) and thereby assured her of his special presence; like as where the colours are, there is the captain—where the standard, there the king. The wicked also have their banners of lust, covetousness, ambition, malice, under which they fight, as the dragon and his viperous brood, (**Revelation 12:7**) against Christ and his people; but they may read their destiny, **Isaiah 8:9, 10**, "Associate yourselves, O ye people!" stand to your arms, repair to your colours, yet "ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought, &c., for God is with us"; Immanuel is our general and how many do you reckon him for? as Antigonus once said to his soldiers that feared their enemy's numbers. Surely "if Christ be for us," and he is never from us, (**Matthew 28:20**) but as Xerxes was wont to do, he pitcheth his tent and sets up his standard in the midst of his people, as once in the wilderness, "who can be against us?" (**Romans 8:31**) And though many be, yet "no weapon that is formed against the Church shall prosper"; how should it, since she hath such a champion as Christ, who is in love with her, and will take her part, fight her quarrel? "and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." (**Isaiah 54:17**) As the eclipsed moon, by keeping her motion, wades out of the shadow and recovers her splendour, so it shall be with the spouse—yea, she shall be able to answer those that reproach and cast dirt upon her for her keeping close to Christ's colours and suffering hardship for him, as the Emperor Adrian did the poet Florus, who sat on an ale bench and sang,

*"Nolo ego Caesar esse
Ambulare per Britannos
Rigidas pati pruinas, &c."*

I do not wish to be Caesar,
To walk through the Britians
To endure the rigours of hoar frost,

The witty emperor replied upon him, as soon as he heard of it—

⁶⁴ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 1653.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1866.

*"Nolo ego Florus esse
Ambulate per tabernas;
Latitare per popinas,
Pulices pati rotundos."* ⁽⁶⁶⁾

I do not wish to be Florus
To walk through taverns;
To lie low through the bistro,
To endure round flees.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 2:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Stay me with flagons.** Not with cups or bowls only, but with flagons, larger measures of that wine that was set before her in Christ's wine house. "Comfort me with apples," such as fall from Christ's apple tree, spoken of in the former verse, the precious mellifluous promises, which are sweet, like the apples of the garden of Eden, as the Chaldee here hath it. 'Bolster me up' with these; for I am even sinking and swooning with an excess of love, with an exuberance of spiritual joy in God my Saviour, such as I can hardly stand under. Stay me therefore, saith she to the ministers, those pillars to "support the weak," (*Galations 2:10*) and to "comfort the feeble minded." (*1 Thessalonians 5:14*) "Stay me, or sustain me, with flagons, comfort me with apples." Solinus ⁽⁶⁷⁾ tells of some near the river Ganges that live *odore pomorum sylvestrium*, by the smell ⁽⁶⁸⁾ of forest apples, which is somewhat strange.

For I am sick of love. Surprised with a love qualm, as an honest virgin may be, meeting her love unawares, enjoying him in the fulness of joy, and fearing the loss of his company for a long season. This is *timor amicalis*, which Lombard ⁽⁶⁹⁾ thus describeth, *Nehemiah offendamus quem diligimus, et ne ab eo separemur*, The fear of love is, lest we should offend him whom our soul loveth, and so cause him to withdraw. *Hic timor transit in charitatem*, saith Gregory, This fear passeth into love, and overwhelms the spirit sometimes. This was it that made Jacob, when he saw nothing but visions of love and mercy, cry out, "How dreadful is this place!" This made that mixture of passions in those good women, that, coming to look for Christ, departed from the grave "with fear and great joy." From this cause it was that Bernard, for a certain time after his conversion, remained as it were deprived of his senses by the excessive consolations he had from God. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ Cyprian ⁽⁷¹⁾ writes to his friend Donatus, that before his conversion he thought it impossible to find such raptures and ravishments as now he did in a Christian course. He begins his epistle thus, *Accipe quod sentitur antequam discitur*, &c.; Augustine ⁽⁷²⁾ saith the like of himself. What inconceivable and unutterable ecstasies of joy, then, may we well think there is in heaven, where the Lord Christ perpetually, and without intermission, manifesteth the most glorious and visible signs of his presence and seals of his love! He pours forth all plenteous demonstrations of his goodness to his saints, and gives them eyes to see it, minds to conceive it; and then fills them with exceeding fulness of love to him again, so that they swim in pleasure, and are even overwhelmed with joy—a joy too big to enter into them, they must "enter into it." (*Matthew 25:21*) Oh pray! pray with that great apostle that had been in heaven, and seen that which eye never saw, that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and what is the

⁶⁶ Melanchthon in *Chron. Carion*.

⁶⁷ *Poly. Hist.*, cap. 56.

⁶⁸ Smelling salts are applied to the nostrils of those who faint.

⁶⁹ Lomb. *Sent.*, lib. iii. distinc. 34. *Vide August. Epist.*, 121, ad Honorat.

⁷⁰ Gosr. in *Vita Bern*.

⁷¹ *Epist.*, lib. i.

⁷² *Confess*, lib. vi. cap. 22.

riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (*Ephesians 1:18; 3:19*) A glory fitter to be believed than possible to be discoursed. ⁽⁷³⁾ "An exceeding excessive eternal weight of glory." (2 *Corinthians 4:17*) Such a weight, as if the body were not upheld by the power of God, it were impossible but it should faint under it. How ready are our spirits to expire here, when any extraordinary unexpected comfort befalls us! The Church is "sick of love." Jacob's heart fainted when he heard of Joseph's life and honour in Egypt. The Queen of Sheba was astonished at Solomon's wisdom and magnificence, so that she had no spirit more in her. Viscount Lisley, in Henry VIII's time, died for joy of an unexpected pardon. What then may we think of those in heaven? And should not we hasten in our affections to that happy place? Oh do but think, saith one, though it far pass the reach of any mortal thought, what an infinite, inexplicable happiness it will be, to look for ever upon the glorious body of Christ, shining with incomprehensible beauty, far above the brightest cherub, and to consider that even every vein of that blessed body bled to bring thee to heaven! Think of it, I say, and then exhale thyself in continual sallies, as it were, of most earnest desires "to be dissolved ἀναλῦσαι, and to be with Christ, which is far the better." (*Philippians 1:23*) As in the meanwhile, let thy soul sweetly converse with him in all his holy ordinances, but especially at his holy table, where he saith unto thee, as once to Thomas, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." Let thy soul also there reciprocate and say, "My Lord and my God!" "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and in earth, none in comparison of thee." (*Psalms 73:25*) "Rabboni," "Come quickly."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 2:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.** As if she should have said, I called unto you, my friends, to relieve and raise me, falling into a spiritual swoon; but behold the "consolation that is in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the bowels and mercies of my dear husband": (*Philippians 2:1, 2*) he hath fulfilled my joy, he hath prevented your help, or at least he hath wrought together with the means, and made it successful. You have stayed me with flagons, but he hath "restored my soul": (*Psalms 23:2*) you have bolstered me up with apples, but when that would not do, he hath put "his left hand under my head," as a pillow to rest upon, and "with his right hand he hath embraced me," as a loving husband cherisheth his sick wife, and doth give her all the help he can. (*Ephesians 5:29*) The whole virtue and power of the ministry cometh from Christ. They do their worthy endeavour to stay and underprop our faith: but that notwithstanding we shall soon fall to the ground, if Christ put not to both his hands to keep us up. We stand in need of whole Christ; and having him to support us, we cannot fall finally, because fall we never so low, we shall arise, "for the Lord puts under his hand"; (*Psalms 37:24*) his goodness is lower than we can fall; he circleth his saints with amiable embracements, and none can pull them out of his hands. Jacob undergird Rachel till she died upon him, "died on his hand." (*Genesis 48:7*) The good Shunammite held her son till he died on her lap. But the love sick Church, "whether she lives or dies, she is the Lord's"; (*Romans 14:8*) and whoso liveth and believeth on him cannot die eternally. But when Christ himself died, though soul and body were sundered for a season, yet neither of them were sundered from the Godhead whereunto they were personally united; so is it here: death may separate soul and body, but cannot separate either of them from Christ. And as "Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more," (*Romans 6:9*) so neither doth any one that is "risen with him." (*Colossians 3:1*) Christ may as easily die at the right hand of his heavenly Father as in the heart of a true believer. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 2:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I change you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.** A vehement obtestation, or rather an adjuration, I charge you, and that by an oath, taken from the manner of country speech. For in this wholeChapter the allegory is so set, as if the feast or

⁷³ *Verbis exprimi non potest, experimento opus est.—Chrys.*

meeting were made and represented in a country house or village. These daughters of Jerusalem, therefore, the particular congregations, and all faithful men and women, (as **Luke 23:28**) are straitly charged, and as it were in conscience bound by the Church, the "Mother of us all," (**Galations 4:26**) not to disease or offend, much or little, her well beloved spouse that "resteth in her love," (**Zephaniah 3:17**) and "taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants," (**Psalms 35:27**) "until he please"—that is, not at all: for he is not a God that taketh pleasure in wickedness, (**Psalms 5:4**) his holy Spirit is grieved by it. (**Ephesians 4:30**) Or, "until he please"; that is, till he waken of his own accord. Be not over hasty with him for help, but hold out faith and patience; let him take his own time, "for he is a God of judgment, and waiteth to be gracious." (**Isaiah 30:18**) If through impatience and unbelief you set him a day, or send for him by a post, he will first chide you before he chide the waves that afflict you, as he dealt by his disciples that wakened him ere he was willing. (**Mark 4:37-40**) Those that are suddenly roused out of a deep and sweet sleep are apt to be angry with those that have done it. Great heed must be taken by ourselves, and God's charge laid upon others, that nothing be "spoken or done amiss against the God of heaven." (**Daniel 3:29**) "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." (**Psalms 16:4**) "The Lord shall trouble thee, thou troubler of Israel." (**Joshua 7:25**) "Do ye provoke the Lord to wrath? are ye stronger than he?" (**1 Corinthians 10:22**) Will ye needs try a fall with him? (**Psalms 18:26**) "Hath ever any yet waxed fierce against God and prospered?" (**Job 9:4**) Surely, as Ulysses's companions told him, when he would needs provoke Polydamas, so may we say much more to those that incense the Lord to displeasure,

“ΣΧΕΤΛΙΕ ΤΙΠΤ’ ΕΘΕΛΕΙΣ ΕΡΕΘΙΖΕΜΕΝ ἄγριον ἄνδρα.”

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (**Hebrews 10:31**) Had men the feet of roes and hinds of the field, they could not outrun his wrath; witness Jonah. Or if they could, yet the roes and hinds, those loving creatures, (**Proverbs 5:19**) would be swift witnesses against them for their baseness and disloyalty, since they do such things as those poor creatures would not. See **Deuteronomy 30:19; Isaiah 1:2**. Be thou instructed therefore, O Jerusalem, lest Christ's soul be disjointed from thee, lest, as well as he loves thee now, "he make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." (**Jeremiah 6:8**) Let him be that love of thine, as she here emphatically calls him, that taketh up thy whole heart, soul, and strength, with a love, not only of desire, but of complacency, with a God-like love. True it is that we cannot, neither are we bound to love God, *in quantum est diligibilis*, so much as he is loveable, for so God only can love himself; but we must love *nihil supra, aequae, or ntra*, nothing more, or so well, or against God. Other persons we may love with his allowance, but it must be in him, and for him, as our friends in the Lord, our foes for the Lord. Other things we may also love, but no otherwise than as they convey love to us from Christ, and may be means of drawing up our affections unto Christ. This true love will keep us from doing anything wilfully that may disease or displease him; it will also constrain the daughters of Jerusalem to "abide with the roes and with the hinds of the field," so some read this text, as Rachel did by her father's herds, to glorify Christ in some honest and lawful vocation, and not to vex him by idleness and unprofitableness, since, as punishment hath an impulsive, so love hath a compulsive faculty. (**2 Corinthians 5:14**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 2:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **The voice of my beloved! behold!** An abrupt passage, proceeding from a pang of love, whereof she was even sick, and now lay languishing, as it were, at Hope's Hospital, lingering and listening, hankering and hearkening after her beloved. Of the ear we use to say that it is first awake in a morning. Call one that is asleep by his name, and he will soon hear and start up. Christ "calls all his sheep by their name," (**John 10:3**) and they "know his voice," (**John 10:4**) so well are they versed in his Word, and so habitually are their senses exercised, (**Hebrews 5:14**) yea, they know his pace. For—

Behold he cometh. viz., To "make his abode with me," according to his promise; (*John 14:23*) to fulfil with his hand what he had spoken with his mouth, as Solomon phraseth it in his prayer. (*1 Kings 8:15*) Christ sends his voice as another John Baptist, a forerunner, and this no sooner sounds in the ear, and sinks into the heart, than himself is at hand to speak comfort to the conscience. (*Psalms 51:8*) He thinks long of the time till it were done, as the mother's breast aches when it is time the child had suck.

He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. Look how the jealous eagle, when she flieth highest of all from her nest, and seems to seat herself among the clouds, yet still she casts an eye to her nest where are her young ones; and if she see any come near to offend, presently she speeds to their help and rescue. So doth the Lord Christ deal by his beloved spouse. Neither mountains nor hills shall hinder his coming; neither the sins of his people nor the world's opposition. As for the former, Christ blots out the "thick cloud," as well as the "cloud"; (*Isaiah 44:22*) that is, enormities as well as infirmities. He casts all the sins of his saints into the bottom of the sea, which can as easily cover mountains as mole hills. And for the second, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey," meaning, than all the Church's enemies, called, for their ravenousness, mountains of lions and leopards. (*Solomon's Song 4:8*) The stout hearted are spoiled, &c. (*Psalms 76:4, 5*) And "who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." (*Zechariah 4:7*) And whereas man's soul hath naturally many mountains of pride and profaneness in it—"there is that leviathan, and creeping things innumerable," (*Psalms 104:26*) as the Psalmist saith of the sea—and for his body there is not a vein in it that would not swell to the height of the highest hill to make resistance to the work of grace; every such "mountain and hill is made low before the Lord Christ"; (*Isaiah 40:4*) and "every high thing cast down that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." (*2 Corinthians 10:5*) He coaxes with authority, and reigns over all impediments. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 2:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My beloved is like a roe or a young hart.** viz., For sweetness and swiftness, as in the former verse. His help seems long, because we are short. In the opportunity of time he will not be wanting to those that wait for him. The lion seems to leave her young ones till they have almost killed themselves with roaring and howling; but at last she relieves them; and hereby they become the more courageous. God seems to forget his people sometimes, but it is that they may the better remember themselves, and remind him. He seems, as here to have taken a long journey, and to be at a great distance from them, whenas indeed he is as near us as once he was to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection; but she was so bleared she could not see him. If he at any time absent himself for trial of our faith and love to him, and to let us know how ill we can be without him, yet he is no further off than behind some wall or screen. Or if he get out of doors from us, yet he looks in at the window, to see how we take it, and soon after shows himself through the lattice, that we may not altogether despond or despair of his return. Yea, he flourisheth or blossometh ⁽⁷⁴⁾ through the lattices, like some flower or fruit tree that, growing under or near unto a window, sends in a sweet scent into the room, or perhaps some pleasant branches, to teach that Christ cometh not to his without profit and comfort to their souls.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 2:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My beloved spake, and said.** Heb., Answered and said. She had sighed out, belike, some such request unto her beloved as David did, (*Psalms 90:13*) "Return, O Lord, how long!" Lovers' hours are full of eternity. He replieth, Even now, my love; behold, here I am for thy help. "Now will I rise, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself." (*Isaiah 33:10*) Rise thou, therefore, out of the ashes wherewith thou hast been covered, (*Lamentations 3:16*) and come away to a better condition. Or, rise out of sin, wherein by nature thou sittest. (*Luke 1:79*) "Stand up from the dead," come away to Christ,

⁷⁴ אִצְחָן, Apparuit instar floris exorientis.

and he "shall give thee light." (**Ephesians 5:14**) "Come, for the master calleth," as they said to blind Bartimeus. (**Mark 10:49**) "Come, for it is high time to come, since now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (**Romans 13:11, 12**) "The winter is past, the flowers appear." Up, therefore, and come with me to my country house, as it were to take the pleasure of the spring tide. In heaven there is a perpetual spring; and here the saints have handsel of heaven, those "firstfruits of the Spirit," even as many as are "holy brethren, partakers of this heavenly calling." (**Hebrews 3:1**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 2:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.** In winter the clouds commonly "return after the rain." (**Ecclesiastes 12:2**) A shower or two doth not clear the air; but though it rain much, yet the sky is still overcast with clouds; and as one shower is unburdened another is brewed. Lo, such is the doleful and dismal condition of such as are not effectually called by Christ. *Omnis illis dies hybernus est*, it is ever winter with them; no spring of grace, no sunshine of sound comfort. It is with such as it was with Paul and his fellow sailors, when, "as neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, all hope that they shall be saved was then taken away." (**Acts 27:20**) All the hope is that God, who by his all-quickening voice "raiseth the dead, and calleth things that are not as if they were," (**Romans 4:17**) that calleth those "his people that were not his people, and her beloved which was not beloved." (**Genesis 9:25**) Together with his voice, there goeth forth a "power," (as **Luke 5:17**) as when he bade Lazarus come forth, he made him rise and come away; so here. Of carnal, Christ makes us a people created again; (**Psalms 102:18; Ephesians 2:10**) of a wild ass colt he makes a man, (**Job 11:12**) and of a hollow person (as empty and void of heart as the hollow of a tree is of substance) he makes a solid Christian, fit to be set in the heavenly building. This is as great a work as the making of a world with a word. God "plants the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, that he may say to Zion, Thou art my people." (**Isaiah 51:16**) Hence Christ is called "the beginning of the creation of God." (**Revelation 3:14**) And the apostle in **Romans 5:10**; argues from vocation to glorification as the lesser. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 2:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The flowers appear on the earth.** Here we have a most dainty description of the spring or prime time—*prin-temps*, as the French call it—far surpassing that of Horace and the rest of the poets, who yet have shown themselves very witty that way. For the sense; by "flowers" (made rather to smell than to feed upon) are understood, saith an interpreter, the firstfruits of the Spirit, whereby the elect give a pleasant smell; and therein lieth sweetness of speech, and words going before works, even as flowers before fruits. For the which cause, as the apostle exhorteth that our speech be gracious always, "ministering edification to the hearer," (**Colossians 4:6**) so the prophet calls it a "pure language," which the Lord will give to as many as love him, as are called according to his purpose. (**Zephaniah 3:9**)

The time of the singing of birds is come. *Hic autem garritus avium plurimum facit ad veris commendationem*, this chirping of birds makes much to the spring's commendation, saith Genebrard. How melodiously sing the ministers of the gospel, while they are unto God's people as "a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant voice." (**Ezekiel 33:32**) It is *mel in ore, moles in aure*, to the elect, as it was to Augustine, who, coming to hear Ambrose, had his ears tickled, his heart touched; so had that unlearned Corinthian, (**1 Corinthians 14:25**) and the whole city of Samaria, wherein there was "great joy" at the receiving of the gospel. (**Acts 8:8**) "Behold we bring you good tidings of great joy to all people," (**Luke 2:10**) said those angels to the shepherds that sang Christ into the world, and from whom the preaching of the gospel was afterwards taken and given to the ministers, whose proper office it is "to publish peace, to bring good tidings of good." "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing." (**Isaiah 52:7-8**) If they do otherwise to any, if they sing doleful accents to guilty persons, if the voice of these gospel birds be to such, like that of Abijah to Jeroboam's

wife, "I am sent to thee with heavy tidings," (**1 Kings 14:6**) they may thank themselves. To fall out with the minister is as great folly, as if some fond people should accuse the herald or the trumpet as the cause of their war; or as if some ignorant peasant, when he sees his fowls bathing in his pond, should cry out of them as the causes of foul weather. What do faithful ministers do more—what can they do less, if they will be true to their souls?—than tax men's sins, foretell their judgments? This when they do, it is diversely taken. Ravenous and unclean birds, like the ravens of Arabia, screech horribly, scratch terribly. Turtles and doves ⁽⁷⁵⁾ (whose voice is here said to be heard in the land when other birds are sweetly singing) come in with a mournful tone, mixed with a groaning sadness (whence also the turtle hath its name, *scil., a sono quem edit, per onomatopaeiam*), and may well serve to set forth the unutterable groans of gracious spirits grieving for their sins, mourning bitterly (**Zechariah 12:10**) over Christ crucified before their eyes, (**Galations 3:1**) and evidently set forth by their faithful ministers (so that they need no other crucifix to draw tears from them) "tabering upon their breasts with the voice of doves," (**Nahum 2:7**) yea, smiting upon their breasts, with the penitent publican, and saying, or rather sighing, out each for himself, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." And here *affert solatium lugentibus suspiriorum societas*. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ It is a heavenly hearing when a church full of good people, wrought upon by their godly preachers, send up a volley of sighs to God; and as "hinds by calving," so they by weeping "cast out their sorrows," (**Job 39:3**) such as show their hearts to be as so many Hadadrimmons. Augustine ⁽⁷⁷⁾ persuades a preacher so long to insist upon some needful point, until by the groans and looks of his hearers he perceive that they understand it, and are affected with it. Such hearers Paul had at Athens, that wept as he did; (**Acts 20:37**) but this is but few men's happiness. Turtle doves are rare birds in our land.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 2:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes, &c.** These two trees put forth their fruits first, when other trees for the most part put forth first flowers, and then fruits ⁽⁷⁸⁾ in their season. Pliny ⁽⁷⁹⁾ numbers the fig tree among the trees of quick nature. And our Saviour (**Luke 21:29, 30**) makes the shooting forth of the fig tree to be a sign of summer's approaching. When himself came hungry to that fig tree, (**Matthew 21:19**) he thought to have found something on it more than leaves only; for though the time of figs was not yet (that is, of ripe figs, **Mark 11:13**), yet *grossuli*, green figs, at least, he looked for, those untimely figs that she casteth when she is shaken by a mighty wind; (**Revelation 6:13**) his hunger would have made somewhat of them. It was at Bethphage (that house of green figs, as the word ⁽⁸⁰⁾ signifieth), or near unto it, that he cursed this barren fig tree, (**Mark 11:1, 13**) and therefore cursed it, because it answered not his expectation. It behoves us, therefore, not only to make a flourish of goodly words, with Naphtali, but to be fruitful boughs, with Joseph, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. (**Philippians 1:11**) Joseph is a fruitful bough, (**Genesis 49:22**) that is, of the vine, saith the Chaldee paraphrast there. But it may be Jacob meant it of the Egyptian fig tree, whereof Solinus reporteth that it beareth fruit seven times a year. ⁽⁸¹⁾ Pull off one fig, and another presently puts forth. ⁽⁸²⁾ Now, if the fig tree slack not her duty, but laboureth quickly to bring forth her firstfruit, that so again and again

⁷⁵ See **Ezekiel 7:16**. Isidor.

⁷⁶ Basil.

⁷⁷ Aug. in **Psalms 10**.

⁷⁸ *Post flores fructus*. After thye flowers, the fruit.

⁷⁹ Lib. xvii. cap. 13.

⁸⁰ **ῥα**, *grossus*. *Hinc ficus, et fig. Hinc puto Bethphage dictum quasi locum grossorum.*—Mercer.

⁸¹ *Uno anno septies fructus sufficit*.

⁸² *Unde pomum decerpseris alterum protuberat*.

she may be more fruitful, how much more should we hasten the fruits of holiness, break off our sins, and be abrupt in our repentance, (**Daniel 4:27**) cut the cart ropes of vanity, and cast away the deeds of darkness, (**Romans 13:12**) bring forth fruits meet for repentance, parallel to it and tantamount, such as were to be seen in the penitent thief that suffered with our Saviour? Aaron's rod was not sooner changed from a withered stick into a flourishing tree, than he was from a barren malefactor into a fruitful professor; for see what a deal of fruit he bears in an instant; he confesseth his own sin, rebuketh his companion, giveth a good testimony unto Christ, and prays that Christ would remember him when he came into his kingdom. This encouragement, among many others we have, that Christ will bless our very buds ⁽⁸³⁾ (**Isaiah 44:3**)—see the Geneva translation. He will taste of our green figs, of our tender grapes, which, if not yet of a good taste, yet because they give a good smell, as this text hath it, they are well resented. Christ, when he comes into his garden, takes all he finds well aworth. He "gathereth his myrrh with his spice; he eats not only of his honey, but of his honeycomb; and drinks not only of his wine, but of his milk." (**Solomon's Song 5:1**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Song 2:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Oh, my dove! that art in the clefts of the rock.** The dove is meek, mournful, simple, sociable, fearful, beautiful, faithful to her mate, fruitful, neat, so is the Church. And because the dove is sought after by birds of prey, therefore she builds in strong and steep places, in clefts of rocks, in the sides of "the hole's mouth," as Jeremiah hath it. (**Jeremiah 48:28**) The Church also is forced many times to "flee into the wilderness," (**Revelation 12:6**) into the further parts of the world, and hide itself in corners, to avoid persecution. So many, so mighty, and so malicious are the Church's enemies, that she dare scarce peep out or appear abroad with the dove, but she is in danger to become hawk'smeat. Hence Hilary saith of the primitive Christians, that they were not to be sought *in tectis et exteriori pompa*, in palaces and outward pomp, but rather in deserts and in mountains, and "in dens and caves of the earth," as the apostle also hath it. (**Hebrews 11:38**) Concerning the Christian congregation in Queen Mary's time, saith Mr Foxe, ⁽⁸⁴⁾ there were sometimes forty, sometimes a hundred, sometimes two hundred came together, as they could, in some private place in London, for mutual edification. They are utterly out, therefore, that hold that the true Church must be evermore glorious and conspicuous for her outward splendour. She is soon like the moon in her eclipse, which appeareth dark towards the earth, but is bright and radiant in that part which looks toward heaven. The Papists would have this moon always in the full. However if she show but little light to us, or be eclipsed, they will not yield she is the moon. And yet (except it be in the eclipse) astronomers demonstrate that the moon hath at all times as much light as in the full. But oftentimes a great part of the bright side is turned to heaven, and a lesser part to the earth. And so the Church is ever conspicuous to God's eye, though it appear not always to ours.

In the secret places of the stairs. Whither thou art retired, as for security, so for secrecy, that thou mayest the more freely, and without suspicion of hypocrisy, pour out thy heart before me, and seek my protection. Or, where thou liest close out of modesty, or conscious of infirmity, not daring to show thy face.

Shew me thy face. Or, Let me see thy countenance; leave none of thy particular congregations or members behind thee, but present yourselves before the Lord. "Come boldly to the throne of grace," (**Hebrews 4:16**) in "full assurance of faith." (**Hebrews 10:22**) *Quid enim per faciem nisi fidem qua a Deo cognoscimur*, saith Gregory upon this text. What can we understand by the face but faith, since by it we are known of God, and "without it, it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God"—that shows his face before the "King, eternal, immortal, invisible,"

⁸³ *Una minutula.*—*R. David.*

⁸⁴ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 1881.

&c., (**1 Timothy 1:17**) must come in his best—"must believe that he is"—*scil.*, *optimus maximus*, and more particularly—"that he is a rewarder of all that diligently seek him," (**Hebrews 11:6**) that seek him out, as the Greek ⁽⁸⁵⁾ hath it, viz., that fetch him out of his retiring room, as the Syrophenisse, by the force of her faith did, (**Mark 7:24-30**) and as the spouse here would never give him over till she had recovered him out of the country, and drawn from him this sweetest invitation to go along with him, and incitation to make bold with him.

Let me hear thy voice. In holy exercises, preaching, prayer, conference, &c. See here how the Lord Christ woos attendance, solicits suitors. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." (**John 4:24**) "Hitherto ye have asked me nothing," saith the Son; nothing to what you might have done, and should do well to do hereafter. "Ask that your joy may be full." (**John 16:24**) Pray that ye may joy; "draw waters with joy out of this well spring of salvation." Ply the throne of grace; follow your work close. It was more troublesome to Severus the emperor—to Christ you may be sure it is—to be asked nothing of his courtiers, than to grant them much. "Ask, and you shall have," saith Christ. And is he not worthily miserable that will not make himself happy by asking?

Sweet is thy voice. Because uttered by "the Spirit of grace and supplication," whose very breath prayer is, and without whom prayer is no better than a "sounding brass or tinkling cymbal."

And thy countenance is comely. *scil.*, By reason of the image of God repaired in thee, clearly shining in thy heart and life. This renders thee comely indeed, so that I am the better to see thy face, and to hear thy voice. To lovers nothing can be more pleasing than mutual converse and conference.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Song 2:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Take us the foxes, the little foxes.** *i.e.*, The heretics and schismatics. For as fox cubs will be foxes one day, and of little will become great; so schismatics, if not timely taken, will turn heretics. Whence it is that the apostle, in **1 Corinthians 11:18, 19**, having said, "I hear that there be divisions, or schisms, among you," he presently subjoins, "For there must be also heresies among you," God having so foreappointed and foretold it, "that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Now these heretics and schismatics are fitly called *foxes*, both here and **Ezekiel 13:4**. Herod is also called a fox, (**Luke 13:32**) as being a sect master, (**Matthew 22:16**) and as it is thought, to still the noise of his conscience, a Sadducee—first, For their craft; secondly, For their cruelty. Foxes are famous for their craftiness, even to a proverb—'As subtle as a fox'—

"Astutam vapido servans sub pectore vulpem."—Persius

They are passing cunning to deceive those that hunt them, feigning themselves simple when there is nothing more subtle, and looking pitifully when taken in a snare, but it is only that they may get out; there is no trusting to their looks, for *Vulpes pellem murat; non naturam*, saith the proverb, The fox may alter his countenance, but not his condition. And for cruelty, besides the harm foxes do among lambs and fowls—for, lacking meat, they feign themselves dead, and so the birds, hasting down as to a carcase, *volucres rapiunt et devorant*, saith Isidore, ⁽⁸⁶⁾ they seize upon the birds and devour them—they are noted here to mar the vineyards, *Vulpes vitibus maxime nocivae*, saith one. And for grapes, the fox loves them exceedingly—yea, though they be but tender and unripe. Hence the Latins call him *Legulus*, a gatherer—namely, of grapes; and we ironically say of a man, the fox loves no grapes, he will not eat them, but it is because he cannot get them; howbeit, by his leering one may know he loves them. Heretics

⁸⁵ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν.

⁸⁶ Isidor. *Etym.*, lib. xii. 1.

and schismatics are therefore to be taken by the vinedressers—that is, detected, refuted, and if need be, "delivered up to Satan," (**1 Timothy 1:20**) by the ministers, chased out of the vineyard, and pursued to death, if incorrigible, by the magistrate, as Jehu dealt by the Baalites, and after him Josiah. The sword is put into their hands for such a purpose, (**Romans 13:4**) and our Saviour with a civil whip expelled those Church foxes, the money merchants, giving therein a taste of that civil authority which he naturally derived from David, as one observeth. The apostles, being convented before civil authority about matters of religion, never pleaded, You have no power to meddle with us in these things that belong to Jesus Christ. No; their plea was only the justness of their cause, their obedience to God, &c. This heretics can never make good. Well they may pretend that they suffer for righteousness sake, and style themselves, as the Swenckfeldians did, the confessors of the glory of Christ! Well they may cry out, as that heretic Dioscorus did in the Council of Chalcedon, 'I am cast out with the fathers, I defend the doctrine of the fathers, I transgress them not in any point! Well they may seem to be ambitious of wearing a Tyburn tippet, as Campian, and cry out with Gentilis, the Anti-trinitarian, that he suffered death for the glory of the most high God! ⁽⁸⁷⁾ "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips," saith Solomon of such subtle foxes, "and layeth up deceit within him. When he speaketh fair believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart." (**Proverbs 26:24-25**) Heretics are notably cunning and no less cruel, as the Arians and Donatists were of old, the Papists, Socinians, and others of the same brand to this day. These "foxes have holes"; (**Matthew 8:20**) they cunningly creep, or shoot themselves into houses by their pithanology and counterfeit humility, they "lead captive silly women," (**2 Timothy 3:6**) and by them their husbands; they take them prisoners, as the word signifies, and then make prize of them; (**2 Peter 2:3**) they bring them into bondage and devour them, as St Paul saith of those deceitful workers, the foxes of his time; (**2 Corinthians 11:13, 20**) they fraudulently foist in false doctrines, (**2 Peter 2:1**) heresies of perdition, and so corrupt the vineyard as the master of the vineyard complains, (**Jeremiah 12:10**) "shipwreck the faith," (**1 Timothy 1:19**) "subvert whole houses," (**Titus 1:11**) and are therefore to be taken, or clubbed down as pests and common mischiefs to mankind—to the younger sort especially, those tender grapes which they chiefly covet and catch at. And here, in hunting of these cruel crafties, that counsel would be taken that Saul gave the Ziphites concerning an innocent man that deserved it not: "Go, I pray you, prepare ye and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there, for it is told me that he dealeth very subtly. See, therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself." (**1 Samuel 23:22-23**).^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [^{@Bible:Song 2:16}]^{}field-on:Bible}} **My beloved is mine, and I am his.** Hitherto the Church hath related Christ's words to herself and others. Now she shuts up the whole discourse with praise of Christ here, and prayer to him in **Solomon's Song 2:17**. In praising him, she preacheth her own blessedness in that spiritual union, that mystical marriage that is between them, "My beloved is mine," &c.—*q.d.*, I am sure he is mine, and I can boldly speak it. Many lay claim to him which have no share in him; they deeply affirm of him, but have no manner of right to him; their faith is but fancy, their confidence presumption; they are like that madman of Athens that claimed every rich ship that came to shore, whereas he had no part in any; or Haman, who hearing that the king would honour a man, concluded, but falsely, that himself was the man; like idolatrous Micah, they conceit that God will bless them for the Levite's sake, (**Judges 17:13**) which was no such matter; and like Sisera, they dream of a kingdom, whereas Jael's nail is nearer their temples than a crown. The condition of such self-soothers and self-seekers is nothing different from his, that, dreaming upon a steep place of some great happiness befallen him, starts suddenly for joy, and falling down with the start, breaks his neck at the bottom. The true believer is upon a far better ground; his faith is "unfeigned," his hope is "unfailable." He "knows whom he hath trusted," he "knows and

⁸⁷ *Se pro gloria Altissimi Dei pati.*

believes the love that God hath to him"; (**1 John 4:16**) he hath gotten a full grip of Christ, and is sure that "neither death nor life, &c., shall separate him from Christ." He hath comprehended him, or "rather is comprehended of him." (**Philippians 3:12**) Christ hath laid hold on him by his Spirit, and he hath laid hold on Christ by faith, the property whereof is to put on close to Christ, and Christ to him; yea, to unite us to Christ, so that "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"; (**1 Corinthians 6:17**) as truly one as those members are one body which have the same soul, or as man and wife are one flesh; as they two are one matrimonial flesh, so Christ and his people are one mystical Christ. (**1 Corinthians 12:12**) Well, therefore, may the Church here glorify Christ, and glory in her own happiness by him, saying, "My beloved is mine," and I am sure of it, and cannot be deceived, for "I am his"; all that I am is his—I have made a total resignation of my whole self unto him, and have put him in full possession of all. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (**Galations 2:20**) Christ is all-sufficient to me, and I am altogether his. His is as a covenant of mercy, mine of obedience, wherein I do as it were by indenture, with highest estimations, most vigorous affections, and utmost endeavours, bestow myself upon him, and I accept of whole Christ in all his offices and efficacies.

He feedeth among the lilies. Before she was to seek, and goes to Christ to be resolved where he fed. (**Solomon's Song 1:7**) Now, after more intimate communion with him, she is able to resolve herself and others where he feeds his flock—viz., "among the lilies"; that is, in sweet and soft pastures, (**Psalms 23:2**) in those "mountains of spices," (**Solomon's Song 8:14**) those "beauties of holiness," the glorious ordinances wherein Christ feeds his people, and feasts them daily and daintily, pleasantly and plentifully, with the best of the best, "fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined," (**Isaiah 25:6**) to the gladdening of their hearts and greatening of their faith, so that they "grow up as the lilies," (**Hosea 14:5**) as the "calves of the stall," (**Malachi 4:2**) "as the willows by the water-courses." (**Isaiah 44:4**) And as lilies are not more beautiful than fertile, *Una radiae quinquagenos saepe emittente bulbos*,⁽⁸⁸⁾ yea, the dropping of the lily will cause and beget more lilies; so the lily white saints will be working upon others, and bringing them to Christ, as Andrew did Peter, and Philip, Nathaniel. (**John 1:41, 45**) True goodness is generative; charity is no churl.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Song 2:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.** Until that day dawn,⁽⁸⁹⁾ that last and glorious day, when Christ the Sun of righteousness shall appear, and chase away the shadows of sin and misery wherewith I am here benighted.

Turn about, my beloved. And though thou leave me for a time, as "thou art a God that hidest thyself," (**Isaiah 45:15**) yet never forsake me, but let thine heart be ever upon me, and thine hand ready to help at a dead lift.

Yea, be thou like a roe or a young hart. Come sweetly and seasonably to my relief and succour. To set thee a time were to set the sun by my dial. But when thine own time is come, then "come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," be as nimble as a roe or young hart upon the mountains of Bether, called elsewhere "Bithron," beyond Jordan, (**2 Samuel 2:29**) which mountains were much hunted by hunters. Mountains of division, some render it, and one⁽⁹⁰⁾ descants thus: The spouse of Christ in that heavenly marriage Song calleth him a young hart on the mountains of division. Tell me, then, whither will you go for truth, if you will allow no truth but where there is no division? {{field-off:Bible}}

⁸⁸ Plin.

⁸⁹ *Umbra terrae noctem facit.* The shadow of earth makes the night.—*Isidor. Etym.*, lib. v. cap. 13.

⁹⁰ Dr Hall *Epist.*, v. dec. 3.

Chapter 3

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 3:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. She had not a name good enough for him, she therefore makes use of this powerful *periphrasis*. Before he had been "her beloved," but now "the love of her soul," because now he had withdrawn himself. It was night with her now; she "walked in darkness, and had no light," as **Isaiah 50:10**, and as before daybreak the darkness is greatest, so was it now with the woeful spouse. She was indeed upon her bed of ease, but to her in this case it was a little ease, a bed of unrest; her soul was tossed and troubled with solitary seeking, longing and looking after him whom "her soul loved." "By night," therefore, or "night after night," sundry nights together, as some read it, "she sought and sought," being constant, instant, and indefatigable in the search; she sought him early and earnestly, with utmost attention and affection, with her "whole heart and soul," (**Jeremiah 29:13**) according to the measure of her love to him, which was *modus sine modo*, as Bernard hath it. Now whatsoever a man loves, that he desires, and what he desires, that he seeks after, especially if he apprehend some singular worth in it. "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (**Colossians 2:3**) He is "better than rubies," saith Solomon, "and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto him." (**Proverbs 8:11**) Hence the good soul seeks him as eagerly as the mammonist seeks silver, the ambitionist honour, the famished man bread, the condemned prisoner a pardon, or as one that seeks for a lost jewel, he overlooks all till he hath found it; Christ I must have, saith she, whatever it cost me—this gold cannot be bought too dear. She longeth sore, as David did, saying, "Oh that one would give me of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" (**1 Chronicles 11:17**) Oh for a blessed armful of the babe of Bethlehem! such as Simeon once had; give me Christ or else I die. None but Christ, none but Christ. All is but dung and dross to Christ. (**Philippians 3:8**) God offered Moses an angel to go along with them in the wilderness; he would have no angel, nor stir a step unless God himself would conduct them. Barak would not march without Deborah, &c.

I found him not. *i.e.*, I had not so full a presence nor so fast hold of him as I desired. He had got behind the wall or the window, as in the former chapter, and, Joseph like, concealed his love out of increasement of love, as also that he may stir up strong affections after him in the hearts of his people, for he well enough knows how to commend his mercies to us, as Laban did his daughter Rachel to Jacob—by holding us off—by suspending us for a season. Even barren Leah, when unloved and unlooked on, becomes fruitful; and the drowsy spouse, when she misseth her beloved, becomes restless till she have recovered him. "In their affliction they will seek me early." (**Hosea 5:15**) Affliction excites devotion, and makes the saints seek again with a redoubled diligence, as here. See **Psalms 78:34-35**. It fares with the best sometimes as it did with St Paul and his company in the shipwreck, (**Acts 27:20**) when they saw neither sun nor stars for many days and nights together. In this dismal and disconsolate condition, if they can but cast anchor and pray still for day, Christ will appear (as here, **Solomon's Song 3:3**), and all shall clear up; the day will dawn, and the daystar appear in their hearts. "Mourning lasteth but till morning," (**Psalms 30:5**) and "the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: it will surely come, it will not tarry." (**Habakkuk 2:3**) But what shall we do in the meanwhile? may some say. How shall we sustain our spirits, since "hope deferred makes the heart sick?" "Though it tarry, wait for it," saith the prophet. Have patience, and learn to "live by faith. The just shall live by his faith." (**Solomon's Song 3:4**) We are usually too hasty, and do antedate the promises. Neither will any reason satisfy us, unless we may have all Christ's sweetness at once, and at present. Excellent is that discourse that Mr Bradford the martyr makes in a consolatory letter to a good woman that was troubled in conscience. ⁽⁹¹⁾ You are not content, saith he, to kiss Christ's feet, with Magdalen, but you would be kissed

⁹¹ Acts and Mon., 1490.

even with the kisses of his mouth. You would see his face, with Moses, forgetting how he biddeth to seek his face, (*Psalm 27:8*) yea, and that for ever, (*Psalm 105:4*) which signifieth no such sight as you desire to see in this present life, which would see God now face to face, whereas he cannot be seen but covered under something, yea, sometime in that which is clean contrary unto God, as to see his mercy in his anger, &c. How did Job see God, but, as ye would say, under Satan's cloak? &c. You know that Moses, when he went to the mount to talk with God, he entered into a dark cloud; and Elias had his face covered when God passed by. Both these dear friends of God heard God, but saw him not. But you would be preferred before them. See now, my dear heart, how covetous you are. All, be thankful! be thankful! But, God be thanked, your covetousness is Moses' covetousness. Well, with him you shall be satisfied. But when? Forsooth when he shall appear, &c. God would have his people discontentedly contented with what measures of grace and feelings they have attained unto, and to know that *tota vita boni Christiani sanctum desiderium est*,⁽⁹²⁾ the whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire after more, and that those very pantings, inquietations, and dissatisfaction cannot but spring from truth of grace and some taste of Christ.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 3:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I will rise now, and go about the city**, &c. The holy city Jerusalem, whither "the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel." (*Psalm 122:4*) There was the likeliest place to find Christ; there his parents found him once, after three days' search, (*Luke 2:46*) sitting in the temple; there he dwelt among men; there he gave gifts unto men, and therefore he went forth abroad the whole world, "conquering, and to conquer." (*Revelation 6:2*) Here, therefore, the spouse seeks him among the people of God, and in his word and ordinances. She knew well that he fed his flock among those lilies, used to go down into that his garden of spices (*Solomon's Song 6:1, 2*) to take a turn amidst those golden candlesticks, (*Revelation 1:13*) to take a view of his wedding guests, (*Matthew 22:11*) yea, to eat and drink in their presence, and to teach in their streets. (*Luke 13:26*) Abroad she gets, therefore, and that presently.

I will rise now. Saith she, lest I lose mine opportunity; for if so, I may seek it with tears, and go without it with sorrow. Men may purpose, promise, and expect a time of healing and curing, when they shall be deceived, and find a time of trouble. (*Jeremiah 14:17*) "Many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able," (*Luke 13:24*) yea, "they shall go with their flocks, and with their herds, to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him: he hath withdrawn himself from them." (*Hosea 5:6*) They came too late, belike; they sought not the Lord while he was to be found (*vel sero, vel certe non serlo querebant*); they called not upon him while he was near; they stayed till he was out of call; (*Proverbs 1:28*) till he was resolved to return either no answer at all, or such a sad answer as the Jews had from him, because they stood out their day of grace: "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come." (*John 7:34*) And again, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." (*John 8:21*) Oh, dreadful sentence! The Church herself here, though never so dear to Christ, seems to some to be guilty of sloth and slackness in seeking after Christ, and doing it in her bed (as loath at first to disease herself), or in holding him while she had him, if, while she was sleeping, he slipped away from her side. The wise virgins also were napping and nodding, (*Matthew 25*) and holy Augustine⁽⁹³⁾ confesseth that he could not answer that clear text, whereby he was called out of his sinful course. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead," &c., but only by that wish of the sluggard, *Modo et ecce modo, Sinite paululum*, &c. A little more sleeps, a little more slumbers, &c.; little, and yet sleeps, in the plural. Thus, *Modo et modo non habent modum, et Sinite paululum ibit in longum*, as that father hath it. Somewhat it was, surely, that makes the Church resolve, as here, "I will rise now," or "Let me rise now"; I

⁹² Bernard.

⁹³ *Confess.*, lib. viii. cap. 5.

will stir up the gift of God that is in me; I will stir up myself to take better hold of Christ. Here is a tacit taxing herself for some former slackness, after her former enjoyments and familiar intercourse with Christ. We are too ready, after we have run well, to lie down and take cold, which may cause a consumption; to please ourselves in unlawful liberties, when we have pleased the Lord in lawful duties. Hezekiah, after his notable service, both of prayer and thanksgiving, fondly over-shoots himself to the Babylonish ambassadors. Jonah, after his embassy, faithfully discharged, to the Ninevites, breaks forth into anger against the Lord. Peter, being commended by Christ for the profession of his faith, fell presently so far wide, that he heard, "Get thee behind me, Satan." (**Matthew 16**)

I sought him, but I found him not. For trial and exercise of her faith and constance. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." (**Hosea 6:3**) So then shall we find, if we follow on to seek Christ, fetching him out of his hidingplace, as the woman of Canaan did. For he would have hid himself, saith the text, but he could not, for a certain woman, &c. (**Mark 7:24, 25**) And as she set him out, so she followed him close, refusing to be either said nay, or sit down with silence or sad answers. The like did Jacob. (**Genesis 32**) He wrestled with might and slight. He would have a blessing whether God would or no, as we may say with reverence. "Let me go," saith God. No, thou shalt not, saith Jacob. "Let me alone, that I may destroy this people." No, by no means, saith Moses. In seeking of Christ, faith is not only importunate, but even impudent, (**Luke 11:8**)⁽⁹⁴⁾ and threatens heaven, as Nazianzen said of his sister Gorgonia. If he have lost his mercy, she will find it for him. (**Isaiah 63:15**) If he look strange and stern, she will both know him, and claim him amidst all his austerities. **Isaiah 63:16**, "Art not thou our father?" If he be gone never so far, she will "follow hard after him," (**Psalms 63:8**) so David's phrase is; even as hard as her old legs will carry, as Father Latimer said; with "Return, for thy servant's sake. We are thine." (**Isaiah 63:17, 19**) O Lord, saith the Church in Habakkuk, "Art not thou from everlasting, my God, and mine Holy One?" It was a bold question, but God assents to it in a gracious answer, ere he went further. We shall not die, say they abruptly. (**Habakkuk 1:12**) Nay, "after two days"—for so long, it may be, he will hold us off, to try how we will hold out seeking—"he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (**Hosea 6:2**) Or if we should die in this waiting condition, and in a spiritual desertion, yet we could not miss heaven, because he hath said, "Blessed are all they that wait for him." (**Isaiah 30:18**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 3:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **The watchmen that go about the city found me.** *i.e.*, The angels, who are God's watchmen⁽⁹⁵⁾ over the world, and are so called somewhere in Scripture, as also ministering spirits, guardians of the saints, &c. But here I conceive are meant either those princes of the world, strangers to the mystery of Christ, (**1 Corinthians 2:8**) and therefore can tell no tale nor tidings of him. For what reason? They are of Gallio's religion, which is no better than a mere irreligion, (**Acts 18:15**) being *de regione magis solliciti quam de religione*, as one saith: or else, the officers and ministers of the Church, set as "Watchmen upon Jerusalem's walls, with charge never to hold their peace, day nor night." (**Isaiah 62:6**) But they, alas! prove too too oft "blind watchmen, dumb dogs; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." (**Isaiah 56:10**) And such it seems were these here, by the small directions they gave the Church, or intelligence of her best beloved. Howbeit, because the priests' lips should preserve knowledge, and they are given for guides to God, (**Hebrews 13:17**) however they prove, she repairs to them, or rather, lighting upon them, inquires for Christ.

Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? They that love Christ in sincerity, are apt to imagine that others also do love him no less than they. So much worth they find in him, that they wonder

⁹⁴ ἀναίθεϊαν *propter improbitatem*.

⁹⁵ ἐγρήγοροι. (**Daniel 4:10; Ezekiel 33:2**)

how any can do otherwise than affect and admire him. This made Mary Magdalene, who "loved much," to ask the gardener, for so she took him to be, what he had done with the Lord's body, (**John 20:15**) whereabouts she thought he had been as solicitous as herself. So the Church here, Have you seen him? when they perhaps were perfect strangers to him. But be they as they will, they should have known and loved the Lord Jesus Christ, upon pain of utter cutting off, (**1 Corinthians 16:22**) and whether they do or do not, they shall know that she loves him; *Quis enim celaverit ignem?* For who can hide fire in his boston, or musk in his pocket? The love of Christ cannot possibly be concealed. A man may as easily hide the wind with his fist, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself, as Solomon speaketh in another case. (**Proverbs 27:16**) He that "believes with his heart, will confess with his mouth." (**Romans 10:10**) Christ's true worshippers are marked "in their foreheads." (**Revelation 7:3**) Antichrist's limbs receive his mark "in their hands," (**Revelation 13:16**) which they can cover or discover, as they see the occasion. We have also many political professors among us, who for want of true love to Christ, either run away in the plain field, (**Hebrews 10:36-39**) and so incur the danger of martial law; or else, under a colour of discretion, fall back into the rearward: the battle is sharp, and it is not good to be too forward. "But is this thy love to thy friend?" as he said to Hushai the Archite. David's parents and brethren came down to him to the cave of Adullam, though to their great danger; (**1 Samuel 22:1**) and Basil being blamed for his forwardness to appear for his friend in danger, answered, *Ego aliter amare non didici*. A friend is made for the day of adversity.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 3:4]]{{field-on:Bible}} **It was but a little that I passed from them.** It is probable that, lighting upon these watchmen, she promised herself much counsel and comfort from them, but was disappointed. It pleaseth God many times to cross our likeliest projects, that himself alone may be leaned upon. The poor soul in distress is apt to knock at the creature's door for comfort, to shark abroad, and to look this way and that way, as David did, for help. Yea, many use the means as mediators, and so fall short of Christ. It is a good note that one ⁽⁹⁶⁾ makes upon this text, that she was a little past the watchman; which shows, saith he, that the Lord delays comfort, to draw his Church, through all his means, from the lowest to the highest, where she findeth in short time comfort; but many times not till she is past, that they might not attribute it to the excellence of the means, but unto God.

But I found him whom my soul loveth. Christ, as he therefore threateneth that he may not be put to punish, ⁽⁹⁷⁾ so he therefore hides himself, otherwise, that he may come in again to his people with more comfort: and his usual time to come in to them is, when they have well-nigh done looking after him, as he dealt by those two that were travelling to Emmaus, (**Luke 24:13**) when they have hanged up their hopes and their harps together, and are ready to cast away their confidence, and to leave looking any longer. "When the Son of man comes"—viz., with an answer to his people's prayers, which they have now even given up for lost labour—"shall he find faith upon the earth?" (**Luke 18:8**) *i.e.*, Will anybody ever think that, having stayed so long, he would yet come at last? Christ loves to comfort those that are forsaken of their hopes, and to give a blessing to those times and means whereof we despair. The pains cannot be cast away which we resolve to lose for Christ.

I held him, and would not let him go. She held him with both hands earnestly; for faith hath two hands, one receiving Christ from God, the other giving the believer to God. With both she holds Christ—"the king is held in her galleries" by the bonds of love, by the cords of kindness, (**Solomon's Song 7:5**) he is even held prisoner in her company—but especially with the former. She holds him as Jacob did, (**Genesis 32:26**) though with much conflict. The devil strikes hard at her hand, and would make her loose her hold. Hence faith is fain to tug and

⁹⁶ Mr Dudley Fenner.

⁹⁷ *Ideo minatur, ut non puniat.*—Chrys.

wrestle, even till it sweat again. And therefore Paul calls it τὸ ἔργον, the difficult "work of faith," (**1 Thessalonians 1:3**) because the believer hath such ado to hold his own. If he cannot hold with his hands, he will make use of his teeth—as it is reported ⁽⁹⁸⁾ of Cynegirus, that noble Athenian, and of our Sir Thomas Challoner, ⁽⁹⁹⁾ in the wars of Charles V—any shift he will make rather than part with Christ, whom his soul loveth: having fastened on the tree of life, rather than drown, he is resolved to pull it up by the very roots. Let God fight against him with his own hand, and offer, as it were, to kill him, yet he will hang on still; he will trust, in an angry God, in a killing God, as Job; and as Jacob, he will wrestle, and not let go, though alone, and in the night, and upon one leg. "Lo! this is the generation of them that seek him, of them that seek thy face": this is Jacob; (**Psalms 24:6**) these be "Israelites indeed." (**John 1:47**)

Until I had brought him into my mother's house. That is, Into my conscience, say some—where faith dwelleth, and Christ by faith. (**Romans 10:10; Galatians 4:19**) Into the synagogues of the Jews, say others, or into the congregations of the Gentiles. They do best that understand it of the Catholic Church, the supernal Jerusalem, that "Mother of us all," figured by Sarah, (**Galatians 4:24, 26**) where Christ hath most delightful dwelling, a comfortable commoration, and, as it were, conjugal cohabitation with his spouse, chamber fellowship. (**Judges 15:1**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 3:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I change you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.** As a further fruit of her revived faith, she renews her contestation and charge of sanctification of life, such as becometh the gospel; that Christ, whom she resolves now to retain with her, be not provoked by sin to leave his people. (**Numbers 32:15**) And in this vehement adjuration, no doubt, saith an interpreter, but the Church had a special regard to the custom used then, and yet even at this day used among us—namely, that Song s are sung before the bride chamber, and certain noises of instruments brought to wake the bride and bridegroom from sleep. (**See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 2:7"**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 3:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?** "Who is this?" say the angels, those friends of the bridegroom, as some will have it, admiring the Church's high expressions, and continual ascensions in her affection to Christ. But I rather think it is the voice of the bridegroom himself, ravished with the beauty and sweetness of his spouse, and wondering at his own comeliness put upon her; as well he may, for *quantum mutatur ab illa*. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Such a change he hath wrought in her, as never was known in any. (**Ezekiel 16:6-14**) Moses married an Ethiopian woman, and could not change her hue. David married a scornful dame, a mocking Michal, and could not mend her conditions. Job's wife continued to be, as it is said of Helena, after the Trojan troubles caused by her, ἡ πάλαι γυνή, the same woman still—no changeling she: but the Church and all her genuine children are strangely altered and metamorphosed—as the apostle's word is (**Romans 12:2**, μεταμορφοῦσθε)—and this change is not moral, formal, merely mental, temporal, partial, but spiritual, real, universal, both in respect of subject and object; for it is an entire change of the whole man, from the whole service of Satan to the living and true God, in sincere obedience to the whole law, the whole course of his life throughout. A change so conspicuous and so stupendous, that not only strangers take notice of it, ξενίζονται, strange at it, (**1 Peter 4:4**) and marvel much at the matter, saying, Who is this? (**Matthew 21:10**) What is come to the man of late, that now it is, *Ego non sum*? But Christ himself stands wondering at his own work, as he did once in Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed" (**John 1:47**)—an Ishmaelite by nature, but an Israelite by grace, as Gether, (**1 Chronicles 7:17; 2 Samuel 17:3**) and as before that in

⁹⁸ Aelian.

⁹⁹ Camden.

¹⁰⁰ Virg.

Araunah, that famous Jebusite. (2 *Samuel* 24:18; *Zechariah* 9:7)

That cometh out of the wilderness. *scil.*, Of this world, fitly called a wilderness, for the paucity of good people in it—the wilderness of Judea, where John preached was so called, because but thinly inhabited—and plenty of bears and boars, lions and leopards, and other wild creatures, whereunto wicked men for their savageness are commonly compared in Scripture. This ascending of the Church out of the world, as Israel did out of Egypt, and their orderly marching through the wilderness into the promised inheritance is worthily called a wonderful separation. (*Exodus* 33:16) And as that angel that appeared to Manoah, by ascending up in the flame of the altar, is said to do wondrously, (*Judges* 13:19-20) so do the saints by their daily devotions, as so many pillars of smoke, *elationibus fumi*, aspiring to eternity, and coming up, as Cornelius's prayers and alms did, "for a memorial before God." (*Acts* 10:4) And albeit their best performances are as smoke, black and sooty in regard to infirmities and imperfections, yet they have a principle in them to carry them upward; they have also the high priest of the New Testament, not to present them only, but to perfume and scent them, as it is here, with myrrh and frankincense, and sweetest powders of the spice merchant—that is, with the merit and mediation of his own most precious passion, (*Hebrews* 9:24) those sweet odours poured as out of vials into the prayers of saints, (*Revelation* 5:8; 8:4) and so making both them and their services acceptable to his Father. And as he promised, (*John* 12:32) that "being lifted up" himself by the cross to the kingdom, he would "draw all his to him"; so we see it fulfilled in the saints, those heavenly eagles, soaring out of sight—lowly in their speeches, lofty in their actions, but especially in their affections carried above all earthly objects, (*Colossians* 3:2) and not content till they are gotten home to heaven; their commoration is here, their conversation above. These heavenly stars, though seen sometimes in a puddle, though they reflect there, yet they have their situation in heaven. These birds of paradise, though they may touch happily upon earth, yet they are mostly upon the wing, and those outward comforts and creatures are to them but *scalae et alae*, "wings, and wind in their wings," (*Zechariah* 5:9) to carry them upward. Let shallow men wonder at worldly things, as the disciples did at the huge and fair stones of the temple; (*Matthew* 24:1-3) let them be nailed fast to the earth, as Sisera was by Jael; let them ever bow downward, as that woman in the gospel that had a spirit of infirmity; let them grovel and go upon their bellies and feed upon earth, as the serpent. (*Genesis* 3:14) The saints are of another alloy; their "civil conversation (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven," (*Philippians* 3:20) their political bent, aim, and fetch is for heaven; they are *immortalitatis candidati*, as the ancients called Enoch and Elias; they do *paradisum mente deambulare*, as Jerome bids the young hermit take a turn ever and anon in paradise, and after some serious thoughts of that blessed place they break out as Monica, Augustine's mother did, into a *Quid hic facio?* What make I here? why hasten I not home to mine own country? They send up many pious ejaculations, many holy sallies, and as it were egressions of soul, many a humble, joyful, and thankful heart to God. *Mittunt preces et lachrymas cordis legatos*, as he saith, pillars of prayers, volleys of hearty wishes they send up continually, laying up treasure in heaven, and thinking long of the time or ere they get thither.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 3:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Behold his bed, which is Solomon's,** &c. Or, Behold the bed of Solomon, as the Greek, explaining the Hebrew, hath it. Solomon was a famous figure of Christ; of his bed we read nothing, but may well conceive it was, as everything else about him, stately and costly, and thereby is meant here heaven, say some, whither the Church is brought in ascending in the preceding verse, and by the valiant warders they understand the angels, those mighties. (*Psalms* 103:20) But because they are said to be "valiant men of Israel," I rather assent to those that think the godly ministers are here meant by the "mighties," and the Church by Christ's "bed," where he reposeth and "resteth in his love," (*Zechariah* 3:17) lodging "between her breasts." (*Solomon's Song* 1:13) There is

nothing more sure than that the blessed angels do watch over the Church. (*Hebrews 1:14*) What a guard by them had Jacob at Mehanaim, (*Genesis 32:1-2*) where they made a lane for him, as the word imports, to provide for his safety! The like we may say of Elisha at Dothan, and various others. I doubt not, saith one, but as the angels waited at Christ's sepulchre, so for his sake they watch also over our graves, called our beds. (*Isaiah 57:2*) Howbeit here understand we it of the ministers of the word that "watch for men's souls," and are frequently called watchmen. Sixty of them they are said to be, because a great number, as the Levites were scattered up and down the tribes of Israel, as salt is strawed thick upon flesh to keep it from putrifying. Ye are the salt of the earth (*Matthew 5:13-16*) And "valiant" they are said to be, for valour and courage invincible is necessary to a minister who shall be sure to be put hard to it, and therefore had need to be, as Athanasius was, an adamant for his resolute stout carriage, and to partake with the diamond in the high priest's breastplate for hardness and hardiness in standing to and for the truth. Israelites also they ought to be Jews inwardly, not scoffing Ishmaelites, profane Edomites, false Philistines, but the valiants of Israel, such as David's band of worthies was; (*1 Chronicles 11:10-12:37*) faithful and godly patterns of piety such as will "take heed to themselves and to the flock," waiting upon the Lord's work and "watching for men's souls as they that must give account," &c. (*Hebrews 13:17*) It is a great matter to be of Christ's bodyguard. Remember what David said of Abner. (*1 Samuel 26:15*)
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Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 3:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**They all hold swords, being expert in war.** They not only bear arms, but can handle them. Young Jether wore a sword, but he durst not draw it, (*Judges 8:20*) or strike with it when he should have killed Zeba and Zalmunna. Themistocles said of the Eretrians, a cowardly people, that they were like the sword fish, which hath a sword indeed, but wants a heart. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Such white livered soldiers, such faint hearted swordmen our Solomon hath no need of; our Gideon will not employ them so far as to break a pitcher or to bear a torch. (*Judges 7:3*) The fearful and unbelieving shall never set foot in his kingdom, much less be esquires of his body; those in that office must hold fast the faithful word, that sword of the Spirit, that twoedged sword, far beyond that of Goliath, and yet David said there was none to that, that they may be able and apt by sound doctrines both to exhort the tractable and to "convince the gainsayer." (*Titus 1:9*) Those that either cannot or will not do thus, are no way fit to be of Christ's guard, because they are more likely to betray him into the hands of his enemies than to defend him from them, to act a Judas's part than a Peter's, who manfully cut off Malchus's ear, and chose rather to be held temerarious than timorous. Jeremiah complains of the pastors of his time that they were "not valiant for the truth," (*Jeremiah 9:3*) they had no spiritual metal in them; but as harts and stags have great horns and strength, but want courage, so it was with these. St Augustine professeth this was it that heartened him, and made him to triumph in his former Manicheeism, that he met with feeble opponents, and such as his nimble wit was easily able to overturn. If gainsayers be not powerfully convinced, how will they set up their crests and cry *victoria*! If they be not stoned with arguments, ⁽¹⁰²⁾ how will they start up and outstare the truth! There must be, therefore, skill and will in all her champions. They must also every man have his sword upon his thigh, and be ready for an assault. Seneca reports of Caesar that he had quickly sheathed his sword, but never took it off. And Suetonius tells us that he would never tell his soldiers of any set time of removal or onset, that he might never find them unready, ⁽¹⁰³⁾ Christ expects the like care and courage in his ministers, lest the proverb be verified on them, ungirt, unblest.

And because of fear in the night. Lest evil should befall Solomon, as it did Ishbosheth, who

¹⁰¹ Μάχαιραν μὲν ἔχει, καρδίαν δὲ οὐ —Plutarch.

¹⁰² Haeretici argumentis lapidandi.—Hilar.

¹⁰³ Scilicet ut paratum et intentum momentis omnibus, &c.

was slain upon his bed by the sons of Rimmon; lest deeds of darkness be done in a land of light, and while the watchmen slack their duty, the rulers of the darkness of this world break in and play their pranks. While men slept, tares were sown by the evil man. (**Matthew 13:25**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 3:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**King Solomon made himself a chariot.** *Hic locus lubricus est et difficilis.* This is a hard text, saith one. It had been easier, perhaps, if commentators had not made it so hard. The word rendered chariot, is by others rendered a bridechamber, a bed, a throne, a palace. The Hebrew word is found in this place only; ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ it hath the name of fairness and fruitfulness. Rabbi Solomon saith it is *thalamus honorificus*, a bedchamber of honour, whereby we are to understand again the Church, as we did by "bed" in the former verse. She is oft compared to a house, here to a bridechamber, and Solomon's bridechamber, which must needs be supposed very trim, and set forth to the best. It is further set forth here by the causes: *efficient*, Solomon himself; *material*, cedar, silver, gold, &c.; *formal*, paved with love; *final*, for himself first, and then for the daughters of Jerusalem. First, Solomon himself made it, though a king. *Stupenda sane dignatio*, a wonderful condescension. The Church is Christ's own "workmanship," his "artificial facture," or creature (as the Greek word signifieth, **Ephesians 2:10**, **ποίημα**), that masterpiece of his architecture, wherein he hath showed singular skill, by erecting that glorious fabric of the new man, that "new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." (**2 Peter 3:13**) For "he planteth the heavens and layeth the foundations of the earth, that he may say to Zion, Thou art my people," that he may "rejoice in the habitable part of God's earth," (**Proverbs 8:31**) that he may say, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (**1 Corinthians 6:16**) Christ wrought the centurion's faith, as God; he wondered at it, as man. God wrought, and man marvelled; he did both to teach us where to bestow our wonder. Paul prays for his Ephesians, that their eyes might be enlightened to see the power that wrought in them. (**Ephesians 1:18**)

Of the wood of Lebanon. (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:17"*) The saints are the Church's materials. (**Romans 1:7**; **1 Corinthians 1:2**) "The precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold." (**Lamentations 4:2**) "Her Nazarites are purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than rubies; their polishing is of sapphire." (**Solomon's Song 3:7**) And yet Bellarmine is not ashamed to say, *Nos etiamsi credimus in ecclesia inveniri omnes virtutes*, & c. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Although we doubt not but that all virtues are found in the Church; yet that a man may be absolutely called a member of that true Church spoken of in Scripture, we hold not that any inward virtue is required, but only an external profession of the faith, and participation of the sacraments. *Belle hoc convenit Ecclesiae Romanae*, saith a learned man. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ This description suits very well with the Church of Rome. For certainly if there be any virtuous persons in that Church, *id eis convenit per accidens*, it is by mere accident, and not as they are in that Church, but as they dissent from it; like as Cicero saith wittily of the Epicureans, that if any were good among them, it was merely from the goodness of their nature, for they taught and thought otherwise. And as Peter Moulin said of many of the priests of France, that they were for their loyalty not beholden to the maxims of Italy; and yet Bellarmine hath the face to say, *Sunt quidem in Ecclesia Catholica plurimi mali, sed ex haereticis nullus est bonus*: ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Among Papists there are many bad men, but among Protestants not one good man is to be found.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 3:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**He made the pillars thereof.** *i.e.*, The faithful

¹⁰⁴ ὅλας λεγόμε.

¹⁰⁵ Lib. iii. cap. 2, *De Eccles. Militante*.

¹⁰⁶ Cameron, *De Eccles.*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁷ *De Notis Eccles.*, lib. iv. cap. 13.

ministers, called "pillars," (**Galations 2:9**) and that, Atlas-like, bear up the pillars of it. (**Psalms 75:3**) Those that offer violence to such, Samson-like, they lay hands upon the pillars to pluck the house upon their own heads. Yea, they attempt to pull stars out of Christ's hand, (**Revelation 1:16**) which they will find a work not feasible.

Of silver. For the purity of matter, and clearness of sound; for their beauty, stability, and incorruption. Let ministers hereby "learn how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." (**1 Timothy 3:15**)

The bottom thereof of gold. Understand it either of God's Word, which is compared to the finest gold, or of that precious grace of faith, the root of all the rest; whence it is laid by St Peter as the bottom and basis, the foundation and fountain of all the following graces: **2 Peter 1:5**, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," &c. They are all in faith radically. Every grace is but faith exercised; hence we read of the "joy of faith," the "obedience of faith," the "righteousness of faith," &c. She is the mother grace, the womb wherein all the graces are conceived. Hence the bottom of Christ's fruitful bed, the pavement of his glorious bride chamber, the Church, is here said to be of gold; that is, of faith, which is called gold, (**Revelation 3:18; 1 Peter 1:7**) "that the trial of your faith" (or your well tried faith, for it seems to be a Hebraism), "being much more precious than that of gold." And here, *Melius est pallens aurum quam fulgens aurichalcum*, ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ gold, though paler, is better than glittering copper. The faith of God's elect is far more precious than the shining sins ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ of the beautiful abominations of mere moralists. Suppose a simple man should get a stone, and strike fire with it, and thence conclude it a precious stone; why, every flint or ordinary stone will do that. So to think one hath this golden grace of faith, because he can be sober, just, chaste, liberal, &c.; why, ordinary heathens can do this. True, gold will comfort the fainting heart, which alchemy gold will not. Think the same of faith.

The covering of it of purple. I am of their mind that expound it of Christ's blood, wherewith, as with a canopy, or a kind of heaven overhead, the Church is covered and cured. (**Revelation 5:9-10; 7:14; Romans 6:3-4**) Purple was a rich and dear commodity among them. (**Proverbs 31:22; 7:5; Mark 15:17; Luke 16:19**) The precious blood of Christ is worthily preferred before gold and silver. (**1 Peter 1:18-19**)

The midst thereof being paved with love. For Christ loved us, and washed us with his blood. (**Revelation 1:5**) He also fills his faithful people with the sense of his love, who therefore cannot but find a great deal of pleasure in the ways of God, because therein they let out their souls into God, and taste of his unspeakable sweetness; they cannot also but reciprocate and love his love. So the bottom, the top, and the middle of this reposing place are answerable to those three cardinal graces, faith, hope, and love. (**1 Corinthians 13**)

For the daughters of Jerusalem. This chariot or bridal bed he made for himself, he made it also for the daughters of Jerusalem; for all his is theirs, union being the ground of communion. As we must do all for Christ—according to that, *Quicquid agas propter Deum agas*; and again, *Propter te, Domine, propter te*; choice and excellent spirits are more taken up with what they shall do for God than what they shall receive from God—so Christ doth all for us, and seeks how to seal up his dearest love to us in all his actions and achievements. "Christ's death and bloodshed," saith Mr Bradford, "is the great seal of England, yea, of all the world, for the confirmation of all patents and perpetuities of the everlasting life whereunto he hath called us. This death of Christ, therefore, look on as the very pledge of God's love towards thee, &c. See, God's hands are nailed, they cannot strike thee; his feet also, he cannot run from thee. His

¹⁰⁸ Bernard.

¹⁰⁹ *Splendida peccata*.

arms are wide open to embrace thee, his head hangs down to kiss thee; his very heart is open, so that therein look, nay, even spy, and thou shalt see nothing therein but love, love, love to thee. Hide thee, therefore, lay thine head there with the beloved disciple, join thee to Christ's chariot, as Philip did to the noble eunuch's. This is the cleft of the rock wherein Elias stood. This is for all aching heads a pillow of down," &c. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 3:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion.** *i.e.*, All ye faithful souls which follow the Lord Christ, the Lamb that stands upon Mount Zion.

(Revelation 14:1, 4) Ye shall not need to go far—and yet far ye would go, I daresay, to see such a gallant sight as King Solomon in his royalty: the Queen of Sheba did—behold he is at hand, "Tell ye the daughters of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh," &c. **(Matthew 21:5)** Go forth therefore, forth of yourselves, forth from your friends, means, all, as Abraham did, and the holy apostles, confessors, and martyrs, and as the Church is bid to do, "forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." **(Psalm 45:10)** Good Nazianzen was glad that he had something of value—to wit, his Athenian learning—to part with for Christ. *Horreo quicquid de meo est, ut meus sim*, saith Bernard. He that will come to me, must go utterly out of himself, saith our Saviour. All St Paul's care was, that he might be found in Christ, but lost in himself. *Ambula in timore et contemptu tui, et ora Christum, ut ipse tun omnia faciat, et tu nihil facias, sed sis sabbatum Christi*, saith Luther, ⁽¹¹¹⁾ Walk in the fear and contempt of thyself, and rest thy spirit in Christ; this is to go forth to see King Solomon crowned, yea, this is to set the crown upon Christ's head. When Queen Elizabeth undertook the protection of the Netherlands against the Spaniard, all princes admired her fortitude; and the king of Sweden said, that she had now taken the diadem from her own head, and set it upon the doubtful chance of war. ⁽¹¹²⁾ He that forsakes all for Christ, and puts himself by faith under his protection, submitting to the sceptre of his kingdom, and "sending a lamb to this ruler of the land," **(Isaiah 16:1)** in token of homage and fealty, his "eyes shall see the King in his beauty"; and instead of a *Vivat Rex*, Let the king live, he shall break forth into this glorious acclamation, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king, and he will save us." **(Isaiah 33:17, 22)** It was St Augustine's wish that he might see *Romam in flore, Paulum in ore, et Christum in corpore*, Rome, as of old, flourishing; Paul, as he did once, preaching; and Christ, as in the days of his flesh, going up and down doing good. There are those who hold, that by Solomon crowned here is meant Christ incarnated, taking flesh, as a crown, off his mother Mary; and that this was "the day of his espousals," when "the Word was made flesh," and "the day of the gladness of his heart," when he "rejoiced in the habitable part of God's earth,"—that is, in the human nature, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily—"and his delights were with the sons of men." **(Proverbs 8:31)** Some understand it to be the crown of thorns set upon him by his mother, the synagogue. Others, the resurrection, and that name above all names **(Philippians 2:9)** that he got by his death. I am of Mercer's mind, who expounds it to be that glory which Christ hath when he is preached up as the sole and absolute Saviour, and so believed on in the world, **(1 Timothy 3:16)** that the obedience of faith is yielded unto him. When faith and obedience make a perfect pair of compasses, then Christ's head is compassed with a crown. Faith, as the one foot, is pitched upon the crown of Christ's head; while obedience, as the other, walks about in a perfect circle of good duties, "whereby he is made glad." **(Psalm 45:8)** {{field-off:Bible}}

¹¹⁰ *Sermon of Repent.*, 63.

¹¹¹ *Epist. ad Gabr. Vydym.*

¹¹² *Camb. Elisab.*, Anno 1585.

Chapter 4

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 4:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair.** Thou art, thou art; and I am much taken with it, so that I cannot but set an *Ecce admirantis* Behold, wonder at it, upon it. I am so rapt and ravished; yea, I would that others also should behold it, and be enamoured with it. As the Church called upon her daughters of Zion, in the last verse of the former chapter, to go forth and see her Bridegroom in all his bravery, and to help to crown him; so here interchangeably, Christ calls upon all sorts to contemplate his beautiful bride in all the "comeliness that he hath put upon her," (**Ezekiel 16:14**) and that crown of twelve stars that he hath set upon her head, (**Revelation 12:1**) so that "in everything she is enriched by him, and cometh behind in no gift." (**1 Corinthians 1:5, 7**)

Thou hast doves' eyes. Particularly Christ commendeth her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, temples, neck, and breasts. He that would praise another, is careful to take in whatsoever of him may be thought praiseworthy. Christ only is able to give his Church her due commendation; because he only "knows all men, and needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man." (**John 2:24-25**) All others that shall undertake such a business had need say, as Mr Bradford the martyr saith of that peerless King Edward VI; So many things are to be spoken in commendation of God's graces in this child—who yet was but one of those many that make up the Church; but yet such a one, that as he was the chiefest, so I think the holiest and godliest in the realm of England, saith the same blessed Bradford—that as Sallust writes of Carthage, I had rather speak nothing than too little, in that too much is too little. ⁽¹¹³⁾ An exact face, saith Pliny, is seldom drawn but with great disadvantage; ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ how much more when a bungler hath it in hand? In which regard Alexander the Great forbade his portraiture to be painted by any other than Apelles, or to be carved by any other but Lysippus, men famous in those faculties. Behold here one that goes far beyond them both (the greatest artisan in the world), pencilling out to the life, and setting forth a complete character of his dearest spouse, whom he had "in his heart to die and to live with," (**2 Corinthians 7:3**) as the high priest had the twelve tribes, (**Exodus 28:29**) and St Paul his Corinthians, though "the more he loved, the less he was beloved." (**2 Corinthians 12:15**) But to come to her particular praises—"Thou hast doves' eyes," that is, fair, full, clear, chaste. (**See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:15"**) Eyes the true Church hath, and those both opened and enlightened. (**Acts 26:18**) She cries not up ignorance as the mother of devotion, neither doth she send forth blind guides, to require blind obedience, as the Popish *Padres* do with their novices; to put out the eyes of those poor misled and muzzled *ignoramuses*, and to lead them blindfold into the midst of their deadly enemies, as Elisha did the Syrians into Samaria. The Church here described hath (as Solomon's wise man) her eyes in her head; yea, she hath two eyes, when the rest of the world hath but one (as the Chinese vainly brag of themselves), ⁽¹¹⁵⁾ a praise proper to the Church of Christ. She lifteth not up her eyes unto idols, (**Ezekiel 18:6**) but to the Holy One of Israel, (**Isaiah 17:7**) her eyes are doves' eyes. Every child of Christ's Church hath a spiritual eyesight, an insight into the mystery of Christ, communication of Christ's secrets, "the mind of Christ." (**1 Corinthians 2:16**) She hath no blind children; for, though born blind, yet Christ hath anointed them with his eye-salve, (**Revelation 3:18**) and given both light and sight. But by "eyes" here we are chiefly to understand pastors and ministers, those "seers," as they were called of old, (**1 Samuel 9:9**) those "lights of the world," (**Matthew 5:14-16**) "burning and shining lights," (**John 5:35**) as the Baptist was called, whose office is to be to God's people "instead of eyes,"

¹¹³ *Serm. of Repent., 37.*

¹¹⁴ *Pic ores pulchram absolutamque faciem raro nisi in peius effiungunt.*

¹¹⁵ *Description of the World, Chap., Of China.*

(**Numbers 10:31**) and "to open the eyes of the blind, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," &c. (**Acts 26:18**) And these are to have doves' eyes, seeking to present unto Christ every man chaste and pure in the simplicity of the gospel. (**2 Corinthians 11:2-3**)

Within thy locks. Seemly tied up and covered, as the word imports, without pride or affectation; not laid out, as the manner is, of vain and unshamefaced women, but thick, fair, and modestly made up, to show the Church's modesty and humility, which is the knot of every virtue, and ornament of every grace, as St Peter's word, ἐγκομβώσασθε, holds it forth. (**1 Peter 5:5**)

Their hair is as a flock of goats, &c. They are fat and well liking; and so their hair lay smooth, slick, and shining. By the Church's hair here may be meant the community of true Christians, that, being as the hair innumerable, do adhere to Christ as to their head, and have a promise that not one hair of that sacred head shall fall to the ground; and that if any son of Belial shall offer to shear or shave them, he shall answer it as dearly as the Ammonites did the like abuse done to David's ambassadors. (**2 Samuel 10:3-4**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 4:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep,** &c. Handsome teeth set forth a woman very well, and they are then held handsome when they are (1.) Even and well matched; (2.) Fair and white; (3.) Thick and full. All this we have here daintily set forth in an allegory. And by teeth the Chaldee paraphrast will have meant (and I dissent not) the priests and Levites of the law, the pastors and preachers, think I, of the Church; who, as they must be "eyes" to see, so they must be "teeth" in another regard—viz. (1.) To chew; (2.) To bite. First, They must champ and chew the children's meat for them, as good nurses, such as Paul was, (**1 Thessalonians 2:7**) and before him Isaiah. (**Isaiah 28:9**) Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand? Not the wise and prudent, not conceited persons, that make divinity only a matter of discourse, or come to hear only to exercise their critics, and to sit as judges on their ministers' gifts. But such as are "weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." And how will he do to deal with such, and to "divide the word aright" (ὀρθοτομεῖν, **2 Timothy 2:25**) to them? He will *praemansum cibum in os indere*, mollify their harder meat for them, that it hurt not the tender toothless gums of these weanlings, weaklings "Precept," saith he, "shall be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." They shall have it as they can take it, neither will he put that upon them that is not fit for them. They shall have milk, and not strong meat; or if they have, it shall be ready chewed for them. Our Saviour spake "as the people could hear," (**Mark 4:33**) and not as he could have spoken. "If we have spoken to you," saith he, "of earthly things" (that is, of spiritual matters under earthly similitudes borrowed from wind, water, &c.) "and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (**John 3:12**) that is, of more sublime matters and mysteries of eternal life. Ministers must stoop to their hearers' capacities, and not be up in their altitudes, or deliver their discourses in a high language, in a Roman English, &c. For what is that but to "beat the air," to lose their labour, and to be "as barbarians to their hearers?" &c. *Non oratorum filii sumus, sed piscatorum; nec verborum* πειροχη, *sed Spiritus* ἐπιδείξει, said that great divine to Libanius the rhetorician. We are not orators, but preachers; neither come we with "excellence of words," but with "evidence of the Spirit and of power," and "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (**1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 4:2**) This is preaching; the art whereof *plus operis habet quam ostentationis*, as Quintillian saith of the art of grammar, is not a matter of show, but of service. And to the ears of that which St Peter calls "the hidden man of the heart," the plain Song always makes the best music.

But, secondly, As ministers must masticate the children's meat, and make it fit for eating, so

they are bound to bite—that is, to "rebuke sharply" ⁽¹¹⁶⁾ those that are unsound in their faith, or enormous in their practice; (**Titus 1:13**) to gore their very souls with smarting pain, and to sting their consciences to the quick, with the forked arrows of biting reproofs and unquestionable convictions. "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." (**Psalms 45:5**) Ministers must not only whet their teeth against the wicked (as boars do their tusks when provoked), but set their teeth in the sides of those boars that root up the vineyard, and those foxes that destroy the grapes. Thus the ancient prophets pricked and pierced the hearts of their hearers; so did the holy apostles, St Peter for instance. He so handled the matter that they were punctually "pricked at heart" ⁽¹¹⁷⁾ (**Acts 2:37**) they felt the nails wherewith they had crucified Christ sticking fast in their own spirits, and driven home to the head by that "Master of the assembly." (**Ecclesiastes 12:11**) Penitence and pain are words of one derivation, and are very near of kin. Hardly will men be made to repent till touched to the quick, till the Preacher do *mordaci radere vero*, ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ deal plainly and roundly with them, stab them to the heart with the menaces of the law, and lay them for dead at Christ's feet, that he may revive them, as the pelican doth her young ones with her blood. It is said of Chrysostom, that he took the same liberty to cry down sin that men did to commit it. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Of Mr Bradford, that as he did earnestly persuade to a godly life, and sweetly preach Christ crucified, so he did sharply reprove sin, and zealously impugn errors. Of Mr Perkins, that he came so close in his applications, that he was able almost to make his hearers' hearts fall down, and their hairs to stand upright. This was preaching indeed, preaching in the life of it. I know well that most men are sick of a *Noli me tangere*, and are apt to hate him that reproveth in the gate. As loath they are to be searched as Rachel, when she sat upon the idols; to have their lusts mortified, as David was to have Absalom executed. "Handle him gently, for my sake," &c. Cannot preachers meddle only with toothless truths, say they, as Balak bade Balaam neither curse nor bless at all. But why hath Christ given his ministers teeth, but to bite and be bitter against sin and wickedness? personal invectives, indeed, proceeding from private grudge, he allows not. *Spiritus Christi nec mendax, nec mordax*. The Spirit of Christ is neither deceitful nor caustic. The rule here is,

"Parcere nominibus, dicere de vitiis."

"To space by names, is to say concerning the crimes."

Of Erasmus it is said that he was *Mente et dente potens*, sharp with discretion. Every minister should be so; and his doctrine should distil as honey, as the property whereof is to purge wounds, but to bite ulcers; ⁽¹²⁰⁾ it causeth pain to exulcerate parts, though of itself sweet and medicinal.

That are even shorn. The commendations of a set of teeth, whereof before. (1.) Even they must be and well matched; so should ministers be "likeminded, having the same love; being of one accord, and of one mind," (**Philippians 2:2**) serving the Lord with one shoulder, (**Zephaniah 3:9**) not shouldering one another, and striving for precedence, but content with a parity, and in giving honour, going one before another. The six branches in the golden candlestick joined all in one, and the cherubims in the temple looked one toward another, which some think signified the agreement and oneness that should be between the ministers of the gospel.

Which came up from the washing. (2.) Fair and white, washed in the king's bath of Christ's

¹¹⁶ ἀποτόμως, cuttingly.

¹¹⁷ Κατενύγησαν τῇ καρδίᾳ.

¹¹⁸ Horat.

¹¹⁹ Osiand. *Hist. Eccles.*, cent. 5, lib. i. c. 6.

¹²⁰ τοῖς ἔλκεσι ὄριμῳ.—*Alex. Aphrod. Probl.*

blood, famous and eximious for their extraordinary and exemplary holiness. It is their office to be *fullones animarum*, to make and keep white the fleeces of their flocks, the people's souls. And therefore themselves had need be as Jerusalem's Nazarites were, **Lamentations 4:7**, "Purer than snow, whiter than milk," &c.

Whereof every one bears twins. *Gemelliparae*. It must be ministers' care to bring many to God, whom they may one day present with, Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me. Aaron's sons, by generation, are said to be Moses' sons by institution and instruction. (**Numbers 3:1**) See **Galations 4:19**; **1 Corinthians 4:15**. "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 4:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet.** Which hath two comely properties, *small* and *ruddy*. A thin lip is a sign of eloquence; (**Job 12:20**) Pitho sits upon it. As, on the other side, a thick lip is an uncircumcised lip, (**Exodus 6:12**) a polluted lip. (**Isaiah 6:5**) Scarlet or coralline lips are counted a great grace, as white, black, bluish lips are held no small deformity. The Church's lips are her Christian confessions, whether to God or men. To God, when she acknowledgeth his favours (and so covereth his altar with the calves of her lips), or confesseth her sins with all the aggravations, bringing them forth as they did the vessels of the sanctuary, (**Ezra 8:34**) by tale and by weight, bewailing and begging pardon for all their transgressions in all their sins, as the words are. (**Leviticus 16:21**) To man she confesseth when she makes a wise and bold profession of the truth; not "afraid with any amazement," (**1 Peter 3:6**) but ready to "resist even unto blood." (**Hebrews 12:4**) The tabernacle was covered over with red (and the scarlet whore would fain persuade us that she takes up that colour for the same intent), to note that we must stand to the profession of the truth, even to effusion of blood. This confession of the mouth (**Romans 10:10**) is set forth here by lips red as scarlet, because it must be lively, not fady or frigid, but full of faith, and dyed in Christ's blood. It is also described by a thread of scarlet, because, as a thread, it must be drawn out to the full length, and not cut off, so long as life lasteth, for any fear or other by respect whatsoever. Surely, as Augustine said of the feast of Pentecost, *Gaudet produci haec solennitas*; so may we say of Christian confession, It rejoiceth to be held out to the last breath. And as the silk worm stretcheth forth herself before she spin, and ends her life in her long wrought clue, so it is with the faithful confessor.

And thy speech is comely. Because grave and gracious, framed in Scripture phrase as much as may be, and therefore comely and delectable. *Loquamur verba Scripturae, utamur sermone Spiritus Sancti*, &c., said that incomparable man Peter Ramus; Let us speak the very words of Scripture, let us make use of the language of the Holy Ghost, and for ever abominate those *logodaedali*, learned asses, that profanely disdain at the stately plainness of God's blessed book, and that think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own infancy and sophistry. It is the Church only that speaks handsomely, because holily, and as the oracles of God. (**1 Peter 4:11**) She is, as one well saith of Basil, *suaviter gravis, et graviter suavis, nihil habens affectatae loquacitatis*, sweetly grave, and gravely sweet, neither troublesomely talkative nor sinfully silent; *verborum parca, sententiarum dives*, as another ⁽¹²¹⁾ saith of Livy, few words, but full of matter.

Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate. A pomegranate hath many grains within his case, and a little round circle or crown without upon his head. Now these grains being sweet in taste, and red in colour, are orderly set one by another, and point up, and as it were look up altogether unto the crown; to intimate thus much, say Beda and Haimo, that the children of the Church must grow on still toward the mark, not only when they enjoy the sweet taste of pleasant prosperity, but also when they bear the red colour of bloody persecution; and,

¹²¹ Casaub.

consenting in a kind of conformity and perfect peace, they must point up altogether with the finger of faith to Christ, and look up continually with the eye of love to their head, Christ, who, being first crossed, is now come to be crowned with honour and glory. Some do explain this "piece of a pomegranate," when it is cut, to signify the reverend and modest countenance of the Church, as fearing and taking heed lest she should speak or do amiss, or blushing, if she hath failed. Others expound it of the good works of God's people—compared to an "orchard of pomegranates" (*Solomon's Song 4:9*)—beautiful and comely, but yet imperfect; like as there is no pomegranate that hath not one rotten grain in it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 4:4]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thy neck is like the tower of David.** *i.e.* Fair and forcible—*erectum et celsum*, upright and lofty. It betokeneth the invincible courage and comfortable carriage of the Church, not "giving place to her enemies by subjection, no, not for an hour." (*Galations 2:5*) "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say, yet never have they prevailed against me," &c. (*Psalms 129:1-4*) Neither shall the gates of hell ever do it. She shall set her feet in the necks of her enemies; but her neck (as the horse's, *Job 39:19*) shall be clothed with thunder, so long as, with outstretched neck, she "looks up unto the hills from whence cometh her help" (*Psalms 121:1*)—even those everlasting hills (*Genesis 49:26*) where her David, the Lord Christ, dwells as in a tower, and from thence succours her, as the people said once to David. (*2 Samuel 18:3*) Besides the fresh supply ⁽¹²²⁾ of his free Spirit, (*Philippians 1:19*) fortifying their hearts against the tyranny of sin and terror of hell, he hath furnished for her a most admirable armoury—viz., the sacred Scriptures—with armour that is polished and prepared for most necessary uses. ⁽¹²³⁾ So that the saints are those true Argyraspides, as Alexander's old soldiers were called: for defence they have, besides that privy armour of peace with God (*Philippians 4:7*) and joy in the Holy Ghost, (*Nehemiah 8:13*) the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, the shield of faith, and shoes of patience; and for offence, they have the sword of the Spirit and darts of prayer. (*Ephesians 6:14-16*)

All weapons of mighty men. Meet for such, and not for mean men; and all to be fetched out of the armoury of the Scriptures by our Saviour's own example. (*Matthew 4:4*) The Word of God hath a power in it to quail and quell all our spiritual enemies, far better than that wooden dagger, that leaden sword of the Papists—their holy waters, crossings, medals, relics, &c. This the devil knows, and therefore sets his Antichristian instruments on work to take away this armoury from the common people (as the Philistines took away all weapons from the Israelites), and to give this wicked advice, as Bristow ⁽¹²⁴⁾ did, to get heretics out of their weak and false tower of holy Scriptures into the plain field of councils and fathers, &c.; which if they should do, as we trust they never shall, yet we dare be bold to say, with learned Whitaker, *Patres in maximis sunt nostri, in multis varii, in minimis vestri.* ⁽¹²⁵⁾ The Fathers, in most material points, are for us, and not them. As for the Papists, we know how disdainfully they reject the Fathers when they make against them. Bellarmine ⁽¹²⁶⁾ saith, To Irenaeus, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Luther, I answer, *Omnes manifesti haeretici sunt*, They are all manifest heretics. When anything in Gregory, or other ancients, pleaseth them not, the gloss upon that saith, *Hoc non credo*, I do not believe this, or sets *Palea* chaff, upon it; or *Hoc antiquum est*, This is in old time, and happened *in illo tempore* at that time. And Cornelius Mus, on Rom. 3, speaks out the sense of the whole rabble of them, *Plus uni Pontifici crederem, quam mille Augustinis*; I would sooner believe one Pope than a thousand Augustines. How much better that learned Picus

¹²² ἐπεχορηγία τοῦ πνεύματος.

¹²³ Justin.

¹²⁴ Motive 48.

¹²⁵ Whitaker in *Campian*.

¹²⁶ *De Christo*, lib. i. cap. 9.

Mirandula ⁽¹²⁷⁾ (a Papist too), *Simplici potius rustico et infanti et aniculae magis quam Pontifici Maximo et mille Episcopis credendum est, si isti contra Evangelium, illi pro Evangelio faciant*; We should sooner and rather believe a plain countryman, an infant, or an old wife, than the Pope and a thousand bishops, if the former speak or do according to the Scripture, the latter against it. And what a strong neck had Luther, scorning to stoop to Antichrist's yoke, when he professeth that if the Pope, as Pope, should command him to receive the communion in both kinds, he would but receive in one kind, though he were otherwise very earnest to have it administered in both, according to the Gospel, lest he should seem to receive the mark of the beast!{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 4:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thy two breasts are like two young roes,** &c. From the neck he descendeth to the breasts, and by these descriptions of beauty in all parts (for the rest are to be understood, though not here specified) is signified, that the spirit of regeneration worketh upon the whole man in all manner of virtue. Holiness in the heart, as the candle in the lantern, appears in the body, and every member thereof. Spirit, soul, and body are sanctified throughout, (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**) like as the most holy place, the sanctuary, and the outer court of Solomon's temple, were filled with the cloud. The Church's breasts here are said to be fair, full, and equally matched. Hereby some understand the two testaments, those "breasts of consolation," (**Isaiah 66:11**) fair and full, strutting with "sincere milk," that her children may all suck and be satisfied—viz., batten, grow up, and increase with the increase of God, to a full stature in Christ. (**1 Peter 2:2**) These breasts are also suitable and equal, as twins. The two testaments are so in sundry respects; for, as the Old Testament hath four sorts of books—viz., legal, historic, wisdom, prophetic, so hath the New in a due proportion. Answerable to the legal are the evangelical; to the historical are the Acts of the Apostles; to the wisdom or dogmatic are the epistles—wherein, as St Paul principally presseth faith, so St Peter hope, and St John charity—and to the prophetic, *Apocalyps, ut sic mira sit conformitas*, saith Bonaventure, *non solum in continentia sensuum, sed in quadriformitate partium*, so that there is a wondrous conformity of one testament to another, not only in the similarity of sense, but in the quadriformity also of parts. And this was mystically set forth, saith he, by Ezekiel in his vision of the wheel with four faces, and this wheel within a wheel, implying the Old Testament in the New, and the New Testament in the Old. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 4:6]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.** i.e., Till that last and great day of the Lord dawn, that "day of refreshing," (**Acts 3:19**) that day of consolation, as the Syriac hath it, (**John 11:24**) when "everlasting joy shall be upon the heads of all believers; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." ⁽¹²⁸⁾ Till that blessed time, Christ, in answer to his spouse's request, (**Solomon's Song 2:17**) promiseth to get him "to the mountains of myrrh"; that is, not to heaven, as some sense it, but to his Church militant, frequently called God's holy mountain, and here "mountains of myrrh, and hills of incense," as in allusion to Mount Moriah, whereon the temple was builded, so especially in reference to the prayers and good works of the saints, those evangelical sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased. Some there are that, comparing this with **Solomon's Song 2:17**, make these to be the Church's words; that as there she requested speedy help of Christ in the time of her sorrow, so here in like temptation she fleeth for refuge to the "mount of myrrh, and hill of frankincense," to the holy ordinances where she hopeth for comfort.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 4:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thou art all fair, my love.** Christ, having graciously answered his spouse's petition with a promise of his gracious presence with her and providence over her, proceeds in her commendation. A perfection of parts he here grants

¹²⁷ Quaest. An papa sit sup. concil.

¹²⁸ Benuchama. (**Isaiah 35:10**).

her, though not of degrees, a comparative perfection also in regard of the wicked, whose "spot is not the spot of his children." (**Deuteronomy 31:5**) He calls her his spouse in the next verse. The Hebrew word ⁽¹²⁹⁾ imports that, being dressed in all her bride attire, she is all fair, and hath perfection of beauty, (**Jeremiah 2:32**) and is all glorious within and without, not having spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and spotless. (**Ephesians 5:26, 27**) Fair he called her before, (**Solomon's Song 4:1**) but new,

All fair. And therefore "the fairest among women," a suitable mate for him who is "fairer than all the children of men." (**Psalms 45:2**) Not but that she hath, while here, her infirmities and deformities, as the moon hath her blots and blemishes but these are *ut naevi in vultu Veneris*; these serve as foils to set off her superexcellent beauty, or rather the superabundant grace of Christ, who "seeth no sin in Jacob"; that is, imputeth none but freely accepteth his own work in his people, and sweetly passeth by whatsoever is amiss in them. Perfection is what they breathe after, and that which is already begun in them; they have the firstfruits of the Spirit, and all their strife is to "attain to the resurrection of the dead"; that is, to that perfection of holiness that accompanieth the state of the resurrection. (**Philippians 3:11**)

There is no spot in thee. *i.e.*, None in mine account none such as the wicked are full of (**See Trapp on "Deuteronomy 32:5"**)—no leopard spots that cannot be washed away with any water. Faults will escape the best man between his fingers: *Nimis angusta res est nusquam errare*, In many things we offend all. (**James 3:2**) But as David saw nothing in lame Mephibosheth but what was lovely, because he saw in him the features of his friend Jonathan; so God, beholding his offending people in the face of his Son, takes no notice of anything amiss in them. They are, as that tree of paradise, (**Genesis 3:6**) fair to his eye, and pleasant to his palate; or as Absalom, in whom there was no blemish from head to foot, so are they irreprehensible and without blemish before the throne of God. (**Revelation 14:5**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 4:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Come with me from Lebanon**, &c. Or, Thou shalt come with me—by way of promise. And it is doubled for more certainty; *q.d.*, Nothing shall hinder thee, but thou shalt indeed come with me, and enjoy my continual presence. This she had begged hard for in the former chapters, and this she is now sweetly assured of, with a new largesse of love sealed up in the kindest compellation, "spouse," which signifies the wife married and already joined to her husband. Yea, in the next verse he calleth her both "sister" and "spouse." The nearest affinity is spouse, and the nearest blood sister. Thus Christ is better to his people than their prayers—better than their hopes. Hezekiah asked one life; God gave him two, adding fifteen years to his days. David asked life, and God "gave him life for ever and ever." (**Psalms 21:4**) "Hitherto ye have asked me nothing," (**John 16:24**) saith Christ; that is, nothing to what I am ready to give you. He stands disposed to his suitors, as Naaman did toward Gehazi. (**2 Kings 5:22-23**) Gehazi asked but one talent. Nay, take two, saith Naaman; one is too little, take two. And he pressed him, and heaped them upon him. God deals with his servants as the prophet did with that widow, when he bade her borrow vessels, and the cruse never ceased running till there was no room. (**2 Kings 4:1-7**) Or as he dealt with the Shunammite in the same chapter, when he bade her ask what she needed, and she found not anything to request at his hands; he sends for her again, and makes her a free promise of that which she most wanted and desired, and tells her that God would give her a son.

From Lebanon, look from the top of Amana. Or Abanah, as the river running under it was called. (**2 Kings 5:12**) And Strabo saith, ⁽¹³⁰⁾ that it was a mountain forcibly possessed by many tyrants. Of Shenir and Hermon, see **Deuteronomy 3:9**. These all were haunted with wild

¹²⁹ Calab of Calol, to profit.

¹³⁰ Lib. xiv.

beasts, even Lebanon also, (**2 Kings 14:9**) though otherwise a pleasant and plentiful place. (**Deuteronomy 3:25**) Hereby is signified, that the Lord Christ from all parts will call and collect unto himself a people; and although he find them lions and leopards, as here, untameable and untractable, he will soon subdue them to the obedience of the faith, so that "the lion shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid." (**Isaiah 11:6**) All bloodiness and rapine shall be laid aside, as it was with the wild beasts in Noah's ark. Thus Paul, that ravening wolf of the tribe of Benjamin, (**Genesis 49:27**) is made to "preach the faith which once he destroyed." (**Galatians 1:23**) Thus the ancient Britons, our forefathers, though like that demoniac in the Gospel, "fierce above measure," and inhospitable savages, so that the Romans could not come at them, *Christo tamen subditi*, saith Tertullian; yet they were easily subdued by Christ; and then *sensim evanuit feritas indies, exulavit immanitas, corruiit crudelitas*,⁽¹³¹⁾ saith one, they were suddenly and strangely altered—not civilised only, but sanctified. So was Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Augustine, Vergerius, Latimer, Julius Palmer, that Popish priest of Canterbury, who said mass on one day, and the next day after came into the pulpit and made a long sermon against it, desiring the people to forgive him, for he had betrayed Christ, &c. As long before him, in Wyckliffe's days, and by his means, one that was the Pope's chaplain renounced him, professing that he came out of his order, as out of the devil's nest, &c. And although not a scholar in Oxford would look upon the good Bishops Ridley and Cranmer, prisoners in Bocardo, but generally set against them, yet the whole body of that university gave a glorious testimony under their public seal of Wyckliffe's religious life, profound learning, orthodox opinions, exquisite writings, all furthest from any stain of heresy.⁽¹³²⁾ See what Christ can do where he pleaseth to come in by his mighty Spirit.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 4:9]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thou hast ravished mine heart**, &c. Thou hast caught it, and carried it from me, so that I am least master of it; for *Animus est potius ubi amat, quam ubi animat*,⁽¹³³⁾ The heart is the place where it loves, and not where it lives. The Hebrew is, "Thou hast behearted me" (as we say, one is beheaded, behipt, &c.). Thou hast robbed me of my heart, and laid thyself in the room; thy love is fixed in the table of my heart, so the Chaldee expoundeth it. Excellently spake he,⁽¹³⁴⁾ who called the Holy Scripture *Cor et animam Dei*, the heart and soul of God: and another⁽¹³⁵⁾ father is bold to say, *Cor Pauli, est cor Christi*, Christ and Paul had exchanged hearts as it were. For, "we have the mind of Christ," (**1 Corinthians 2:16**) saith he,—communication of Christ's secrets. And surely when the saints hide Christ's words in their hearts, as his mother Mary did, when they give themselves wholly up to it, as the Macedonians did, so that the word of Christ, "indwells richly in them in all wisdom," (**Colossians 3:16**) and he by his Spirit putteth "his laws into their minds," so that they assent unto them, and "into their hearts," (**Hebrews 8:10**) so that they consent unto them, and have the comfort, feeling, and fruition of them, then is his heart ravished with his own handiwork; then is he so far in love with such a soul, as that, Esther like, she may have anything of the King. "The King is not he that can do anything against you"; (**Jeremiah 38:5**) Christ saith seriously so. His heart is become a very lump of love toward his sister, as nearest unto him in consanguinity, his spouse is nearest also in affinity, *Sanctior est copula cordis, quam corporis*. Christ is endeared to his people in all manner of nearest relations. For whosoever shall do the will of his Father, the same is his brother, and sister, and mother; (**Matthew 12:50**) "And in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." (**Acts 10:35**)

With one of thine eyes. With that single eye of thine, (**Matthew 6:22**) that looks on me singly

¹³¹ Bond in *Horat. Carm.*, lib. iii. od. 3.

¹³² *Acts and Mon.*, 924; and 1555.—*Ibid.*, Anno 1755.—*Speed*, 761.—*Acts and Mon.*, 1565.—*Speed*, *ibid.*

¹³³ Augustine.

¹³⁴ Greg. in *Revelation 3*.

¹³⁵ Chrysost.

abstracted from all other things, and affects thine heart with pure love to me for myself, more than for my Love Tokens; that eye of faith that looks up to my mercy seat, yea, that pierceth heaven, as St Stephan's bodily eye did, he being "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God." (**Acts 7:55**) Heaven is so high above the earth, that it is a just wonder that we can look up to so admirable a height, and that the very eye is not tired in the way. But faith hath a visive faculty peculiar to itself; it is the evidence of things not seen, (**Hebrews 11:1**) while it "looks not at the things which are seen"—*scil.*, with the eye of sense—"but at the things that are not seen," viz., but by the eye of faith, (**2 Corinthians 4:18**) whereby Moses "saw him who is invisible." (**Hebrews 11:27**) Let as many as would "behold the King in his beauty," study Moses' optics, get a patriarch's eye, "see Christ's day afar off," as Abraham did, and "set him at their hand," as David. (**Psalms 16:11**) "So shall the King greatly desire their beauty," yea, set them at his right hand with the queen, his spouse, in gold of Ophir. (**Psalms 45:9, 11**) But then Christ must see their chain of obedience, as well as their eye of faith, even the whole chain of spiritual graces linked one to another. These are the daughters of faith, and good works, the products of them, are the fruits of faith. As chains adorn the neck, so do true virtues a true Christian; these as chains are visible and honourable testimonies of a lively faith, which works by love. These make the true *Manlii Torquati* (**See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:10"**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 4:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**How fair is thy love.** Heb., *Loves*, in the plural, noting not only their multitude, but excellence also, such as do far preponderate all carnal affections. These are said to be inexpressibly fair and lovely (noted by the exclamation and repetition here used, as if words were too weak to utter it), because (1.) It is undissembled—a man may paint fire, but he cannot paint heat; a man may dissemble actions in religion, but he cannot dissemble affections—(2.) It is rare, and in respect of common Christians it may be said, as in **Ephesians 3:19**, to "pass knowledge," since most have little of the life of it in their breasts, less of the light and lustre of it in their lives.

How much better is thy love than wine. This same she had said of him in **Solomon's Song 1:2**. Now he returns it upon her, as is usual among lovers. He had confessed himself ravished with her love. (**Solomon's Song 4:9**) Now here he shows why he was so. He found her not lovely only, but loving; he had made her so, and now takes singular delight and complacency in his own work, as once he did in his work of creation. He well perceived that he had not lost his love upon his Church, as David did upon his Absalom, as Paul did upon his Corinthians (of whom he complains, that the more he had loved, the less he was beloved), as Job upon his miserable comforters, whom he compares to the brooks of Tema, that in a moisture swell, in a drought fail. (**Job 6:15-17**) But Christ finds no such fickleness or false heartedness in his beloved—he had love for love; and as he had been a sweet friend to her, so was she to him. Her love was better than the best wine (which yet is both costly and comfortable), yea, than all the delights that this life can afford; so much is implied by "wine" here, and so he is pleased to esteem it. Unworthy she of so kind acceptance of that little she can do this way, if she do not her utmost; if she cry not out with her son David, "I will love thee dearly," or entirely, with mine utmost bowels—with the same tenderness of affections as is in mothers towards the fruit of their bodies, so the Hebrew word signifies. (**Psalms 18:1**) And again, "I love" (so he abruptly expresseth himself by a passionate pang of love), "because the Lord hath heard the voice of my supplications," &c. (**Psalms 116:1**) He saw, and we may all see, so much cause to love the Lord, as that he must needs be a monster, and not a man, that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It was a miracle that those worthies in Daniel should be in the midst of a fiery furnace, and not burn. It is no less that men should be in the midst of mercies on all hands, and not love Christ. It would be as great a wonder men should fail here, as for a river to run backwards. "I have drawn them by the bands of love, by the cords of a man," (**Hosea 11:4**) that is, with reasons and motives of love befitting the nature of a man, of a rational creature.

But most men, alas! (and those that profess to be the children of the Church too), move like the river Araris, backward or forward, who can tell? ⁽¹³⁶⁾ This is to give Christ vinegar for wine; this is as lukewarm water to his nice and nauseating stomach. (**Revelation 3:16**) There is a prophecy reported in Telesphorus, that Antichrist shall never overcome Venice, nor Paris, nor London. But we have a more certain word, and let us take heed, lest for our lukewarmness Christ spew us out of his mouth. What hath been the opinion and fear of some not inconsiderable divines, that Antichrist, before his abolition, shall once again overflow the whole face of the west, and suppress the whole Protestant Churches for a punishment of their loss of their first love, I pray Christ to avert.

And the smell of thine ointments, than all spice!] That is, Of thy sweet graces actuated and exercised. (**Psalms 89:20; John 1:20, 27**) It was an aggravation of the fall of Saul, that he fell "as though he had not been anointed"; (**2 Samuel 1:21**) so for the saints to fall from their first love or from their own steadfastness. Such a dead fly will cause their once sweet ointments to send forth a stinking savour. (**Ecclesiastes 10:1**) *Corruptio optimi est pessima*. The best things are the worst things I corrupt.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 4:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as an honeycomb.** Heb., Drop the honeycomb. So Christ calls the doctrines and prayers of the Church, her thanksgivings, confessions, conferences, &c., which are things most pleasing to Christ, and do much comfort and edify the faithful. That golden mouthed preacher did so please the people, that it was grown to a proverb, Better the sun shine not, than Chrysostom preach not. Bilney the martyr, a little before he was burned, entreated much on that text, (**Isaiah 43:2**) "Fear not; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"; so that some of his friends present took such sweet fruit thereby, saith Mr Foxe, ⁽¹³⁷⁾ that they caused the whole sentence to be fair written in tables, and some in their books; the comfort whereof in several of them was never taken away from them to their dying day. The same author saith ⁽¹³⁸⁾ of Bishop Ridley, martyr, that he usually preached every Sunday and holiday, to whose sermons the people resorted, swarming about him like bees, and coveting the sweet juice of his heavenly doctrine. How pleasant and profitable to Latimer was the private conference he had with Bilney! and the like benefit had Ridley by Bradford, Luther by Staupicius, Galeacius by Peter Martyr, Junius by a countryman of his not far from Florence. "Οο καὶ ἀπὸ γλώττης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδὴ. ⁽¹³⁹⁾

Honey and milk are under thy tongue. The language of Canaan is thy proper dialect; for Canaan was a land that flowed with milk and honey—with things both pleasant and profitable. Yea, I doubt not, saith an interpreter, but that under these terms the Holy Ghost meaneth fit food, as well for strong men as for weak ones in the Church. Milk most properly belongs to children; (**1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12, 13**) and honey to them of more strength, as examples of the word and reason itself teacheth sufficiently, in Jonathan, (**1 Samuel 14:27**) and John Baptist. (**Matthew 3:4**) By these comparisons also may well be understood the good housekeeping that is in Christ's Church. Honey and milk she hath ever at hand. And why hath he put these provisions under her tongue, but that she should look to lip feeding? (**Proverbs 10:22**) Let our words be "always with grace." (**Colossians 4:6**) *Mel in ore, verba lactis*, this becomes the Church's children. *Fel in corde, fraus in factis*, is for those brats of fathomless perdition, that have adders' poison under their lips, (**Psalms 140:3**) that being "in the gall of bitterness and bond of perdition," show themselves by their words and actions to be the sons

¹³⁶ *Oculus in utram partem fluat iudicari non potest.—Caesar. de bello Gal., lib. i.*

¹³⁷ *Acts and Mon., 923.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid., 1559.*

¹³⁹ *Homer.*

of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and of the whore, whose lips also drop the honeycomb, but her end is bitter as wormwood. (**Proverbs 5:3-4; Isaiah 57:3**)

And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. Which was passing pleasant, by reason of the odoriferous and sweet smelling trees that grew there. Now what are these garments but the Church's inward graces, say some; outward behaviour, say others, which is most gracious, amiable, and sweet, as far above all worldly grace as the smell of Lebanon is above the savour of common woods.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 4:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse.** Fair and sweet he had before affirmed her; now, because

"Lis est cum forma magna pudicitae."

The quarrel is with her great form of modesty. Fair women have many that wish them and lie in wait for them. εἰ μὲν καλὴν, ἔξεις κοινὴν, said he to his friend, dissuading him from marriage. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ If she be fair, she will lightly be common. Christ therefore here commends her for her purity and chastity, and shows that she was so hedged and defenced by discipline and government, that none could come at her to hazard her virginity, no more than they could enter into a well walled garden. She openeth the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in; (**Isaiah 26:2**) those which subscribe with their hands unto the Lord; (**Isaiah 44:5**) that when he shall say, Who is on my side? who? do heartily avouch him for their God; (**Deuteronomy 24:18**) that fly to her as a cloud, and flock to her as a flight of doves. (**Isaiah 60:8**) As for the unclean, or anything that defileth, she hath her porters on purpose to keep them out; (**2 Chronicles 23:19; Revelation 21:27**) no dirty dog shall trample on her golden pavement. (**Isaiah 5:2, 35:8-10; 62:8; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13**) It was not permitted to a dog to enter into the Acropolis or tower at Athens, for his heat in venery and for his ill favour, saith Plutarch. ⁽¹⁴¹⁾ Goats likewise, saith Varro, come not there, lest they should hurt the olive. Irish air will sooner brook a toad or snake to live therein than the true Church, if she may freely exercise her power, scandalous and heretical persons. Papists teach that the Catholic Church consisteth of good and bad; and that a man may be a true member thereof, though he have no inward virtues. ⁽¹⁴²⁾ We confess that in all particular congregations there are hypocrites, as appears in the parable of the tares, of the net, &c. But yet we deny that the holy Catholic Church mentioned in the creed hath a mixture of good and bad, since she is the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ, who owneth no wicked man or hypocrite in her; for how should he love such, unless it be with a common, not with a conjugal, love, so as he loved that tame young man, (**Mark 10:21**) whom he pitied as a self-deceiver; like as we pity moderate and devout Papists. In Christ's garden, as there is no ground but what is specially good, set apart for the purpose, fit for him to sit and walk in for his recreation—my well beloved hath his orchard in a very fruitful hill, (**Isaiah 5:1**) in a cornucopia country—so it is furnished and filled with the choicest fruits and flowers, plants of renown, and pleasant trees, yielding fruit according to their kind. And though all cannot bear cinnamon and balsam, yet as in Spain there is said to be *nihil infructuosum, nihil sterile*, nothing barren or unfruitful, so all that "are planted in the house of the Lord, do flourish in the courts of our God; they do still bring forth fruit in old age, they are fat and flourishing"; (**Psalms 92:13-14**) they are both *actuosos* and *fructuosos*, neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (**2 Peter 1:8**) And indeed how can it be otherwise with God's garden, whenas he "himself keeps it, and watereth it every moment; lest any hurt it, he keepeth it night and day." (**Isaiah 27:3**) God fenceth it with his omnipotent arm, keepeth it from the wild boar and other devoratory evils,

¹⁴⁰ Aul. Gell.

¹⁴¹ διὰ τοῦ ἀκολάστου, καὶ δυσώδους.—Plut. "Ἑλλην.

¹⁴² Bellar., lib. iii. cap. 2, *De Eccles. Militan.*

as Tertullian phraseth it, better than the garden of Eden was kept with the flaming sword. And whereas the Church may seem to lie open to all incursions, this verse shows that it hath a *well* within it and a *wall* without it. Yea, himself is a "wall of fire round about Jerusalem," (***Zechariah 2:5***) in allusion to the custom of those Eastern countries where, by reason of the great number of wild beasts, shepherds and travellers guard themselves by making great fires round about their night lodgings to keep off their approach.

A spring shut up, a fountain sealed. A precious purling current of grace, "a spring of water whose waters fail not," (***Isaiah 58:11***) and whereof "whosoever drinketh shall never thirst" (***John 4:14***) For which end it is carefully shut up, nay, sealed, that the "stranger meddle not with his joy," and that the envious man stop not up this wellspring with earth, as the Philistines served Isaac; or cast bags of poison into it, as the spiteful Jews did once in this kingdom, and were therefore banished hence for ever. It was wittily said of Polydore Virgil, *Regnum Angliae, regnum Dei*, the kingdom of England is the kingdom of God. He meant because God seemed to take special care of it, as having walled it about with the ocean, and watered it with the upper and nether springs, like that land which Caleb gave his daughter. Hence it was called *Albion, quasi Olbion*, the happy country, whose valleys are like Eden, saith our English chronicler, ⁽¹⁴³⁾ whose hills are as Lebanon, whose springs are as Pisgah, whose rivers are as Jordan, whose walls are the ocean, and whose defence is the Lord Jehovah. Foreign writers have termed our country "the granary of the western world," "the fortunate island," "the paradise of pleasure, and garden of God." All this may much more fitly be applied to the Catholic Church. If Judea were called the "glorious land" because of God's presence there, (***Daniel 11:16***) and an "island," though part of the continent, because surrounded with God's powerful protection, (***Isaiah 20:6***) and the commonwealth of Israel **Θεοκρατεία** by Josephus, a God-like polity, what shall we think of that "Jerusalem above, that is the mother of us all"; of those sealed saints; (***Revelation 7:3, 4***) this "sealed fountain," sealed up as to keep it filth free, that no camels stir up the mud, nor great he-goats foul it with their feet, (***Ezekiel 34:18***) so to denote an excellence—as in ***Isaiah 28:25***, *hordeum signatum* is put for excellent barley—and a propriety, "who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," (***2 Corinthians 1:22***) like as the merchant sets his seal upon his goods, and marks them for his own?{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 4:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy plants are as an orchard of pomegranates.** By plants are to be understood either particular churches or several saints. These are those shoots or sprouts ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ that spread abroad God's paradise—that the word here used, and nowhere else in Scripture, save ***Ecclesiastes 2:5***; ***Nehemiah 2:8***; so called for the curious variety and excellence of all sorts of precious and pleasant trees there growing; some for profit, as pomegranates, which are known to be healthful and preservative, some for pleasure; and these again were either more common and copious in Jewry, as camphires and spikenards—plurals both in the original, for the plenty of them in those parts—or more rare and costly, as those mentioned in the next verse.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Song 4:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Nard.** Called in ***Mark 14:3*** ***John 12:3***, "spikenard very costly," or rather, as some learned men will have it, nard of Opis, a town near Babylon, where grew the most precious spikenard, and whence it was transported to other places. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ Of this plant, see Pliny, lib. xii. c. 11; as of cypress or camphire, lib. xii. c. 14; of saffron, lib. xii. c. 15; of calamus, lib. xii. c. 23; of cinnamon and myrrh, lib. xii. c. 23, 19. For pomegranates, (***See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 4:3"***) for camphire, (***See Trapp on***

¹⁴³ Speed.

¹⁴⁴ *Emissiones, propagines.*

¹⁴⁵ **τιοτικής**, *melius vero τιοιστικής* *ab oppido prope Babylonem Opis dicto.*—*Scultet, ex Hartungi Criticis.*

"Solomon's Song 1:14") Saffron is in the Hebrew *carcom*: Shindler saith it should be read *carcos* with *samech*; and so it will exactly agree with *κρόκος*, *crocus*, the one likely coming of the other. Our English comes of the Arabic *zaphran*, so called by the yellow colour. Calamus or sweet cane is a precious aromatical reed bought and brought out of far countries, as appeareth by **Jeremiah 6:20; Isaiah 43:24**. Cinnamon was very rare in Galen's time, and hard to be found, except in princes' storehouses. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ Pliny reports that a pound of cinnamon was worth a thousand denarii,—that is, 150; crowns of our money. As for those trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, &c., Brightman thinks they betoken tall and eminent Christians, as calamus and cinnamon, shrubs of two cubits high or thereabouts, do Christians of a middle stature; and nard and saffron, herbs that scarce lift up themselves above the ground, represent those of a lower rank and lesser degree of holiness; which yet have all of them their place in God's garden, and their several sweetnesses; the Spirit of grace being *magnus* in *magnis*, *nec parvus in minimis*, as Augustine hath it,—Great in God's greater children, and not little in the least. And though there be diversity of gifts, yet are they from one Spirit, as the diverse smells of pleasant fruits and chief spices are from the same influence, and the divers sounds in the organs from the same breath. The Spirit of grace are those two golden pipes, (**Zechariah 4:12**) through the which the two olive branches empty out of themselves the golden oils of all precious graces into the candlestick, the Church. Hence grace is called the "fruit of the Spirit"; (**Galations 5:22**) yea, "Spirit"; (**Galations 4:17**) and albeit, "as the man is, so is his strength," as they said to Gideon; and God hath his children of all sizes,—babes, young men, old men; (**1 John 2:13**) yet Philadelphia, with her "little strength," may "keep Christ's word, and not deny his name" (while those churches that had more strength are not so commended), and in "that little strength I have set open a door for thee," even the door of heaven, wide enough so that none could shut it. (**Revelation 3:8**) Why, then, should any "despise the day of small things?" God, who "hath begun a good work, his hands shall finish it: and he that hath laid the foundation, shall in due time bring forth the topstone thereof with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." (**Zechariah 4:7-10**) An infant of days shall proceed from degree to degree, till he be like the Ancient of days; and "those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall once flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing." (**Psalms 92:13, 14**) The seeds of the cypress tree are so very small, that they can scarce be seen with eyes, *et tamen in iis tanta est arbor, tamque procera*, ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ and yet in some one of them is potentially so large and so tall a tree. Despair not therefore of further measures, but aspire still to perfection. (**Philippians 3:12, 13; Hebrews 5:14**) The blessing on man in the first creation was, "increase and multiply," in the second, "grow in grace." (**Isaiah 61:3, 11**) And remember that growth is not always to be measured by joy, and other accessory graces. These sweet blooms may fall off when fruit comes on, &c.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Song 4:15]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A fountain of gardens, a well,** &c. Or, O fountain of the gardens, &c. For they do best in mine opinion that make this to be the Church's speech to Christ, grounded upon his former commendation of her. And it is as if she should say, Callest thou me, Lord, a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed? True it is I am the garden which thine own right hand hath planted, walled, watered, &c., but for all that I am or have, the entire praise belongs to thee alone. All my plenty of spiritual graces, all my perennity of spiritual comforts, all my pleasance and sweetness, is derived from thee, no otherwise than the streams of Jordan are from Mount Lebanon; "all my springs are in thee," as in their well head. *Certam est nos facere quod facimus, sed ille facit, ut faciamus*, saith Augustine. True it is that we do what we do; but it is as true that Christ maketh us to do what we do; for "without him we can do nothing"; (**John 15:5**) "in him is our fruit found": (**Hosea 14:8**) it is he that "works all our works in us." (**Isaiah 26:12**) Hence it is that the Church is

¹⁴⁶ Gal., lib. i. *Antidot.*

¹⁴⁷ Plin., lib. xi. cap. 2.

nowhere in all this book described by the beauty of her hands or fingers, because he alone doth all for her. The Church of Rome, that will needs hammer out her own happiness (like the spider climbing up by a thread of her own weaving, and boasting with her in the emblem, *Mihi soli debeo* I own to myself alone.), shows thereby of what spirit she is. That wretched monk died blasphemously who said, *Redde mihi aeternam vitam quam debes*, Pay me heaven which thou owest me. And what an arrogant speech was that of Vega, *Caelum gratis non accipiam*, I will not have heaven of free cost? *Haec ego feci, haec ego feci*, shows men to be no better than mere *faeces*, said Luther wittily. This I have done, and that I have done, speaks them dregs, and dogs that shall stand without doors. (**Revelation 22:15**) Hear a child of our Church speaking thus of himself: ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

*"Fabricius studuit bene de pietate mereri;
Sed quicquid potuit, gloria, Christe, tua est."*

This was matrissare, to be like his mother, whose motto hath ever been, *Non nobis Domine,—*"Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the praise." (**Psalms 115:1**) If I be thy garden, thou art my fountain, from whence, unless I be continually watered, all will be soon withered, and I shall be as one that inhabiteth the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. (**Jeremiah 17:6**) In the island of St Thomas (on the back side of Africa), in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered, ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ Such is the Lord Christ to his Church, (**Hosea 14:5-7**) which therefore, as Gideon's fleece, must needs be wet and moist, when all the earth besides is dry and desolate, as the mountains of Gilboa, or as St David's in Wales, which is said to be a place neither pleasant, fertile, nor safe.

A well of living. Or, A pit of living and life giving waters, ⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ *Christus et coelum non patiuntur hyperbolen*, A man cannot say too much in commendation of Christ and his kingdom; hence the Church here cannot satisfy herself. A fountain she calls him, a well, a stream, such as "makes glad the city of God," even that "pure river of the water of life proceeding out of God's throne." (**Revelation 22:1; Ezekiel 47:6**) Gregory makes this fountain to be the Scriptures, which, he saith, are like both to a fountain and to a pit. Some things in them are plain and open, and may be compared to a spring which runs in an open and eminent place. Other things therein are dark and deep, and like unto a pit, that a man must dive into, and draw out with hard labour.

And streams from Lebanon. Watering the whole Church (as Jordan did the Holy Land), and tasting no doubt of that sweetness mentioned before; (**Solomon's Song 4:11**) even as we see by experience, saith one, that the waters that come out of the hills of some of the islands of Molucca taste of the cinnamon, cloves, &c., that grow there.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Song 4:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Awake, O north wind; come, thou south,** &c. These winds she supposeth to be asleep, because they blew not. Rupertus calls the winds *Mundi scopas*, the world's besoms, because God makes use of them to sweep out his large house, and to purge the air. The Spirit of God first purgeth, and then watereth the faithful, whom the Church here calleth her garden, though, indeed it be Christ's, by reason of the nigh conjunction that is between him and her, (**Ephesians 5:30**) so that they both make but one mystical Christ. (**1 Corinthians 12:12**) Now, we all know that to a complete garden are necessary (1.) That it be well enclosed; (2.) Well planted; (3.) Well watered; (4.) That it be *amoena caeli aspiratione perflabilis*, well situated for wind and air; (5.) That it be fruitful and

¹⁴⁸ Georg. Fab. *Chemnicensis de seipso*.

¹⁴⁹ Abbot's *Georg.*, 251.

¹⁵⁰ Godw. *Catal. Giral. Camb. Puteus effusus ubi est aqua viva scaturiens et clara.—Merc.*

profitable. The Church's garden hath every one of these good properties, as appears here; and for the fourth, Christ is all the diverse winds, both cold and hot, moist and dry, binding and opening, north and south, fit for every season. What wind soever blows it blows good to the Church, for Christ speaks to them, as David did to his captains, "Do this young man no hurt; handle him gently for my sake." The sun may not smite him by day, nor the moon by night. (*Psalms 121:6*) The nipping north of adversity, the cherishing south wind of prosperity, must both make for him.

That the spices thereof may flow out. That I may be some way serviceable to God and profitable to men. She knew that in God's account to be idle is all one as to be evil, (*Matthew 25:26*) to be unthankful is to be wicked. (*Luke 6:35*) *Paulum sepultae distat inertiae, celata virtus,* ⁽¹⁵¹⁾ could one poet say; and another,

*"Vile latens virtus: quid enim submersa tenebris
Proderit, obscuro veluti sub remige puppis,
Vel lyra quae reticet, vel qui non tenditur arcus?"* ⁽¹⁵²⁾

Christ had made his Church a garden of sweetest sweets. Her desire is therefore that her fruits being rightly ripened, her graces greatened and made mature by the benign breath of the Holy Ghost (compared here, as elsewhere, to the several winds), their sweetness may be disspread, and conveyed to the nostrils of such as have "their senses habitually exercised to discern good and evil." (*Hebrews 5:14*) As for others, their heads are so stuffed with the stench of the world, that great muck hill, and themselves so choked up with earth, as Core and his complices were, that they cannot resent or savour the things of the Spirit; but, as vultures, they hunt after carrion carcasses, and as tigers they are enraged with the sweet smell of the Church's spices.

Let my beloved come and eat his pleasant fruits. For "who plants a vineyard or orchard, and eats not of the fruit thereof?" (*1 Corinthians 9:7*) The garden is Christ's: the precious graces of his Spirit and all acts of grace, those pleasant fruits are all his. He alone is the true proprietary: "for of him, and through him, and to him are all things." (*Romans 11:36*) Of him, as the efficient cause; through him, as the administering cause; and to him as the final cause. Well therefore may it follow, "to whom be glory for ever." Christ counts the fruits that we bear to be ours, because the judgment and resolution of will whereby we bear them is ours. This he doth to encourage us. But because the grace whereby we judge, will, and work aright, comes from Christ, ascribe we all to him, as the Church doth in the former verse; and presenting him with the best fruits, as they did Joseph, (*Genesis 43:11*) say as David, and after him Justinian, ⁽¹⁵³⁾ τὰ σα ἐκ τῶν σῶν σοι προσφερομεν, "Of thine own have we given thee." (*1 Chronicles 29:14*) {{field-off:Bible}}

¹⁵¹ Horat.

¹⁵² Claudian. *De Consul. Honor.*

¹⁵³ Cedren. ad an. 32 Justin.

Chapter 5

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 5:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I am come into my garden.** So ready is the Lord Christ to fulfil the desires of them that fear him. (*Psalm 145:19*) Sometimes he not only grants their prayer, but fulfils their counsel, (*Psalm 20:4*) fits his mercy *ad cardinero desiderii*, as Augustine ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ hath it, lets it be to his, even as they will. Or if he cross them in the very thing they crave, they are sure of a better; their prayers they shall have out either in money or money's worth. Christ, though he be a God that hideth himself, yet he scorns to say unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain"; (*Isaiah 45:15, 19*) that is enough for the heathen idols. (*Isaiah 45:16, 18*) He is not like Baal, who, pursuing his enemies, could not hear his friends; or as Diana, that being present at Alexander's birth, could not at the same time rescue her Ephesian temple from the fire. He is not like Jupiter, whom the Cretans painted without ears, as not being at leisure to attend small matters; ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ and whom Lucian the atheist feigneth to look down from heaven through certain crevices or chinks at certain times; at which time, if petitioners chance to pray unto him, they may have audience, otherwise not. No, no; "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are always open to their prayers." (*Psalm 34:15*) *Flectitur iratus voce rogante Deus.* Basil compares prayer to a chain, the one end whereof is linked to God's ear, and the other to man's tongue. Sozomen saith of Apollonius, that he never asked anything of God in all his life that he obtained not. And another saith of Luther, *Iste vir potuit apud Deum quod voluit.* That man could do what he would with God; it was but ask and have with him.

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. *i.e.*, I have highly accepted thy graces and good works: these are to be gathered only in Christ's garden. Hedge fruits and wild herbs, or rather weeds, are everywhere almost to be had. Moral virtues may be found in a Cato, who was *homo virtuti similimus*, a man as like virtue as may be, saith Velleius. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ And he adds, but I am not bound to believe him, *Qui nunquam recte fecit, ut facere videretur, sed quia aliter facere non poterat*, that Cato never did well that he might seem to do so, but because he could not do otherwise than well. But why then, might a man have asked the historian, did your so highly extolled Cato take up the trade of griping usury? Why did he so shamefully prostitute his wife, so cowardly kill himself? Was it not because he lived in the wild world's waste, and grew not in the Church's garden, hence his fruits were not genuine? His moral virtues are but shining sins, beautiful abominations, a smoother way to hell. Civil honest men are but wolves chained up, tame devils, swine in a fair meadow, &c. *Operam praestant, natura fera est*, as the civil law saith of those mixed beasts, elephants and camels, they do the work of tame beasts, yet have the nature of wild ones. They are cried up for singularly honest as ever lived by such as are strangers to the power of godliness, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; like as in Samaria's famine, a cab of doves' dung was sold at a great rate, and an ass's head at four pound. But Christ, and such as have the mind of Christ, are otherwise minded: they look upon an unregenerate man, though sober, just, chaste, liberal, &c., as a "vile person," and upon all their specious works as "dead works"; whenas contrarily they "honour them that fear the Lord," (*Psalm 15:4*) and set a high price, as Christ here doth, upon their good parts and practices. Myrrh and spices, or aromatic fruits, are but dark shadows and representations of them.

I have eaten mine honeycomb with mine honey. As it were crust and crumb together: not rejecting my people's services for the infirmities I find cleaving unto them, but accepting what is good therein, and bearing with the rest, I take all well aworth, and am as much delighted

¹⁵⁴ *Confess.*, lib. v. c. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Non vacat exquis,* &c.

¹⁵⁶ *Lib.* ii.

therewith as any man is in eating of honey, whereof he is so greedy that withal he devours the comb too sometimes. Christ feedeth, saith an expositor ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ here, upon all the fruits of his garden; he so much delighteth in it as he eateth not only the honey, as it were the most excellent duties or works of the Church, (**Hebrews 13:15, 16, 21**) but also the "honeycomb," as it were the baser services and fruits of his Spirit, of least account: that he receiveth of all sorts most sweetly mingled together, both the common and daily fruits of godliness, understood in "milk," and the more rare of greater price, as solemn fasts and feasts, signified by "wine"; both which he drinketh together; that is, accepteth of them all.

Eat, O friends. That is, O you holy angels (saith the former interpreter), which as my nobles, accompany me, the King of glory, in heaven, and have some communion with me in the gifts I bestow on you. Mr Diodate also thinks the same: but I rather incline to those that by Christ's friends here understand those earthly angels, the saints, (**John 15:14; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23**) whom he cheereth up and encourageth to fall to it lustily, and by a *sancta crapula*, as Luther calls a holy gluttony, to lay on, to feed hard, and to fetch hearty draughts, till they be even drunk with loves, as the Hebrew here hath it, being ravished in the love of God, where they are sure to find it, as in honey pots, the deeper, the sweeter. Such as so eat, are called Christ's friends, by a specialty, and such as so drink, his beloved, as Gregory here well observeth; and they only do thus that hear the Word with delight, turn it *in succum et sanguinem*, concoct it, incorporate it, as it were, into their souls, and are so deeply affected with it, that like drunken men, they forget and let go all things else, that they may retain and practise it. These are "not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but filled with the Holy Ghost." (**Ephesians 5:18**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 5:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I sleep, but my heart waketh.** It was no sound sleep that she took. She did not snort aloud in the cradle of security, as those do whom the devil hath cast into a deep lethargy, but napped and nodded a little, and that by candlelight too, as those wise virgins did; (**Matthew 25:5**) she slept with open eyes as the lion doth, she slept but half-sleep; the spirit was willing to wake, but the flesh was weak and overweighed it, as it fared with those sleepy disciples. (**Matthew 26:41**) Fain would this flesh make strange that which the Spirit doth embrace. O Lord, how loath is this loitering sluggard to pass forth into God's path! said Mr Sanders ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ in a letter to his wife, a little before his death, with much more to like purpose. As in the state of nature, men cared not for grace, but thought themselves well enough and wise enough without; so, in the state of grace, they are not so careful as they should. Heaven must be brought to them, they will scarce go seek it. (**1 Peter 1:13**) And as the seven tribes are justly taxed by **Joshua** for their negligence and sloth in not seeking speedily to possess the land God had offered them, (**Joshua 18:2**) so may the most of God's people be justly rebuked for grievous security about the heavenly Canaan. They content themselves with a bare title, or hang in suspense, and strive not to full assurance; they follow Christ, but it is, as the people followed Saul, trembling; they are still troubled with this doubt, or that fear, and all because they are loath to be at the pains of "working out their salvation." (**Philippians 2:12**) Something is left undone, and their conscience tells them so. Either they are lazy and let fall the watch of the Lord, neglecting duty, or else they lose themselves in a wilderness of duties, by resting in them, and by making the means their mediators, or by pleasing themselves (with the Church here) in unlawful liberties, after that they have pleased the Lord in lawful duties. The flesh must be gratified and such a lust fulfilled. A little more sleep, a little more slumber in Jezebel's bed, as Mr Bradford was wont to phrase it. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Solomon must have his wine, and yet think to retain his wisdom. (**Ecclesiastes 2:3**) Samson

¹⁵⁷ Mr Dudley Fenner.

¹⁵⁸ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 1359.

¹⁵⁹ *Acts and Mon.*

must fetch a nap on Delilah's knees, till God, by his Philistines, send out summons for sleepers, wake them in a fright, cure security by sorrow, as physicians use to cure a lethargy by casting the patient into a burning fever. Cold diseases must have hot and sharp remedies. The Church here found it so. And did not David, when he had sinned away his inward peace and wiped off, as it were, all his comfortables? (*Psalms 51*)

It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh. She was not so fast asleep, but that the "hidden man of the heart," as St Peter calls him, (*1 Peter 3:4*) was awake, and his ears erect and attentive, so that she soon heard the first call or knock of Christ; whose care was to arouse her, that though she slept awhile through infirmity of the flesh, yet she might not "sleep the sleep of death," (*Psalms 13:3*) die in her sins, as those Jews did. (*John 8:21*) In the sweating sickness (that reigned for many years together in this kingdom), those that were suffered to sleep (as all in that case were apt to do), died within a few hours. The best office therefore that any one could do them, was to keep them waking, though against their wills. Similarly our Saviour, solicitous of his Church's welfare, and knowing her present danger, comes calling and clapping at the door of her heart, and sweetly woos admission and entertainment, but misseth it. He knocketh and bounceth by the hammer of his Word and by the hand of his Spirit, (*Revelation 3:20; 2 Peter 1:13*) and if the Word work not on his people, they shall "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it," (*Micah 6:9*) that they may by some means be brought to summon the sobriety of their senses before their own judgments, and seeing their danger, to go forth and shake themselves, as Samson did. (*Judges 16:9, 12, 14*)

Open to me, my sister, my love, &c. What irresistible rhetoric is here! what passionate and most pithy persuasions! *Ipsa suada, credo, si loqui posset, non potuisset* εμφατικότερως, *ubi quot verba tot tela, quae sponsae animum percellant, fodient, lancinant*. She was not so dead asleep, but that she could hear at first and tell every tittle that he said. And this she doth here very finely and to the full, that she may aggravate against herself the foulness of her fact in refusing so sweet an offer, in turning her back upon so blessed and so bleeding an embracement. The terms and titles he here giveth her are expounded before. Undefined or perfect, he calleth her for her dove-like simplicity, purity, and integrity.

For mine head is filled with dew: *i.e.*, I have suffered much for thy sake, and waited thy leisure a long while; and must I now go look my lodging? Dost thou thus requite (repulse) thy Lord, O thou foolish woman and unwise? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be. (*Jeremiah 13:27*) It is the ingratitude that makes the saint's sins so heinous, which otherwise would be far less than other men's, since his temptations are stronger and his resistance is greater. Oh, when God's grace shall come sueing to us, nay, kneeling to us; when Christ shall come with hat in hand and stand bareheaded, as here, and that in foul weather too, begging acceptance and beseeching us to be reconciled, and we will not, what an inexcusable fault is this!{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 5:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I have put off my coat.** Thus the flesh shows itself not only weak but wayward, treacherous, and tyrannical; rebel it doth in the best, and reign it would if it might be suffered. This bramble would feign be playing *Rex*, King, and doth so at other times, till he be well buffeted, as St Paul served it, (*1 Corinthians 9:27*) and brought into subjection. But what a silly excuse maketh the Church here for herself? "Trouble me not, for I am in bed," as he said to his friend. (*Luke 11:7*) My clothes are off, my feet are washed, and I am composed to a settled rest. But are you so? might Christ have regested. And is that the part and posture of a vigilant Christian? Might it not better have beseeemed you to have had your loins girt up, your lamp in your hand, and yourself to have waited for your Lord's return, that when he came and knocked you might have opened unto him immediately? (*Luke 12:35-36*) Or, being got to bed, must you needs mend one fault with another? Is it such a pains to start up again and let in such a guest, as comes not to take anything from you, but to

enrich you much more than once the ark did Obed Edom? And in this sense some take those words in the former verse, "for mine head is filled with dew," as if Christ came unto her, full of the dew of blessings, to enrich her. Sure it is that Christ is no beggarly or niggardly guest. His "reward is with him"; he brings better commodities than Abraham's servants did to Laban, or the Queen of Sheba to Solomon—even purest gold, whitest raiment, sovereign eye salve, anything, everything, that heart can wish, or need require. (**Revelation 3:17, 19**) How unworthily therefore deal they, and how ill do they provide for themselves that either deny or delay to entertain him, when either by the motions of his Spirit, by the words of his mouth, or by the works of his hands, he knocks at the doors of their hearts, and would come in to them! How do they "make void or reject the counsel of God against themselves" with those unhappy lawyers, (**Luke 7:30**) being *ingrati gratiae Dei*, as Ambrose speaketh, and judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life, with those perverse Jews! (**Acts 13:46**) Who can say it is otherwise than righteous that Christ should regeest one day upon such ungrateful Gadarenes, "Depart from me ye wicked"; that such as say to him, as Felix did once to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee," (**Acts 24:26**) should hear from him, Get you to the gods whom ye have chosen, for I will not help you, &c.; and that those that would not obey this sweet precept, "Open to me," &c., "Come down, Zaccheus, for today I must abide at thy house," (**Luke 19:5**) should have no other left to obey but that dreadful "Go ye cursed," &c. The Church here did but lust awhile and linger, when she should have been up and about; and she soon rued it dearly, bewailed it bitterly. Now, what was it that she did? Did she rate Christ for coming at such unseasonable hours? did she answer him currishly, or drive him front her door? No, surely; but only pleads excuse, and pretends inconvenience. She had put off her clothes, washed her feet, &c. A great char she had done; and it would have undone her doubtless to have dressed her again, and set her fair feet on the foul ground. There is none so wise as the sluggard. (**Proverbs 26:16**) He hath got together a great many excuses, which he thinks will go for wisdom; because by them he thinks to sleep in a whole skin. Sin and shifting came into the world together. But what saith the apostle? Surely his counsel is most excellent, and worthy of all acceptation, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh," (**Hebrews 12:25**) *scil.*, By his blood, Word, sacraments, motions of his Spirit, mercies, &c. "Look to it," as the Greek hath it, "that ye refuse not," *παραιτήσῃθε*, "that ye shift him not off" by frivolous pretences and idle excuses, as those recusant guests did, (**Matthew 22:5**) as Moses would have done; (**Exodus 3:11, 14; 4:1, 10**) and Jeremiah. (**Jeremiah 1:6**) So again, **Hebrews 2:3**, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" He saith not, if we reject, renounce, persecute; but if we neglect, let slip, undervalue, &c. If, when God "sends forth his mercy and his truth," (**Psalms 57:3**) and looks that we should send a lamb to that Lamb of God, the ruler of the land; (**Isaiah 16:1**) we send messages after him, saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us"; (**Luke 19:14**) we break his cords, those "cords of love," (**Hosea 11:4**) and kick against his heart; and instead of serving him, "make him to serve with our sins, and even weary him with our iniquities." (**Isaiah 43:24**) How shall we escape? What hill shall hide us What will ye do in the end thereof? {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 5:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My beloved put in his hand by the hole.** Or, He let fall his hand from the hole, ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ where he was lifting at the latch, or seeking to put by the bar; he took it so unkindly to be so ill answered, that he departed in displeasure, and would be no further troublesome. "Sleep on now," quoth he, (*as* **Mark 14:41**) "and take your rest." He that will hear, let him hear, and he that hath a mind to forbear, let him forbear. (**Ezekiel 3:27**) but at his own peril; the best that can come of it is repentance, that fair and happy daughter of an ugly and odious mother. ⁽¹⁶¹⁾ *Delicata res est Spiritus Dei*, saith one, The Spirit of God is a delicate thing; and he that grieves that holy thing whereby he is sealed, by giving way to a

¹⁶⁰ Dimissit manus a foramine.

¹⁶¹ ἐχθροῦ πατρός φίλτατον τέκνον.—*De Pompeio Romano ap. Plutarch.*

spirit of sloth and slumber, may lose his joy of faith, and go mourning to his grave. And although with much ado he may get assurance of pardon, yet his conscience will be still trembling, as David's, (*Psalms 51*) till God at length speak further peace. Even as the water of the sea after a storm is not presently still, but moves and trembles a good while after the storm is over. Take heed, therefore: *Cavebis autem si pavebis* Moreover, if you are terrified, you will beware. (*Romans 11:21*) But to take the words as they are here translated, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole"; that is, he touched mine earthly heart by his Holy Spirit; and notwithstanding my discourteous dealing with him, left a sweet remembrance of himself behind him. As he would not away, but continued still knocking till he had an answer, so, though the answer pleased him not, yet he called not for his lovetokens back again, he cast her not off, as Ahasuerus did Vashti—no, "he hates putting away"; (*Malachi 2:16*) but as the sun with his bright beams follows the passenger that hath turned his back upon it, so deals Christ by his backsliding people. (*Jeremiah 3:22*) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, (*Psalms 23:6*) saith David; follow me, though I forsake mine own mercies, saith Jonah. (*Jonah 2:8*) And as the same sunbeams do convey the heat and influence thereof to the earth, thereby calling out the herbs and flowers, and healing those deformities that winter had brought upon it, so doth Christ, that sun of righteousness, arise (to his servants that are benighted with sin and sorrow) "with healing in his wings"; that is, with the gracious influence of his Holy Spirit, conveying the virtues of his blood to their consciences, and causing them, as by a new spring of holy desires and endeavours, to reflourish. (*Philippians 4:10*)

And my bowels were moved for him. They rumbled, tumultuated, and made a humming noise, as the Hebrew hath it. She means that she had no rest in her spirit, her heart (that chiefest of the bowels, or inwards) did even quake and ache within her; her thoughts afflicted her, she was greatly disquieted, and all "for him," for the unkindness she had offered him, or concerning him, or over him, as those penitentiaries in Zechariah, that "looked upon him whom they had pierced, and" (by an instinct of the spirit of grace poured plentifully upon them) "mourned for him," or over him, till their hearts became a very Hadadrimmon, and fell asunder in their bosoms like drops of water, and all for the indignities and injuries they had done to Christ. This is a sorrow according to God; ⁽¹⁶²⁾ or, as God would have it, (*1 Corinthians 7:9*) this is a repentance never to be repented of. (*Solomon's Song 5:10*) This is that rainbow which, if God see shining in our hearts, he will remember his holy covenant. The Church here, for instance. That she sorrowed after a godly sort appears by those seven signs set down in *2 Corinthians 7:11*, and here in this Chapter exemplified and evidenced. "I sleep"; "there is indignation." But "my heart waketh"; there is "apology," or clearing herself. "I arose to open"; there is "study," or "carelessness," and diligence. "My soul failed when he spake"; there is her "zeal." "I called on him, I sought him"; there is her "vehement desire." "The watchmen found me; they smote me, they unveiled me"; there is her "self-revenge," while she shrank not from any danger, but bearing patiently the Lord's indignation, because she had sinned against him; she followed him through thick and thin, in the night, among the watch, &c., followed him hot afoot, and would not rest till she had recovered him. Lo, this is the guise of a godly heart; it runs into sin sometimes, but riseth again soon after by repentance; it is at as much unrest, till reconciled to God, as he that hath broke a bone till it be well set again. Whenas a profane Esau can sell his birthright (and with it his title to heaven), and when he hath so done, he can "eat, and drink, and rise up, and go his way," ⁽¹⁶³⁾ without any the least remorse or regret. (*Genesis 25:34*) Wicked men grow worse and worse, saith the apostle, and take long strides towards hell, as if they feared it would be full ere they come there. Some seek to out sin one another, like unhappy boys, that strive who shall go furthest in the dirt. *Noluit solita peccare*, He does not wish to make sin a habit, saith Seneca; *Et pudet non esse impudentes*, And it is not

¹⁶² Ἡ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη.

¹⁶³ *Hac congerie impenitentia Esaui describitur.—Piscat.*

permitted to be shameless, saith Augustine. Sin hath woaded ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ an impudence in their faces; "their spot is not the spot of God's children." (**Deuteronomy 32:5**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 5:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I rose up to open to my beloved.** This was repentance from sin, as that in the former verse was repentance for sin. To repent, and yet to lie still in sin, is to repent with a contradiction, saith Tertullian; *Optima et aptissima poenitentia est nova vita*, saith Luther. A new life is the best repentance. Up gets the Church, when once soundly sensible of her sin; and, leaving her bed of carnal security, makes after Christ with all her might, with a redoubled diligence, to make some amends for her former negligence. *Nunquam sero, si serio*. Late though it were ere she started and stirred, yet better late than not at all. We are too much after witted for the most part, post masters, Epimetheuses; we see not our folly (but cry with him, *In crastinum seria*), till we have smarted for it, and then wish, *O mihi praeteritos*, &c.

And my hands drop with myrrh. That is, with the testimonies of his sweetness left behind him on the lock handles, the better to allure her to his love. Philip Beroaldus, ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ and many others, tell us of a very precious unguent Cinnamimum, because made of cinnamon and other sweet odours; whose chief commendation is, that the very smell thereof, if a man carries it about him, draws any woman, though passing by and minding other things, to draw nigh to him. What truth is in this relation I know not; but sure it is, that the smell of the gospel, and those spiritual blessings which the presence of Christ had left behind it, did notably attract and draw after him the Church's affections. Goodness is of itself attractive. The Greeks call it *καλὸν* from *καλεῖν*, and *ἄγαθὸν* from *ἄγαν θεατὸν*; because it doth, as it were, invite and call to it, and every man is willing to run after it. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Christ puts a secret instinct into his people to do so; like as nature hath put an instinct into the bee, the stork, and other creatures. And as the needle in a sundial that hath been touched with an adamant, though it may be forced this way and that way, yet it rests not till it look toward the north pole; so the soul that hath *aliquid Christi* something of Christ in it, that hath been once hand fasted to Christ by a lively faith, though for a season it may, by the malice of Satan working with corruption, suffer some decays of her first love, be drawn aside by some lust, and enticed so as to fall from former steadfastness; (**James 1:14; 2 Peter 3:17**) yet after a while her thoughts will work, and the sweet remembrance that Christ hath left behind him, will make her to say, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." (**Hosea 2:7**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 5:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone.** Or, "He was gone, he was gone"; a passionate complaint for his departure, which lay so much the heavier upon her spirit, because, by her unworthy usage of him, she had foolishly occasioned it. "Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquity, are afflicted." And when affliction comes with a sting in the tail, it is very grievous. But then they "cry unto the Lord in their trouble; he saveth them out of their distress; he sendeth his word and healeth them," (**Psalms 107:17-20**) he sendeth for them by his Spirit, and brings them back again into his own bosom, "that his banished be not expelled from him," (**2 Samuel 14:14**) though to themselves and others they may for the present seem to be as "water spilled on the ground, that cannot be gathered up again." Those fragrant footsteps and heart attracting stamps of his favour, that sweet smelling myrrh, mentioned in the former verse, had so eneagered and edged her affections, that she could not rest till she had recovered him. She opened unto her beloved, and, presuming upon his patience, was in good hope to have had him at hand; but *patientia loesa fit furor*, Christ will not always bear

¹⁶⁴ To dye, colour, or stain with woad, sometimes (in dyeing) as a ground for another colour.

¹⁶⁵ In Apuleium, lib. ii. *M. Les*.

¹⁶⁶ *Velut aliqui volunt ἄγαθὸν quasi ἄγαν θεατὸν. Sic Ἀρετή quasi Αἰρετή.*

with our evil manners, ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ "but hide his face from us, like as we have behaved ourselves evil in our doings." (**Micah 3:4**) And whereas spiritual desertions are of three sorts, (1.) Cautional, for preventing of sin, as Paul's seems to be; (2.) Probational, for trial and exercise of grace, as Job's; (3.) Penal, for chastisement of spiritual sloth and sluggishness, as here in the Church; this last is far the heaviest.

My soul failed when he spake. Or, Because of his speech, that sweet speech of his when he so passionately wooed her. (**Solomon's Song 5:2**) Then he could have no audience nor admittance; now, if he would but offer himself he might be sure of both. The word spoken doth not always presently take effect in the hearers, but lies long as the seed under a clod, till Christ the good husbandman come with some temptation, as with his clotting beetle, and give it room to rise. Then as the water casts up her dead after a time, so do their memories cast up that which seemed buried therein, by the help of the Holy Ghost, their remembrancer. (**John 14:26; John 2:22**) The new birth of some, the recovery of others out of their relapses, is like the birth of the elephant, fourteen years after the seed is inserted into the womb. Peter remembered Christ's words and repented. (**Matthew 26:75**) If we remember not what hath been preached unto us, all is lost. (**1 Corinthians 15:2**) If we leak, ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ and let slip, *actum est de nobis*. The deed is by us. (**Hebrews 2:1**) If we keep the word, the word will keep us. (**Proverbs 6:22**)

I sought him. So soon as recovered out of my swoon, I set to seek him. The Church went not to bed again to sleep as before, neither stays she longer within than to cast her veil or her scarf over her head; without any further dress, abroad she gets to seek him whom her soul loveth. She sought him by serious and set meditation of the word and promises; but after all that toil and travail she took therein she found him not. This is the greatest grief that can befall a good heart in this present world; it is to such little better than hell itself. "Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled" saith David. (**Psalms 30:8**) *Non frustra praedicant mentes hominum nitere liquido die, coacta nube flaccescere*, saith Symmachus. Men's minds are either clear or cloudy, as the weather is; but more truly, good men's minds are as God's countenance is. It is with the godly in desertion, as with vapours drawn up by the sun, which, when the extracting force of the sun leaves them, fall down again to the earth. And as in an eclipse of the sun there is a drooping in the whole frame of nature; so it is with the saints, when Christ withdraws himself. Hell itself is said to be a separation from his presence; the pain of loss there is worse than the pain of sense, the tears of hell are not sufficient to bewail the loss of heaven. *Laetemur igitur in Domino, sed caveamus a recidivo.* ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

I called him, but he gave me no answer. And it was but just, for she had dealt so by him. (**Solomon's Song 5:2**) Christ loves to retaliate. Such a proportion many times one may see between sins and punishments, that you may say, such a sin brought forth this affliction, it is so like the father. Howbeit, "his ear is not heavy that he cannot hear; but your iniquities have hid his face from you that he will not hear." (**Isaiah 59:1-2**) And this the saints take, as well they may, for a sore affliction, (**Lamentations 3:8**) when to all other their miseries, he addeth this, that he will not come at them, that he casteth out their prayers, that he deals by them as the lioness doth by her young ones, which she seems sometimes to leave, till they have almost killed themselves with roaring. This is to make them more careful another time. None look at the sun but when it is in the eclipse; neither prize we, for the most part, God's loving countenance till we have lost it. In this case, the course is to set up a loud cry after him, as Micah did after his gods. (**Judges 18:23**) Or rather as the Church here doth after her beloved,

¹⁶⁷ *Heu rara hora, et parva mora.*—Bernard.

¹⁶⁸ μήποτε παραυῶμεν.

¹⁶⁹ Bernard.

in many strong cries and bitter tears, continuing instant in prayer. (**Romans 12:12**) The Greek word ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ imports a metaphor from hunting dogs, that do not stop pursuing the game till they have got it. For encouragement, see the happy success the Church here had; and further, take that saying of Brentius, *Etiam si fides tua nec lucem hominibus, nec calorem cordi tuo afferat, tamen non abiecit Christus, modo incrementum ores*, i.e., Although thy faith, as smoking flax, yield neither light to others nor heat to thine own heart, yet Christ will not cast thee off, so thou pray for more and follow thy work close till thou have gotten it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 5:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **The watchmen that went about the city, &c.** (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 3:3"*) The ministers that walk the round, that watch for men's souls, (**Hebrews 13:17; Isaiah 61:6**) that know how to "time a word," (**Isaiah 51:4**) these smote her with the tongue, they buffeted her by just and sharp reproofs for her negligence, they unveiled her for being abroad at that time of night (which she needed not to have been, but for her own slothfulness), they dealt little better with her, than as if she had been some light and lewd woman; and all this they might well do out of zeal to God, and godly jealousy for her soul's good—unless it were that hypocrisy of jealousy exercised by the false apostles over the Galatians; (**Galations 4:17**) not pastors, but impostors; not overseers, but by seers, ⁽¹⁷¹⁾ *potius grassatores, quam custodes*, **ῥομονθμῶς** *tamen sic dicti*, cut throats rather than keepers, wicked men taking upon them to be watchmen, church officers in name, but church robbers in deed. Such were those (**Isaiah 66:5**) that hated and cast out the true worshippers, under a pretence of "Let the Lord be glorified." Such a one was Diotrephes, that prating ⁽¹⁷²⁾ prelate, that villanously entreated God's faithful people. (**#3 John 1:9-10**) And such is that man of sin, that antichrist of Rome, who, for so many hundred years together, hath smitten with the fist of wickedness, hath wounded and drawn blood from Christ's dearest spouse, and despoiled her of her veil; that is, laboured to disprivege her, and deprive her of that purity and soundness of doctrine that he hath committed unto her, as a means to hold her in the duty of all holy obedience and subjection unto him. (**1 Corinthians 11:5-6, 10**) Of these false friends and deadly enemies the Church here heavily complains, and might well have proceeded against them, as those six martyrs burnt by Harpsfield, Archdeacon of Canterbury, when Queen Mary lay a-dying. One of those six that were then burnt, and those were the last, John Cornford, stirred with a vehement zeal of God when they were excommunicated, pronounced sentence of excommunication against all Papists in these words: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, and authority of his holy catholic and apostolic Church, we do give here into the hands of Satan, to be destroyed, the bodies of all those blasphemers and heretics that do maintain any error against his most holy Word, or do condemn his most holy truth for heresy, to the maintenance of any false church or feigned religion; so that by this thy most just judgment, O most mighty God, against thine adversaries, thy true religion may be known, to thy great glory and our comfort, and the edifying of all our nation. Good Lord, so be it. ⁽¹⁷³⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 5:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I change you, O daughters of Jerusalem.** Being evil entreated by her enemies, she turns her to her friends, those damsels or daughters of Jerusalem. See **Solomon's Song 2:7; 3:5**. So the Lord Christ, being tired out with the untractableness of his untoward hearers, turns him to his Father. (**Matthew 11:25-26**) Kings, as they have their cares and cumbers above other men, so they had of old their friends, by a specialty, as Hushai was David's friend, (**2 Samuel 15:37**) to whom they might ease themselves, and "take sweet counsel." (**Psalms 55:14**) The servants of God are "princes in all

¹⁷⁰ προσκαρτεροῦντες.

¹⁷¹ *Non Episcopi, sed Aposcopi.*

¹⁷² φλυαρῶν.

¹⁷³ *Acts and Mon., fol. 1862.*

lands"; (**Psalm 45:16**) and as they have their crosses not a few, so their comforts, in and by the communion of saints. The very opening of their grievances one to another doth many times ease them, as the very opening of a vein cools the blood. Their mutual prayers one with and for another prevail much, if they be fervent, or thorough well wrought, ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ as in this case they likely will be; for as "iron whets iron, so doth the face of a man his friend." (**Proverbs 27:17**) And as *ferrum potest quod aurum non potest*, iron can do what sometimes gold cannot do—an iron key may open a chest wherein gold is laid up—so a meaner man's prayer may be more effectual sometimes than a better man's for himself. His own key may be rusty, or out of order, and another man's do it better. Hence the Church is so importunate with the daughters of Jerusalem—who were far behind her in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by that which follows—to commend her and her misery to Christ, to tell him, wherever they meet with him, "Behold, she whom thou lovest is sick," thy Church—in whom thy love is concentrated, as it were, and gathered to a head—doth even languish with love, and is in ill case. "Tell him," saith she. "What shall ye tell him?" as the Hebrew hath it. An earnest and passionate kind of speech, somewhat like that in Hosea, "Give them, O Lord. What wilt thou give them?" (**Hosea 9:14**) as if she should say, Would you know what you should tell him even that which followeth, that "I am sick of love." See **Solomon's Song 2:5**.^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 9. ^{[[@Bible:Song 5:9]]}^{{{field-on:Bible}}} **What is thy beloved more than another beloved?** This capital question is here doubled for the more vehemence, as also for the strangeness of the matter, wherein they desire much to be better informed, and the rather because she so straightly chargeth, or rather sweareth them. Something they must needs think was in it more than ordinary, since good people do not use to be hot in a cold matter. But as in the Revelation, whensoever heaven opened, some singular thing ensued; so when the saints be so serious in a business, sure it is of very great concernment. Great matters are carried with great movings: as "for the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart," (**Judges 5:15-16**) great impressions, great searchings. It is a common saying, *Admiratio peperit philosophiam*, wonderment at the works of God, set men awork to inquire into the natural causes of them. Similarly, these damsels of Jerusalem, friends to the Church, little knowing the love of the spouse to Christ, which passed their knowledge, (**Ephesians 3:18-19**) and yet willing to comprehend with all saints the several dimensions thereof. First, they acknowledge her, amidst all her miseries, to be the "fairest among women." (**Solomon's Song 1:8**) As gold is gold, though found in the dirt, or cast into the furnace, and stars have their glory, though we see them sometimes in a puddle, in the bottom of a well, nay, in a stinking ditch. Secondly, They propound to her two most profitable questions: the one concerning his person, whereof we have here a very lively and lofty description, both generally and in his parts. The other concerning the place of his abode, and where he may be had, (**Solomon's Song 6:1**) to the which she makes answer, (**Solomon's Song 5:2**) and so her faith begins to revive, (**Solomon's Song 5:3**) which was the blessed effect of this their gracious communication. Conference in all arts and sciences is a course of incredible profiting. *Est aliquid quod ex magno viro vel tacente proficias*, the very sight, nay, thought of a good man oft doth good; how much more when he openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his tongue is the law of kindness! (**Proverbs 31:26**) And surely it is a fine art to be able to pierce a man that is like a vessel full of wine, and to set him a-running. (**Proverbs 20:5**) Elihu would "speak that he might be refreshed." (**Job 32:20**) It would be an ease to him, it would be a great benefit to others, as the mother is in pain till the child hath sucked, and the child not at quiet till he hath done so. "Foolish and unlearned questions" about those things whereof we can neither have proof nor profit, we are bound to "avoid," (**2 Timothy 2:23**) knowing that they do "gender strifes," and breed crudities, fill men with wind, and make them question sick. (**1 Timothy 6:4**) But profitable questions are frequently to be propounded with a desire to learn, and resolution to practise, as the Virgin

¹⁷⁴ ἐνεργουμένη. (**James 5:16**).

Mary demanded of the angel, (**Luke 1:34**) the disciples of our Saviour, (**John 16:17, 19-24**) and he resolved them, which he refused to do for the Jews that asked him the same question, (**John 7:35-36**) because not with the same mind and desire. So that frolic self-seeker, with his fair offer of following Christ, was rejected, when those that had more honest aims and ends heard, "Come and see." (**Matthew 8:19-20; John 1:46**) These daughters of Jerusalem do not, therefore, ask because they were utterly ignorant of Christ, but (1.) That they might hear the Church what she had to say of him, as they that love Christ love to hear talk of him; his very name is *mel in ore, melos in aure, &c.*; (2.) That by her discourse they might better their knowledge; for the very angels know not so much of this mystery, but they would know more, and do therefore curiously pry into it. (**1 Peter 1:12**) Yea, to these very "principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" in contriving man's salvation by Christ; they cannot but see an abundance of curious variety in this divine wisdom, such as is to be seen in the best pictures or textures, as the apostle's word, **ΠΟΛΥΤΟΙΚΙΛΟΣ**, importeth. (**Ephesians 3:10**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 5:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My beloved is white and ruddy, &c.** Love lacks no rhetoric to lay forth the thing beloved in liveliest colours. "White and ruddy!" What can be more laudable and lovely? What can come nearer to a perfect symmetry, to a sound and sure constitution and complexion? Sure it is that these two, being comely mixed, do make the most beautiful or orient look or colour; see the prophet's description of the Nazarites, **Lamentations 4:7**. And note, saith an expositor, that the Holy Ghost joineth both these together—the whiteness making the ruddiness more fresh and fair, and the ruddiness discerning the whiteness from paleness of face, or phlegmatic complexion. *Sed sunt in his mysteria investiganda*, saith another, *itaque candor refert divinam Christi naturam, rubor humanam*. White and red may signify Christ's Godhead and manhood. God is called the "Ancient of days"; (**Daniel 7:9**) his "head and his hairs are white like wool, as white as snow." (**Revelation 1:14**) Man had his name Adam of the red earth, out of which he was taken. (**Genesis 2:7**) Christ also, the second Adam, became red with his own blood, whereby he "purchased the Church" (**Acts 20:28**)—a bloody spouse she was unto him—and paved for her "a new and lively way into the most holy place"; (**Hebrews 10:20**) upon the battlements whereof he hangs out still (as once that warlike Scythian did) a white flag of grace and mercy to penitent persons, that humble themselves at his feet for favour; but a red flag of justice and severity to those his enemies that will not have him to rule over them—in token whereof his raiment is said to be red, (**Isaiah 63:1-3**) his vesture dipped in blood. (**Revelation 19:13**)

The chiefest among ten thousand. Heb., *Vexillatus prae decem millibus*; that is, famous and conspicuous among and above many, as "Saul was higher than the people by the head and shoulders," as the Hachmonite was the chief of David's mighties; (**1 Chronicles 11:11**) or, "the standardbearer of ten thousand." Now the goodliest, and with it the ablest, men used to carry the banner or standard. Christ standeth "for an ensign of the people," (**Isaiah 11:10**) and hath ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him, following him wheresoever he goeth, (**Revelation 7:9, 14**) and singing, "We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God (vexillabimus) we will set up our banner." (**Psalms 20:6**) The Church's design here is to hold out Christ as altogether matchless and incomparable, that there is none like him in the earth, as God said of Job; (**Solomon's Song 1:8**) to teach us to esteem him, as the people did David, more worth than ten thousand others; (**2 Samuel 18:3**) to set him upon the chief chariot, and to give him the sole command of all, as Pharaoh dealt by Joseph. And as the sun, moon, and eleven stars in Joseph's vision did obeisance to him, so let our souls, bodies, all our temporal, natural, moral, and spiritual abilities, be subject and serviceable to Christ, who, if he be the chiefest of ten thousand, ought to have as much love as ten thousand hearts put into one could hold. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 5:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His head is as the most fine gold.** Here she

begins her particular praise of his various parts; and here she may seem to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, performing, as lovers used to do, that for him which he had done for her before, (*Solomon's Song 4:1-4*, &c.) though all she could say falleth far short of him; and well she might say after all, as Nazianzen sometime said of Basil, 'There wants but his own tongue to commend him with'; *Loquimur de Deo non quantum debemus, sed quantum possumus*. In speaking of Christ's excellencies, men may speak what they can; they cannot possibly speak so much as they ought, they cannot hyperbolise. If any shall think the Church doth here, he must needs be of those that either know him not, or are not able to judge aright of his worth, as once Cicero ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ said of Crassus and Antony, the orators. *Nusquam Origines non ardet, sed nusquam est ardentior*, &c., saith Erasmus. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Origen is never but earnest; howbeit he is never more earnest than when he discourseth about Christ; in other things he may seem to excel others, but in this he excelleth himself. The same we may well say of the Church in this place, in setting forth the surpassing purity and perfection of her spouse: *Quem manibus propriis finxit cordata Minerva*. And first she makes his head to be of the finest and firmest gold—*Fess-gold*, so the Arabic, from the Hebrew, calleth it; and the land of *Fess* seemeth to be named of such gold there. David's Michtam, or Golden Psalm, comes from one of the words here used; for in the original thus it is, "His head is most glistening gold, yea, most solid gold"; ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ that is, his deity which dwells in him is most pure and glorious—for "the head of Christ is God" (*1 Corinthians 11:3*)—and that fulness of grace which is communicated to his human nature is wondrously beautiful, and so sets it forth as black curled locks do a fresh countenance.

"Spectandus nigris oculis, nigroque capillo est."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 5:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, &c. *i.e.*, they are full of all innocence, singleness, and chastity; (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:15"*) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 4:1"*) where Christ had attributed the very same to the Church, who is his image and glory, as the woman is of the man, (*1 Corinthians 11:7*) the very looking glass of his dignity and reflex of his comeliness. His eyes are elsewhere said to be as a "flame of fire," (*Revelation 1:14; Daniel 10:6*) sharp and terrible, such as pierce into the inward parts, and need no outward light. Here they are as the "eyes of doves," casting an amiable, gracious, joyful, and comfortable look upon his Church. As his "eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men" (*Psalms 11:4*)—the one points out his knowledge, the other his critical descent—so he casteth an eye of singular providence and tender affection upon his afflicted people. "I have seen, I have seen," saith he, "the sufferings of my people; I know their sorrows, and am come down to deliver them." (*Exodus 3:7-8*) His "eye affects his heart," and his heart sets his hand to work for their help and safety. In *Ezekiel 1:8*, we read of faces, eyes, wings, hands, &c., all to express the sufficiency of God's providence for all means of help; see *Psalms 33:18-19; 34:16*. The Church is like the land of Canaan, which is said to be "a hind which the Lord careth for: the eyes of the Lord are always upon it." (*Deuteronomy 11:11*) He seeth that loveliness in her that he overlooks all, as it were, to look upon her; he beholds that worth in her that the buzzards of the world cannot ken. Therefore the "world knows us not," respects us not, "because it knew not him," (*1 John 3:1*) saw "no such beauty that they should desire him." (*Isaiah 53:2*) Nicostratus in Aelian, himself being a cunning artisan, finding a curious piece of work, and being wondered at by one, and asked by one what pleasure he could take to stand gazing as he did on the picture, answered, Hadst thou mine eyes, thou wouldst not wonder, but rather be ravished, as I am, at the inimitable art of this piece. Similarly, had men those dove like single eyes that Christ and his people have, "washed

¹⁷⁵ *Opera. Tull. de Orator.*

¹⁷⁶ Erasmus in Praef. ad Orig.

¹⁷⁷ Or, He is the gold of gold, as Athens was the Greece of Greece.

in milk," that is, in milk white waters, cleansed from the dust of sinful prejudice, and "fitly set," as a precious stone in the foil of a ring, or as the precious filling stones in the holy ephod, (**Exodus 25:7**) they would "kiss the Son" and admire his spouse; whereas, for want of spiritual eyes, the northern proverb is verified, "unkent, unkist," unknown, unrespected. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 5:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His cheeks are as a bed of spices.** *i.e.*, Comely and pleasant to the sight, sweet also to the smell; *areolis similes, aromatum plenis*; flourishing with a goodly, comely, fresh, and sweet beard; so declaring his face not only to be gracious and amiable, but also full of gravity, glory, and majesty. There are those who would have all these things to be taken literally about Christ's natural body, and that here is set down his *prosopographoy*; but this was written long before Christ was incarnated, and therefore it must needs be meant in a metaphorical and allegorical sense, hard to be explained. *Ego quid de singulis statuam fateor me nescire*, saith a learned interpreter. Allegorically to handle all these is not in my purpose or power, saith another: since the graces of Christ, as they cannot well be expressed, so, by reason of our weakness, they cannot better be declared. The drift of the Holy Ghost is to paint out unto us the spiritual and heavenly love of his Church to Christ, who doth not and cannot satisfy herself with any words or comparisons of this kind; and, secondly, to stir up our heartiest and liveliest affections to him that hath such a world of worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies scattered abroad in the creatures are united in Christ; yea, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomised in him. Why do we not then make out to him, and despise all for him with Paul? Why do we not, with David, chide ourselves and others for loving vanity and seeking after leasing? (**Psalms 4:2**) "How long wilt thou go about, O backsliding daughter," (**Jeremiah 31:22**) and fetch a compass? knowest thou not that "the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth? a woman shall compass a man"; (**Isaiah 7:14**) that is, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," even the man Christ Jesus, in whom it pleased the Father that there should dwell all fulness. (**Colossians 1:19**) Make we therefore straight paths for our feet; (**Hebrews 12:13**) let us go speedily to Christ, (**Zechariah 8:21**) as bees do to a meadow full of flowers; as merchants do to the Indies, that are full of fruits and spices, that we may return from him full fraught with treasures of truth and grace.

His lips, like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. *i.e.*, His word and doctrine is white, sweet, pleasant, far spreading as lilies, sweet to the smell, and yet bitter to the taste as myrrh, no way pleasing to the flesh, which it mortifieth, calling upon men to repent, reform, walk by rule, strive to enter in at the strait gate, resist unto blood, striving against sin. "These things are good and profitable to men," as the apostle speaks in another case, (**Titus 3:8**) but they naturally care not to hear about them. Drop not ye, say they; we like not your lilies dropping myrrh and nitre; let those drop or prophesy that preach pleasing things. We like your lilies, but care not for your myrrh; or, if we smell it, we like not to taste of it, because little toothsome, however it may be wholesome. See **Micah 2:6**. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Song 5:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl.** Or, Chrysolite; Heb., Tarshish, whence our word turkeis, as it may seem, a precious stone, of colour blue like the sky, or, as others say, green like the sea. Asher was graven upon this stone, who dwelt near the sea. (**Exodus 28:20**) Some write, that in former times this stone was most usually set in such rings as lovers did use to give one to another, or in marriage rings; because of the power that was thought to be in it to procure and continue love and liking one of them towards another. Whatsoever stone it is, whether a beryl, chrysolite, carbuncle, hyacinth, onyx (for all these ways it is rendered), the Church's meaning is, that all the works of Christ, whether in the state of humiliation or of exaltation—for redemption we have by his abasement, application of it by his advancement—are most rare, dear, precious, and glorious, as numbers of rings filled with all manner of costly stones; they are acceptable

and honorable before God and man. And like as great men are known by their rings and rich jewels, so is Christ by his saints, the work of his hands. (*Isaiah 64:8*)

His belly is as bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires. Heb., His bowels, in the dual—meaning his breast and belly, and there the heart and lights, those seats of the will and affections; here, the liver, stomach, entrails, which serve for nutrition and generation. By all this we may well understand Christ's inward affections outwardly manifested. These are true and sincere, as bright and white "ivory"; they are also hearty and heavenly, as "sapphires"; various also and manifold, *sicut sapphiri caeruleae sunt*, his bowels yearn towards his afflicted people, his heart is turned within him, his "repentings are kindled together"; (*Hosea 11:8*) so the poet,

"Ingemuit miserans graviter, dextramque tetendit."—Virg. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Song 5:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His legs are as pillars of marble.** A sign of Christ's firmness in his kingdom, works, word, and government, saith a learned expositor, and of his strength to trample upon his enemies, as also of his united power to accomplish the course of his threefold office. Pillars both bear up the building and beautify it; neither can anything be more sure and solid than these, if set upon a firm foundation. The pillars here mentioned are said to be "set upon fine gold"—that is, upon a foundation both fine and firm, for gold hardly rusteth or cankereth; whence it was likely that Tithonus and his son Memnon, when they built the city of Susa, in Persia, they joined the stones together with gold, as Cassiodorus writeth: Christ's power is founded upon his divine nature; and this is the rock upon which the Church is built, and whereby it is set in safety from all miseries and molestations, satanic or secular. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Christ and the father are one; therefore none shall take her out of his hands. God hath "laid help upon one that is mighty," (*Psalms 89:19*) even upon Emmanuel, the mighty strong God, as he is called, (*Isaiah 9:6*) "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," (*Romans 1:4*) that your "faith and hope might be in God." (*1 Peter 1:21*) Trust perfectly therefore to, or hope to the end, ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus": (*1 Peter 1:13*) since he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." (*Hebrews 7:25*)

His countenance is as Lebanon. His aspect, his look, or general view—*i.e.*, whatsoever of himself Christ is pleased to manifest and lay open unto us is pleasant and delightful, goodly and glorious, excellent and eximious, choice as the cedars, that are chosen before other trees; and why? (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:17"*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Song 5:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**His mouth is most sweet.** Heb., His palate—that is, his word and promises, which are, as it were, the breath of Christ's mouth—is all sweet. This she had celebrated before, (*Solomon's Song 5:13*) but, as not satisfied therewith, she repeats it, and rolls it again as sugar under her tongue. She doubles this commendation, to show that that is the chief lovely thing in Christ, his word; this fruit she had found sweet unto her palate, (*Solomon's Song 2:3*) and she spareth not to set it forth, as here, the second time, *Malleus carere*, &c. We had rather be without fire, water, bread, sun, air, &c, saith a Dutch divine, than that one sweet sentence of our blessed Saviour, "Come unto me all ye that are weary," &c.

Yea, he is altogether lovely. *Totus totus desiderabilis*, wholly amiable, every whit of him to be desired. Moses thought him so, when he preferred the "reproach of Christ," the worst part of him, the heaviest piece of his cross, before "all the treasures in Egypt," that treasure chest of the world. (*Hebrews 11:26*) Those of this world see no such excellence and desirableness in Christ and his ways, (*Psalms 22:6-7*) nor can do, till soundly shaken; "I will shake all nations,

¹⁷⁸ Εἰς τὸ παντελές, *Prorsus, perpetuo, perfecte*.

and then the desire of all nations"—that is, Christ—"shall come," (*Haggai 2:7*) with stirring affections, saying, (as *Isaiah 26:9*) "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." Lo, this is the voice of every true child of the Church; and these "desires of the righteous shall be satisfied." (*Proverbs 10:24*)

This is my beloved, &c. *q.d.*, You may see I have cause to look after him; neither can you do better than to do likewise: howsoever, when you see him, do my errand to him. (as *Solomon's Song 5:7*) And here we have most excellent rhetoric, which, in the beginning of a speech, requires τὰ ἥδη, milder affections; in the end of it, τὰ πάθω, stronger passions, that may leave deepest impressions. {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 6

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 6:1]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Whither is thy beloved gone?** &c. All Christ's disciples are ζητητικοί, inquisitive after the "truth that is in Jesus," (*Ephesians 4:21*) and are fellow helpers to it. (*3 John 1:8*) There is also *nescio quid divinum in auscultatione*, as one well noteth; that is, a strange and strong energy or forcibleness in hearing, whether publicly or in private conference, Christ and his excellencies displayed and discoursed of. Let but his name, as an ointment, be poured out, and the virgins can do no less than love him. (*Solomon's Song 1:3*) These daughters of Jerusalem are, by hearing the Church describing her spouse, and painting him out in lively colours, fired up to a holy contention in godliness, and, might they but know where to have him, they would be at any pains to "partake of the benefit." (*1 Timothy 6:2*) They wondered at first why she should make such ado about Christ; but when they conversed a while with her, and had heard her speak with such affection and admiration, they are turned, and will now go seek him with her. God is pleased many times to water the holy meetings and conferences of his people with blessing, beyond expectation or belief. We should frame ourselves to an easy discourse of the "glory of Christ's kingdom, and talk of his power." (*Psalms 145:8-9*) Our tongues in this argument should be "as the pen of a ready writer," (*Psalms 45:1*) that we may be able to speak oft to one another, with profit and power in the best thing. (*Malachi 3:16*) Little do we know what a deal of good may be done hereby. Mr Foxe, speaking of God's little flock in the days of Henry VIII, saith: In such rarity of good books and want of teachers, this one thing I cannot but marvel and muse at, to note in the registers, and consider how the Word of God did multiply so exceedingly among them; for I find that one neighbour, resorting and conferring with another, eftsoons, with a few words of their first or second talk, did win and turn their minds to that wherein they desired to persuade them touching the truth of God's Word and sacraments, &c. ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ In all ages such as were ordained to eternal life "believed"; (*Acts 13:48*) after that they had "heard the word of truth they believed, and were sealed." (*Ephesians 1:13*) Contrariwise, reprobates either refuse to hear the Church preaching Christ, (*John 8:47*) or else they hear and jeer—as Pilate, with his What is truth?—in mere mockery ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ (*John 18:38*) hear and blaspheme, (*Acts 13:45*) or, at best, hear and admire, and that is all. They leave the Word where they found it, for anything they will practise. They think they do a great char to sit out a sermon, and then commend it. But wisdom's children will not only "justify" her, (*Matthew 11:19*) but also "glorify" her. (*Acts 13:48*) They will "seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore"; (*Psalms 105:4*) seek him in his holy temple; seek him in and with the Church, as here. They know that *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. The Church is "the pillar and ground of truth," (*1 Timothy 3:15*) inasmuch as, by her ministry, the authority, dignity, knowledge, virtue, and use of the truth of the gospel, is preserved in the world, and "held out," (*Philippians 2:16*) as the hand holds forth the torch, or the watchtower the light, and so the haven to the weather beaten mariners.

That we may seek him with thee. For he is not like to seek long that seeks alone, there being a notable tie to constancy in the communion of saints. Surely, as sincerity is the life of religion, so society is the life of sincerity. The Philippians had no sooner received the gospel, but they were in fellowship, to a day. (*Philippians 1:5*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 6:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **My beloved is gone down into his garden.** Now she can tell where Christ is, and inform others who before was to seek of him, and sought information from others. *Post tenebras lux* is the Church's motto. "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall give me light"; he will, with the temptation, give the issue—a way to get out of it, as the moon wades out of a cloud, as the seed gets up from under a clod. And see how forward

¹⁷⁹ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 750.

¹⁸⁰ *Irridentis vox, non interrogantis.*

she is to share; her friends shall know all that she can tell them. There is no envy in spiritual things, because they may be divided *in solidum*. in the whole. One may have as much as another, and all alike. Yea, God's people know that the "manifestation of the Spirit is given them to profit withal," (1 **Corinthians 12:7**) and that it is not pouring out, but want of pouring out, that dries up the streams of grace, as that of off. (2 **Kings 4:6**) What is meant by Christ's garden? (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 4:16**") He is said to go down to it, in allusion to the situation of Jerusalem, which was on a hill, their gardens being below in the fruitful valleys. Christ came down to his Church; he "descended into the lower parts of the earth"; that is, into his mother's womb; (**Ephesians 4:9**; **Psalm 139:15**) yea, he "emptied himself" ⁽¹⁸¹⁾ of all his excellencies, and took upon him the form of a servant, yea, of an evil servant that was to be beaten. Yea, more, he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (**Philippians 2:9**) Oh, humble Saviour, whither wilt thou descend? *Facinus vincere civem Romanum*. ⁽¹⁸²⁾ It was much for the Son of God to be bound, more to be beaten, most of all to be slain. *Quid dicam in crucem tolli*, &c. Well might the apostle say, "He humbled himself"

To the beds of spices. *i.e.*, To the particular churches, or to the companies of believers. These beds or rows of renewed souls, Christ, as a good gardener, treadeth out, soweth, planteth, watereth, fenceth, filleth with sundry gifts and graces.

To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. Like as men go to their gardens, either to make merry, as we say, or to gather fruits. So Christ here, either to "eat his pleasant fruits," (**Solomon's Song 4:16**) his people's holy performances, better to him than any Ambrosia, and then to "gather his lilies," to transplant them into heaven. *Pascitur Christus, quando suorum virtutes videt*, saith one. *Lilia decerpit, quando optimum quemque ex hac vita traducit*: Christ "feedeth in the gardens," when he beholdeth the virtues of his people. He "gathereth lilies" when he translateth good souls into his kingdom above.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 6:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I am my beloved's**, &c. Or, I am for my beloved, and he is for me; *i.e.*, for me only. He resteth in his love, and I in mine. We will seek no further. And here her faith reviveth who in her late temptation and desertion was in a mist, and could not read her own graces, ⁽¹⁸³⁾ (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 2:16**") It reviveth, I say, and fetcheth out Christ, that had hid himself, as that brave woman did. (**Mark 7:24-25**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 6:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah.** A most neat and elegant city, where the kings of Israel kept their courts. A place of pleasure it was, as the very name imports; hence the Greeks translate it here good pleasure, ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ like as the Italians call a city of theirs Placenza. Of the Church's exquisite beauty much hath been said before. Let it ever be remembered that all her beauty is but borrowed. (**Ezekiel 16:14**) *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*, as they say in the civil law. Isaac, when he was to marry Rebecca, sent her jewels aforehand, that, having them, she might be more lovely in his eye. So doth Christ the spirit of faith, and other graces, besides the imputation of his own perfect righteousness, that he may delight in his spouse. And albeit she had so discourteously dealt with him, (as **Solomon's Song 5:3**) and thereupon he had stepped aside for a while; yet that she might know that he was still the same, without shadow of change, and that he "hated putting away," (**Malachi 2:16**) meeting her again, he doth marvellously commend her, that is, his own graces in her, and all is as well as ever between them. *Homo agnoscit, Deus ignoscit*: it is but acknowledging the debt, and Christ will soon cross the book, and cancel the handwriting.

¹⁸¹ ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν, *ex omni ad nihilum seipsum redegit*.—Beza.

¹⁸² Cicero.

¹⁸³ *Flamma redardescit, quae modo nulla fuit*.—Ovid.

¹⁸⁴ εὐδοκία.

(**Colossians 2:14**) *Quem poenitet peccasse, pene est innocens*,—Repent, and the amends is made. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." (**Jeremiah 3:22**)

Comely as Jerusalem. That "city of the great king," great among the nations, and "princess among the provinces," (**Lamentations 1:1**) the glory of the whole earth; *Urbium totius Orientis clarissima*, saith Pliny, ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ the most famous of all the cities of the East. *Orbis totius lumen*, as another calls it; yea, an earthly paradise, as Josephus, *solī coelique fertilitate omnes civitates superans*—a city compact together. (**Psalms 122:3**) The Church is all this in Christ's esteem, and though the least, yet "not the least among the princes of Judah," as it is said of Bethlehem in a different respect. (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6**)

Terrible as an army with banners. *i.e.*, Of invincible faith and spiritual courage: terrible also and full of majesty, either to draw hearts or to daunt them; as Nazianzen saith of Athanasius, that he was *magnes et adamas*, a lodestone in his sweet gentle drawing nature, and yet an adamant in his resolute stout carriage against those that were evil and erroneous. How terrible were the Israelites, encamped and bannered in the wilderness, unto the Moabites, Canaanites! &c. (**Exodus 15:14-16; Psalm 48:5-6**) And the like may be said of the Hussites in Bohemia, when all Germany were up in arms against them, and worsted by them; of the Britons under the conduct of Germanus, fighting against a mighty army of Pelagian Picts and Saxons in this kingdom, and prevailing only by the three times pronouncing the word Hallelujah. ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Of the Protestants in France at the siege of Mountalban, where the people of God using daily humiliation, immediately before their sallying forth, sang a psalm, which when the enemy heard, they would so quake and tremble, crying, They come, they come, as though the wrath of God had been rushing out upon them. ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ God is both van and rear in the Church's army. "The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward." (**Isaiah 52:12**) Even he that is "the great, the mighty, and the terrible God"; (**Nehemiah 9:32**) so that although, *Loricatus incedat Satan, et cataphractus*, as Luther hath it, Satan, muster up all his forces, tyrants, heretics, &c., that invade the Church and assault her on all sides, yet they shall find her invincible: *Oppugnatur, sed non expugnatur*. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel say, yet they have not prevailed against me." (**Psalms 129:1-2**) *Populus Rom. saepe proelio victus, nunquam bello*, saith Florus. The people of Rome lost many battles, but were never overcome in a set war; at the longrun they crushed all their enemies. So the Church. Nay, it may be truly affirmed of her, that she conquereth, even then, when she is conquered; as Christ overcame as well by patience as by power. So that more truly it may be written upon her gates, that is at this day upon the gates of Venice, *Intacta manet*, Let them remain intact, because it was never yet subdued by any enemy.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 6:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Turn away thine eyes from me.** Or, Turn thine eyes right upon me; so (**Solomon's Song 6:13**) he calls, "Return, return, O Shulamite"; and then the sense is, Look up unto me by faith. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (**Isaiah 45:22; 31:1, 42:18**) But to keep to our translation. Christ had before confessed himself ravished with one of her eyes; and here he saith the same in effect. *Stupenda sane dignatio*, a wonderful condescension. We use to say, Majesty and love cannot meet or cohabit: ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ because love is the abasing of the soul to all services. But it is otherwise in Christ: majesty and love, even unto ravishment, meet in his holy heart. If the Church be sick of love toward him, he would she should know that he is overcome with love towards her, and that there is no love lost between them.

¹⁸⁵ Lib. v. cap. 14.

¹⁸⁶ Dr. Ussher, *De Britan. Eccles. Primord.*, 337.

¹⁸⁷ *Spec. Belli Sac*, 282.

¹⁸⁸ *Non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur, maiestas et amor.*

Thy hair is as a flock of goats, &c. Grazing upon, and gazing from Gilead—*q.d.*, I like thee as well as ever I did, thy late relapse notwithstanding; for I find thee more humble, watchful, thankful for a Saviour, merciful to others, desirous of the state of perfection, &c. And as a limb once broke, and well set again, knits and grows stronger there than in any other place; so by thy late falling in some sort from me, I find thee more firmly fastened unto me. Thus God changeth, saith one, our grievously wounds into beauty spots, and maketh the horrible sting of Satan to be a pearl pin to pin upon us the long white robe of Christ, and to dress us with the garment of gladness. (**Solomon's Song 4:1-6**) And observe here an addition of some other parts described, and a more full description of some of the former: to show that his love was no whit diminished, but rather increased. Something it was surely that made Mr Foxe, the martyrologue say, that he got by his infirmities, and lost by his graces.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 6:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep**, &c. See **Solomon's Song 6:4-5; 4:2.** (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 6:4"*) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 6:5"*) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 4:2"*) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 6:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.** See **Solomon's Song 6:4, 5; 4:2.** (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 6:4"*) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 6:5"*) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 4:2"*) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 6:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There are threescore queens, and fourscore,** &c. Or as some read it, hypothetically, Be there sixty queens, and eighty concubines, which were secondary wives—*usurary*, the lawyers call them, that had right to the bed, but no rule in the family—and virgins, or waiting gentle women without number; although there be of other sorts never so many, yet "My dove," albeit but one, is an "only one," and beloved accordingly. (*see Jeremiah 31:20*) For the allegory here—some go one way to work, some another. Let there be never so great a number, saith one, of peoples and nations, of churches and assemblies, which challenge my name and love, and perhaps by their outward prosperities may seem to plead much interest in me, and much worth in themselves, yet "My dove," &c. Others think, that by "queens" are meant true believers; by "concubines," hypocrites and formal professors; and by "virgins," profane persons, that have not yet so much as a form of godliness. The first are the fewest, and the last are the greatest number. Lastly, There are those who make "queens," "concubines," and "virgins," to signify three different sorts or degrees of true Christians in the Catholic Church, which yet is but one. Some have made but small progress in piety; these are compared to "virgins," and are the far greater in number: Some are got further onward, and are of better proof; these are like "concubines," and do exceed the "queens" in number; *quo enim perfectiores, eo pauciores*. Some again are eminent and eximious Christians; these are queens, and have more close communion with Christ: and to this highest degree we must all aspire and endeavour, striving to perfection. Nature, art, grace, do all proceed from less perfect to more perfect. We read in Scripture of a Christian's conception, (**Galations 4:19**) birth, (**1 Peter 1:23; 2:2**) childhood, (**1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 1 John 2:13**) youth, or well grown age, (**Ephesians 4:13**) old age. (**Acts 21:16**) Mnason was a gray-headed experienced Christian, a father. (**1 John 2:13**) All must exact of themselves a daily growth, and be still bringing forth fruit in their old age, (**Psalms 92:13-14**) so shall the king take pleasure still in their beauty; so shall he one day set them upon his right hand, as place of dignity and safety, in gold of Ophir. (**Psalms 45:9, 11**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 6:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My dove, mine undefiled is but one.** For though all the afore named may be called spouses, yet they all make but one. "He that hath the bride (not brides) is the bridegroom," saith the Baptist. And this is "a great mystery," saith Paul, "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church," not churches. (**Ephesians 5:32**) *Una ecclesia, quia ex una fide, per unum Spiritum nascitur*, saith Epiphanius. "Beware therefore of the concision" (**Philippians 3:2**)—that is, of those that make divisions, and cut the Church in

minutula frustula, as Augustine saith of the Donatists, into little pieces, and sucking congregations, making separations. ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Peter himself was blamed for this, (*Galations 2:11-12*) and others branded for profligate professors. "These are they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." (*Jude 1:19*) The primitive Christians were famous for their unity, *animo animaque inter se miscebantur*, saith Tertullian. The very heathens acknowledged that no people in the world did hold together, and love one another, so as Christians did. As the curtains of the tabernacles were joined by loops, so were they by love; and as the stones of the temple were so close cemented together, that they seemed to be all but one stone, so was it among them. Neither need we wonder, since Christ's dove is but one; neither is there any such oneness or entireness anywhere as among the saints. Other societies are but as the clay in the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image: they may cleave together, but not incorporated one into another.

She is the only one of her mother. *i.e.*, Of the world, say some; of the flesh, say others: but they say best that expound it of Jerusalem, "that is above, the mother of us all." (*Galations 4:26*) Epiphanius makes faith and religion the mother of the Church.

The daughters saw her, and blessed her. *i.e.*, Called and counted her blessed above all other people. "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" &c. (*Deuteronomy 33:29*) And yet at that time they seemed to be nothing so happy as the Moabites, Edomites, &c., as being in a very unsettled condition in the wilderness. So David, What one nation in the earth is like thy people, like Israel? (*2 Samuel 7:23*) Oh "blessed is the people whose God is the Lord." (*Psalms 144:15*) *Est Ecclesiae Scoticae privilegium rarum prae multis in quo eius nomen apud caeteros fuit celebre*, &c. ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ It is the singular privilege of the Church of Scotland, and they are deservedly famous for it, that for this fourscore years and upwards they have kept a unity, together with purity of doctrine, without heresy, or so much as schism. This "the daughters"—other Christian reformed churches—"have seen and blessed her; yea, the queens and concubines, and they praised her."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 6:11]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I went down into the garden of nuts.** Or, Nutmegs. Tremellius and those that follow him render it the *well dressed*, or *pruned gardens*. These are the particular churches and various saints, Christ's mystical and spiritual garden, that need much pruning and trimming. Of all possessions, *Nulla maiorem operam requirit*, saith Cato, none requireth so much pains to be taken with it as a garden or orchard. Grain comes up and grows alone, ripeneth and cometh to perfection, the husbandmen sleeping and waking, "he knows not how." (*Mark 4:27*) But gardens must be dressed, trimmed, pruned, pared almost every day, or else all will be out of order. Christ, therefore, as a careful gardener, αἴρει, καθαίρει, *Putat, purgat, amputat*, weeds, lops, prunes his garden. (*John 15:2*) Be careful, therefore, saith a worthy divine: Christ walks in his garden, spies how many raw, unripe, undigested prayers, &c., hang on such a branch; what gum of pride, what leaves or luxuriant sprigs and rotten boughs there are, and with his pruning knife cuts and slashes where he sees things amiss, &c. Thus he. Neither may we think that Christ doth this or any of this in ill-will, but out of singular love and faithfulness to our souls, which else would soon be woefully overgrown with the weeds of wickedness, as a neglected garden. The wicked God never meddleth with, as I may so say, till he come with his axe to hew them down to the fire; because he finds them incorrigible. "Let him alone," (*Hosea 4:17*) saith God concerning Ephraim; and "why should ye be smitten any more, since ye revolt more and more?" (*Isaiah 1:5*) They have a great deal of freedom for present, but the end is utter extirpation. *Non surget hic afflictio* (*Nehemiah 1:9*) they shall totally and finally be consumed at once.

¹⁸⁹ *Christi tunica est unica.*

¹⁹⁰ *Sic in Elogio Proefator. De Confess. in Princip. Syntag. Confess., p. 6.*

To see the fruits of the valley. Green valley plants—that is, the humble spirits which "tremble at God's word," and present him with the "first ripe fruits, which his soul desireth." (**Micah 7:1**)

And to see whether the vine flourished. These vines and pomegranates are the faithful, who are compared to these trees, for the plenty and sweetness of their fruits. Christ came to see whether the former were flowering, and the latter budding; to see if there were any hopes of ripe fruit in due time; for he liketh not those outlandish plants, that every year bud and blossom, but never bring any fruit to its perfection. No. When he hath done all that can be done for his vineyard, he looks for fruit. (**Isaiah 5:2; Matthew 21:34**) "For who," saith he, "planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" (**1 Corinthians 9:7**) *Danda igitur est opera ut huius agricolae votis respondeamus.* Answer Christ's expectation, or else he will lay down his basket, and take up his axe. (**Luke 13:7**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 6:12]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Or ever I was aware, my soul,** &c. Heb., I knew not. So Christ speaketh after the manner of men. And it is as if he should say, I could not conceive that my people were in so good a forwardness, as indeed I found them; for they have over and above answered mine expectation, being "full of goodness," as those believing Romans, (**Romans 15:14**) "filled with all knowledge," and always abounding in the work of the Lord; from whom therefore they shall be sure to receive "a full reward." (**2 John 8**) Or thus, "I know not," that is, I perceived not that the vines flourished, the pomegranates budded, that all was ripe and ready; therefore I withdrew myself for a season, O my spouse; and therein I dealt with thee no otherwise, than as good gardeners and vinedressers do, who coming (perhaps before the time of fruit) to look for fruit, and finding none, depart for present, till a more convenient season. But that thou mayest know my dear love and tender care of thy comfort, behold my haste to call thee to thy former feelings again. For *dicto citius*, I say more quickly, "my soul set me on the chariots of Amminadib," who may seem to be some famous chariot driver of Solomon's, that could outdrive all the rest. There is another sense given of these words, and perhaps a better. For by some these are thought to be the words of the Church confessing her ignorance. I knew not, Lord, saith she, that thou wast gone down into the garden to do those things. I thought rather that thou hadst departed in great anger against me for my negligence; and therefore I sought thee carefully, I made out after thee with all my might; my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib; *Amor addidit alas*, I drove furiously till I had found thee. I was like unto those two women in Zechariah, that "had wings, and wind in their wings." (**Zechariah 5:9**) This was well; that missing her spouse, she followed so hard after him. "My soul cleaveth after thee," saith David, (**Psalms 63:8**) thereby showing his love, constance, and humility. But then that was not so well; that she so far mistook Christ, as to think that he went away from her in deep displeasure, and kept away from her, as loathing her company. Such hard conceits of Christ, and heavy conceits we are apt to have of ourselves, as if he had forsaken us, because we cannot presently find him, whenas he is only gone down in his garden to prune it, or to see how things thrive there, as if he had cast off the care of us; because, finding us too light, he "make us heavy (as there is need) with manifold temptations." (**1 Peter 1:6**) We are therefore "judged of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world": (**1 Corinthians 11:32**) He leaves us on the other side the stile (as fathers sometimes do their children), and then helps us over when we cry. To say God hath cast us off, because he hath hid his face, is a fallacy fetched out of the devil's topics. *Non est argumentum aversi Dei quemadmodum diabolus interpretatur, sed potius paternae ipsius benevolentiae*, saith learned Lavater.¹⁹¹ It is not an argument of God's wrath and displeasure, as the devil would make it, but rather of his fatherly love and affection; he hides his love, as Joseph did, out of increasement of love. And yet how apt are we to say in this case, with those malcontents in

¹⁹¹ Lavat. in *Proverbs 3*.

Malachi, *In quo dilexisti nos?* Wherein hast thou loved us? and with those Israelites in the wilderness, "Is God among us?" as if that could not be, and they athirst. (**Exodus 17:7**) "O my Lord," said Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us?" (**Judges 6:12**) And, "Lord God," said Abraham, when he had received many gracious promises, "what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (**Genesis 15:1-2**) We see then how ready the best of us are to cast the helve after the hatchet, as they say; and, like little children, because we may not have what we would, sullenly to say, God loves us not, and we will not have what he thinks good to give unto us. "My soul refused comfort," saith he in **Psalms 77:2**; and "I said, My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord: remembering mine afflictions and my misery, the wormwood and the gall." (**Lamentations 3:18-19**) This our folly and fault we must confess to Christ, as the Church here doth; and beseech him, by his Spirit, to teach us better things, that we may not mistake the cause of our calamities, and make them heavier than God meant them, by our frowardness and impatience. *Pondus ipsa iactatione incommodius sit*, saith Seneca.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 6:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Return, return, O Shulamite.** The Church is so called from her peace and perfection with God in Christ. Brightman gathers from this word, that the Church of the Jews in special is meant (the Church in general being usually before signified by the daughters of Jerusalem), and applies it to the recalling of the Jews, according to **Romans 11:25**, &c., which is yet to be fulfilled. Solomon's wife, saith another, was after his name called the Shulamite, according to **Isaiah 4:1**. And as Christ in this book is named Solomon, so the Church is called Shulamite, to show the communion that she hath with him; and therefore also the forming of the Hebrew word is rather passive than active. That which she is again and again called upon to do, is to return. It seems she had so posted apace after Christ (as on swift chariots, **Solomon's Song 6:12**), that she had gone quite beyond him. He therefore, as it were by houting and shouting to her, calls her back. How easily we overshoot and run into extremes, may be seen in Peter, (**John 13:9**) and the Galatians. (**Galatians 4:9-10**) It is best to hold the golden mean. Howbeit, as in falling forward, is nothing so much danger as backward; so he that is earnest in good, though he may overdo, and carry some things indiscreetly, yet is he far better than a lusk or apostate, especially if he afterwards return and discern, and hearken to better counsel. But some are so set upon it, that, like a man that is running a race, though you give them never so good advice, they will not stay to hear it. Of these the proverb is verified, "He that hasteth with his feet, sinneth" (**Proverbs 19:2**) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 19:2"*)

That we may look upon thee. Or, Contemplate thee with complacence and delight. This is the speech of the bridegroom and his friends. The Church, though in her fright and grief for want of her beloved, though unveiled and evil entreated by the watchmen, &c., and so not so slightly as at some other times, yet wanted not that beauty that made her desirable; like as some faces appear most oriently beautiful when they are most instamped with sorrow, and as the sky is most clear after a storm.

What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies. Ready to join battle, or maintaining civil war within her. For in the Christian conflict, the very same faculties are opposed; because in every faculty "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." (**Galatians 5:17**) These maintain civil broils within the Shulamite (as the two babes did in Rebecca's womb), so that she cannot do what she would. And this the apostle spake by woeful experience, as appears from **Romans 6:15, 21**. Something lay at the fountain head, and stopped it. There is a continual contest with spiritual wickednesses about heavenly privileges ⁽¹⁹²⁾ (**Ephesians 6:12**) Put fire and water together, there is no quiet till one of them get the victory. So in sicknesses.

Let a man have a strong disease and a strong body, he shall never have any rest as long as they both continue in their strength. When Christ was born, all Jerusalem was troubled. When Paul came to Ephesus, "there arose no small stir about that way"; (**Acts 19:23**) so when grace is wrought once, there is somewhat to do within, though till then all was jolly, quiet. When cold saltpetre and hot brimstone meet they make a great noise; so do the flesh and spirit in their skirmishes and encounters. Now these two duellers meet and fight in every faculty of the soul; as hot and cold do in lukewarm water; as light and darkness meet in the morning light; or as wine and water in a cup mixed with both. In the wicked one faculty may, and sometimes doth, oppose another; as sensual appetite may resist natural reason, &c. But in such as are sanctified, the understanding is against the understanding, the will against the will, &c., as the sick patient both wills and nills those physical slobber sauces. But Satan is not so "divided against himself." (**Luke 11:18**) No more is the flesh. It is in the Shulamite only, and in every part of her, that this conflict is found which maketh her cry out with Rebecca sometimes, "If it be so, why am I thus?" and with Paul, "Wretched creature that I am!" &c. {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 7

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 7:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, &c.** Before he had described her from head to foot; now back again, from foot to head, taking in ten parts of his spouse, concerning whom—such was his love—he thought he could never say sufficient. He begins at the lowest and most abject part, the feet, not without admiration of them. *O quam pulchri sunt pedes tui!* "Oh, how beautiful are thy feet with shoes!" A temporal calling honours our profession; so some understand it. Others make the meaning to be, the Church's being "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"; (**Ephesians 6:15**) ready pressed to "run with patience the race that is set before her." (**Hebrews 12:1**) To run is active; to run with patience is passive. This prince's daughter (Atalanta-like) can only skill of this "running with patience," as being shod with *Tachash skin*, (**Ezekiel 16:10**) bestowed upon her by her spouse, as a love token, that is, with sound affections and holy actions. Whereas wicked men are carried captive by the devil, as the Egyptians once were by the Assyrians, (**Isaiah 20:4**) "naked and barefoot," and so "perish from the way." (**Psalms 2:12**)

O prince's daughter. Thou that hast him for thy father "in whose hands are all the corners of the earth," and is supreme King of the universe. This is such a privilege and preferment as St John stands amazed at. (**1 John 3:1**) "Behold," saith he, *qualem et quantum*, "what manner of love the Father hath showed unto us, that we should be called the sons" and daughters "of God Almighty." (**2 Corinthians 6:18**) All privileges are summed up in this; and in **John 1:12** it is called a power or prerogative ⁽¹⁹³⁾ royal; it is to be of royal blood of heaven; it is to be an heir of God and co-heir with Christ. Kings can make their firstborn only heirs, as Jehoshaphat. (**2 Chronicles 21:3**) But all God's children are firstborn, and so "higher than the kings of the earth." (**Psalms 89:27**)

The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, &c.. i.e., Thy loins are compassed with the belt of truth; for so some render it, The compassing of thy thighs or loins. And here, if ever, ungirt, unblest. "Gird up therefore the loins of your minds"; (**1 Peter 1:13**) gird yourselves and serve God. (**Luke 17:8**) Girding implies readiness, nimbleness, handiness, handsomeness. A loose, discinct, and diffident mind is unfit for holy actions.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 7:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy navel is like a round goblet, &c.** There are those who expound this text as the two sacraments. The navel is baptism, that nourisheth newborn babes in the womb of the Church. See hence the use of it, even to infants, who can receive nourishment by the navel, though they can neither take nor chew nor suck meat with hand or mouth. Note this against Anabaptists, saith Mr Cotton upon these words, this navel never wants liquor; there is a continual matter of instruction and comfort to be fetched from baptism against all temptations. A Christian, saith Chrysostom, should never step out of doors, or lie down in his bed, or go into his closet, but he should remember that word, *Abrenuncio*, I forsake the devil and all his works, &c. Luther tells of a certain holy virgin, that used to quench the devil's fiery darts with the water of baptism: for as often as she was tempted to do anything not becoming her profession, she would resist the devil, steadfast in the faith, and stop his mouth with this short but full answer, *Christiana sum*, I am a Christian; I have been "baptized into the death of Christ"; I have also "put on Christ by baptism"; I am a votary, the vows of God are upon me, &c. But what a horrible shame is that to the Papists, and what a sore stumblingblock must it needs be to the poor Jews that live among them, that in Rome a Jewish maid may not be admitted into the stews of whoredom, unless she will be first baptized? This is related and bewailed by Espencaeus, ⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ a moderate Papist.

¹⁹³ ἑξουσία.

¹⁹⁴ *De Contin.*, lib. iii. cap. 4.

Thy belly is like an heap of wheat, set about with lilies. Some understand hereby that other sacrament of the Lord's Supper, called a "heap of wheat," for its store of excellent nourishment; and said to be "set about with lilies"—that is, with Christians, white and of holy conversation. Basil calls such, stars of the world and flowers of the churches ⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ Chrysostom calls them earthly angels, and saith that they were *puriores coelo*, purer than the heaven in their common conversation, but especially when they came to the Lord's table—that dreadful ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ table, as he calleth it—whereunto all must come with the best preparation they can make, wash and be clean—wash their hands in innocence before they compass God's altar; wash their "hearts," (**Jeremiah 4:14**) their "feet." (**John 13:10**) "He that is washed (*sc.*, for the outside) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit"; an allusion to those that, having bathed their bodies, foul their feet by going out of the bath, and so are fain to wash them again. The inwards and the feet in a sacrifice were to be washed above the rest, because the entrails contain the excrements, and the legs tread in the dirt. The soul is apt to gather soil by meddling with earthly things, though lawful; how much more to be defiled with the soot of sin, as if she had "lain among the pots." All Christ's Nazarites, his votaries, must come to his feast "purer than snow, whiter than milk," &c., (**Lamentations 4:7**) since at this sacrament they do renew the nuptials of Christ, and take a corporal oath to cleave close to him with full purpose of heart all the days of their lives. As for those that presume to come unpreparedly, that want their wedding garment, they are no otherwise bidden to the feast of the King than Haman was to Queen Esther's. Sin brought to the Sacrament petitions against a man, as Esther did against Haman at the banquet of wine; (**Esther 7:2, 6**) pick out that time, and he shall find God no less angry than Haman did Ahasuerus. For "this is that which the Lord hath said, I will be sanctified in all them that draw near unto me." Of communicants, God seems to say, as Solomon did of Adonijah, "If he show himself a worthy man, there shall not one hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die." (**1 Kings 1:52**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 7:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy two breasts are like two young roes.** Fresh and lusty, even and equal. Understand the two Testaments; hereunto resembled for their perfect agreement, amiable proportion, and swift running all the world over in a short time. Eusebius saith, that the doctrine of both Testaments was presently after our Saviour's resurrection carried abroad into all countries, as it were, upon eagle's wings. The like may be said of Luther and his colleagues in Germany at the first Reformation there, which, as lightning, was soon seen from one end of the heaven to the other. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." (**Acts 19:20**) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 4:5"*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 7:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Thy neck is as a tower of ivory.** Most smooth, white, and upright. Some do hereby understand magistrates, that support the State, as the neck doth the head. "I bear up the pillars of it," saith David. Others will have the ministers meant, who, being aloft in the Church, are to the same instead of watch towers or towers of defence. And especially then when they are in their pulpits—called towers in the Hebrew (**Nehemiah 8:4**)—reading and expounding God's law unto his people.

Thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon. Glazed with tears of compunction and compassion—*Nam faciles motus mens generosa capit*—and well cleared to look into her own heart and life. Tears instead of gems were the ornaments of David's bed, saith Chrysostom. And surely that sweet singer never sang more melodiously than when his heart was broken most penitentially. (**Psalms 6**) (**Psalms 51**) Thus birds in the spring sing most sweetly when it rains most sadly; and tears of true contrition are *pillulae lucis*, pills made on purpose to clear the eyesight. When John wept, the sealed book was set open to him; *Lilium lachryma sunseritur*. Light is sown for the righteous.

¹⁹⁵ ἀστέρας τῆς οἰκουμένης ανθε τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

¹⁹⁶ φρικώδης.

Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, &c. *Si verborum faciem consideremus, quid poterit magis dici ridiculum?* saith Tittleman upon the words: If we look upon the outside only of this text, what may seem to have been spoken more ridiculous? Is it so great a commendation to have a nose like a tower? That which we must herehence learn is, that seeing Christ is now risen again, and ascended up into heaven, we ought to bear our noses aloft, as it were, savouring things of the Spirit of Christ, discerning things that are excellent, and by a spiritual sagacity aspiring to eternity.

That looketh toward Damascus. The chief city of Syria, having its name from the bloody excursions of thieves, as Peter Martyr ⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ thinks; or else, as others, from the blood of righteous Abel there spilled, whence the place was called *Damsech*, "a bag of blood."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 7:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.** This head is Christ himself, for he is the sole head of his Church: "God hath put all things under his feet"—hence he is here compared to Carmel, because he is high over all—"and given him to be head over all things"—that is, over all persons—"to the Church." (*Ephesians 1:18, 22*) Angels are under Christ as a head of government, of influence, of confirmation, not of redemption, as the saints are. The angels are great friends to the Church, but not members of it. (*Hebrews 2:16*) The Church Christ sanctified and washed with his blood. (*Ephesians 5:26*) Not so the angels. He was but a poor patron of the Pope's headship that said—and, as he thought, very wisely too—that he had read in some vocabulary that Cephass signified a head, therefore Peter was head of the Church. But if that should have been granted him, yet it would not follow that the Pope is therefore so too; for Bellarmine, ⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ a better scholar by far, is forced to say, *Forte non est de iure divino Rom. pontificem Petro succedere*, perhaps it is not by any divine right that the Pope succeedeth Peter. And again, *Rom. pontificem Petro succedere non habetur expresse in Scripturis*, it is not expressly set down in the Scriptures that the Pope succeedeth Peter.

And the hair of thine head like purple. Which was the colour of kings and princes. The saints—called here the hair of the Church's head for their number or multitude—are "princes in all lands"; (*Psalms 45:16*) yea, they are kings in righteousness, as Melchisedec was a king, but somewhat obscure. Compare *Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24*. "Many righteous," saith one, "Many kings," saith the other, "have desired to see those things that ye see," &c.

The king is held in the galleries. *i.e.*, There is no king in the world so great and glorious but might find in his heart to be tied to these walls, and to be held prisoner in the sight of thee and thy bravery; like as King James, coming first into the public library at Oxford, and viewing the little chains wherewith each book there is tied to its place, wished that if ever it were his destiny to be a prisoner, that library might be his prison, those books his fellow prisoners, those chains his fetters. (*Psalms 138:4-5; 119:72*) ⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ The Psalmist shows by prophesying that even kings, coming to taste the excellence of the comforts of godliness, and to feel the power of God's Word, should sing for joy of heart, and greatly acknowledge the excelling glory of Christ's spouse the Church. See David's desire. (*Psalms 27:4; Psalm 84*) Constantine and Valentinian, two emperors, called themselves *Vasallos Christi*, as Socrates reports, the vassals of Christ. And Theodosius, another emperor, professed that it was more honour and comfort to him to be *membrum ecclesiae, quam caput imperii*, a member of the Church, than head of the empire. Nay, Numa, second king of Rome, though but a heathen, held it a higher honour to

¹⁹⁷ Pet. Mart. in 1 Reg. xvi.

¹⁹⁸ *De Rom. Pontif.*, lib. ii. cap. 12.

¹⁹⁹ *Rex Platon.*, page 123.

serve God than to reign over men. ⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Some interpreters by the king here understand Christ, coveting the Church's beauty, (**Psalm 45:11**) and held fast bound unto her in the bands of pure affection, of spiritual wedlock.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 7:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights.** *Emphatica haec admodum sunt, cum toties exclamatio ponatur*, saith one. This is a most emphatic exclamation, proceeding from admiration, and importing that all he could say of her was too little. Well might the prophet say, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so doth thy God over thee." (**Isaiah 62:5**) Hence he can make no end here of commending her; but, having finished one praise, he presently begins another. This yields infinite matter of comfort to the saints, that Christ loves them so dearly, prizeth them so highly, praiseth them so heartily. Howbeit, let not them hereupon "turn again to folly," (**Psalm 85:8**) or give way to carnal security. *Laetemur in domino, sed caveamus a recidivo*. Argue not from mercy to liberty—that is the devil's logic—but from mercy to duty, as those good souls do. (**Ezra 9:13-14**) Having received such and such, both privative and positive favours, should we again break thy commandments? There is so much unthankfulness and disingenuity in such an entertainment of mercy, that holy Ezra thinks heaven and earth would be ashamed of it. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" saith the apostle. (**Romans 6:1**) And it is as if he should say, that were most unreasonable, and to a good heart, impossible. A man may as well say the sea burns, or fire cools, as that assurance of Christ's love breeds careless and loose living. They that hold so, know not the compulsive power of Christ's love, (**2 Corinthians 5:14**) nor what belongs to the life of God (**Ephesians 4:18**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 7:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**This thy stature is like to a palm tree.** This thy whole stature and feature of body, that hath been already portrayed and described particularly and piecemeal, is "like to a palm tree," strong and straight, fresh and flourishing, so that thou mayest say with the palm in the emblem, *Nec premor, nec perimor*. Pliny, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Gellius have written of the palm tree, that it is always green, bearing pleasant fruit; and that it will not bow downward or grow crooked, though heavy weights be hanged upon it. The Church is all this and more; ever green, even in the winter of affliction, when the oak loseth her leaves (**See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:16"**) full of the "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (**Philippians 1:11**) (**See Trapp on "Philippians 4:14"**) (**See Trapp on "Philippians 4:11"**) Neither can she be long kept under by any pressure of persecution or heavy affliction, *Premi potest, opprimi non potest*. As Paul, when stoned, started up with *Sic petitur caelum, sic, sic oportet intrare*. Tyrants might curse the saints, as he did that cried out to those ancient confessors, *O miseri, num vobis desunt restes et rupes?* O wretches, cannot you hang or drown yourselves, but that I must be thus troubled with you to put you to death?—but crush them they never could. The valour of the patients, the savageness of the persecutors, have striven together, till both, exceeding nature and belief, bred wonder and astonishment in beholders and readers. Hence Trajan forbade Pliny to seek after Christians; but if any were brought to him, to punish them. Antoninus Pius set forth an edict in Asia, that no Christian should be persecuted; for, said he, it is their joy to die—they are conquerors, and do overcome you, &c.

Trucidabantur et multiplicabantur, saith Augustine of the ancient martyrs: they were martyred, and yet they were multiplied. *Plures efficitur quoties metimur*, saith Tertullian, the more we are cropped, the more we are increased; as the lily is increased by its own juice that flows from it. ⁽²⁰¹⁾ Hence (**Revelation 7:9**) the saints that by their victorious faith overcame the world, are brought in with palm branches in their hands, in token of victory. Plutarch tells us that the Babylonians made three hundred and sixty commodities of the palm tree, and did

²⁰⁰ Τοῦ Θεοῦ υπηρεσίαν βασιλεύειν ενομέζεν —*Plutarch*.

²⁰¹ Plin.

therefore very highly honour it. The world hath a great deal of benefit by the Church, could they but see it; for *absque stationibus non staret mundus*, were it not for the saints, "a short work would the Lord make upon the earth, and cut it short in righteousness." (**Romans 9:28**) And great is the gain of godliness, even a hundredfold here, and life eternal hereafter. Who would not then turn spiritual merchant? who would not pass from strength to strength, and "flourish in God's house like a palm tree," (**Psalms 92:12**) till he attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ? (**Ephesians 4:13**)

And thy breasts to clusters of grapes. Not well fashioned only, (as **Ezekiel 16:7**) but full strutting with milk, yea, with wine, plenty and dainty, to lay hunger and slake thirst, to nourish and cherish her children, even as the Lord doth the Church. (**Ephesians 5:29**) (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 4:5**").{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 7:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}I said, I will go up to the palm tree, &c. I said it, and I will do it; for *Christi dicere est facere*, together with Christ's word there goes forth a power, as it did. (**Luke 5:17**) David said he "would confess his sins," and "take heed to his ways," (**Psalms 32:5; 39:1**) and accordingly he did it. Shall Christ purpose and promise mercy to his people, and not perform it? Is he yea and nay? (**2 Corinthians 1:19**) Can he say and unsay? Doth not the constant experience of all ages fully confute any such fond conceit of him? The saints will not lie, (**Isaiah 63:8**) Christ cannot. (**Titus 1:2**)⁽²⁰²⁾ He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. (**Psalms 89:33**) All his sayings are the issue of a most faithful and right will, void of all insincerity and falsehood. Now when Christ promiseth to climb his palm tree, and to take hold of the boughs thereof, he meaneth that he will dwell most familiarly with his Church, even in the branches thereof, pruning and trimming it, and accepting the fruits of his Spirit in his spouse. Or thus, he will so join himself unto his Church, as he may cause her to be fruitful; he will lay hold on her boughs, which are very fit and apt to climb, so covertly and elegantly noting the work of spiritual generation. The effect follows.

Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine. Whatsoever they have been heretofore, now at this time, and for ever hereafter, they shall be delightful to me, and nourishable to thy children, who shall "suck and be satisfied." (**Isaiah 66:11**) Albeit some interpreters of good note conceive that all this is nothing else but a figurative description of Christ's perfect conjunction with his Church in the kingdom of heaven, and of the unspeakable pleasure which Christ will take in her for ever.

And the smell of thy nose like apples. *i.e.*, The breath that comes out of thy nostrils is sweet as spice apples. The breath that the Church draweth into her lungs, and sends out again, is the spirit of grace, without which she can as little live as we can without air. This sweet spirit is the joy of her heart and the breath of her nostrils, and thereby she draws many into her company. If that be true that one here noteth, that the fruit of the palm partaketh of the nature both of the grape, having a sweet and pleasant juice, and of the apple, for pleasant meat, it may well signify that the Word of God is both meat and drink to the soul.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 7:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine. Her word and doctrine (for the palate is an instrument of speech), often before commended by Christ, and here again, like as she comes over it in him the second time. (**Solomon's Song 4:13, 16**) (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 4:13**") (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 4:16**") This he resembleth to the best and most generous wine. Such the word of God's grace is to those that have spiritual palates, that do not carry *fel in aure*,—their galls in their ears (as some creatures are said to do), that have their ears healed (as Demosthenes said of his Athenians), and their inward senses habitually exercised to discern good and evil. The doctrine of the Church seems

to some bitter and grievous; it goeth down like the waters of Marah, or that water that caused the curse in case of jealousy. (**Numbers 5:12-31**) It becomes a savour of death unto them, as the viper is killed with palm branches, and vultures with oil of roses. ⁽²⁰³⁾ But this is merely their own fault; for "doth not my word do good to them that are good?" saith the Lord. (**Micah 2:6**) Excellently St Augustine, *Adversarius est nobis, quamdiu sumus et ipsi nobis: quamdiu tu tibi inimicus es, inimicum habebis sermonem Dei*,—God's Word is an enemy to none but to such as are enemies to themselves, and sinners against their own souls. This holy word in the mouths of God's ministers is like Moses's rod, which, while held in his hand, flourished, and brought forth almonds; but, being cast to the ground, it became a serpent. The application is easy. (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 1:2"*)

For my beloved. These are Christ's words; but he speaks as if the Church spake, to show her great affection, that had dedicated all her good things to him. Some read it thus, which "goeth straight to my well beloved"; *q.d.*, It is such excellent wine as I would wish it, or send it even to the dearest and best friend I have, even to her that I love as myself, if not before myself. Or thus, "which springs and sparkles in the cup." See **Proverbs 23:31**.

Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. "Utterance" is called a "gift," (**1 Corinthians 1:5, 7**) and dumb Christians are blame worthy as well as dumb ministers. We should all strive to a holy ability and dexterity of savoury discourse. And for this end the word of Christ should dwell richly in us in all wisdom: our hearts should indite a good matter, that our tongues might be as the pen of a ready writer. Let there be a good treasure within our hearts, and the law of kindness will soon be in our lips; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Graceless men are gagged by the devil; they cannot so much as lisp out one syllable of good language; if they attempt it, they show themselves but bunglers, and say Sibboleth for Shibboleth; you may soon see they speak by rote, and not by experience. But those that have well drunk of this wine of the Word, made effectual by the Spirit, talk lustily, yea, their tongues never cease talking and preaching forth the praises of him who hath drawn them out of darkness into his marvellous light: they speak "as the Spirit gives them utterance." (**Acts 2:4, 11, 14**) Those that were in a dead sleep of sin, are soon set to work to "awake and sing." (**Isaiah 26:19**) This should stir us up to study the Word of God, and thence to learn language. The 119th Psalm is by David set before it as a poem of commendation, mentioning it in every verse, testimonies, laws, statutes, &c. Like as when a book is set forth, verses of commendation are oft prefixed. Such another, but far shorter, is that in **Psalms 19:7-11**. The Holy Ghost doth so much the more highly there extol it, because men are wont to have it in very light account, and to hold it a disparagement to be eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 7:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I am my beloved's.** I see I am so, saith the spouse, by that ample commendation that he hath now again given me, notwithstanding all my former failings in duty towards him. There fall out some failings out between married couples sometimes; but then they fall in again: they cannot agree together haply so well at first, but being well pieced again, they love better than before. So is it here. The sins we commit make no change in Christ, no substantial alteration. For, first, Upon the same grounds he chose us, he loves us still. He chose us freely, because he would; he chose us for his love, and loves us for his choice. Secondly, There is the same bent of mind and frame of heart towards him remains in us still. And therefore, as there is a transient act of sin passeth from us, so a transient act of chastisement for sin may pass from him. Christ "looked upon Peter," after his denial, with the same familiarity as before. Jehoshuah the high priest, though he were so ill-clothed, and had Satan at his right hand to accuse him, yet he "stood before the angel." (**Zechariah 3:1**) Christ did not abhor his presence nor reject his service. Ephraim, repenting

²⁰³ Pausanias, Aristot.

after his revolt, is re-entertained with all sweetness. (*Jeremiah 31:20*) (See Trapp on "*Solomon's Song 2:16*") (See Trapp on "*Solomon's Song 6:3*")

And his desire is towards me. His desirous affection; he loves me as passionately as any woman doth her dearest husband; (*Genesis 3:16*) his love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women. "His desire is so toward me," that, as Livia, by obeying her husband Augustus, commanded him, and might have what she would of him, so may I of Christ. Compare *Genesis 4:7; Isaiah 45:11*. The Church here well understood the latitude of that royal charter, and makes it a prop to her faith and a pledge for her perseverance. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 7:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.** Being now fully assured of Christ's love, she falls to praying. She makes five requests unto him in a breath as it were: (1.) That he would "come"; (2.) "Go forth with her into the field"; (3.) "Lodge with her in the villages"; (4.) "Get up early to the vineyards"; (5.) "See if the vine flourish, pomegranates bud," &c. And further promiseth that there she will "give him her loves." Assurance of Christ's love is the sweetmeats of the feast of a good conscience, said Father Latimer. Now, it were to be wished that every good soul, while it is banqueting with the Lord Christ by full assurance, as once Esther did with Ahasuerus, would seasonably bethink itself what special requests it hath to make unto him, what Hamans to hang up, what sturdy lusts to subdue, what holy boons to beg, &c. How sure might they be to have what they would, even to the whole of his kingdom! Suitors at court observe their *mollissima fandi tempora*, their fittest opportunities of speaking, and they speed accordingly. A courtier gets more many times by one suit than a tradesman can do with twenty years' painstaking. So a faithful prayer, made in a fit season, "in a time when God may be found," as David hath it, (*Psalms 32:6*) is very successful. Beggary here is the best trade, as one said. Common beggary is indeed the easiest and poorest trade: but prayer is the hardest and richest. The first thing that she here begs of him is, that he would "come," and that quickly, and this we all daily pray, "Thy kingdom come," both that of grace and the other of glory. The Jews also, in their expectation of a Messiah, pray almost in every prayer they make, "Thy kingdom come," and that "*Bimherah Bejamenu*," quickly, even in our days, that we may behold the King in his beauty. Let our hearts' desire and prayer to God be for those poor seduced souls that they may be saved; and the rather because "they have a zeal of God and his kingdom, but not according to knowledge," (*Romans 10:1-2*) as also because their progenitors prayed hard for us; and so some take it to be the sense of the spouse's second request here, "Let us go forth into the field," that is, into the world, for the field in the parable is the world; (*Matthew 13:38*) let us propagate the gospel all abroad, and send forth such as may "teach all nations," (*Matthew 28:19*) and reveal "the mystery that hath been kept secret since the world began, that obedience may be everywhere yielded to the faith." (*Romans 16:25-26*)

Let us lodGenesis in the villages. That is, In the particular churches; for, *vilissimus pagas, est palatium eburneum, in quo est pastor et credentes aliqui*, saith Luther, ⁽²⁰⁴⁾ the poorest village is to Christ and his spouse an ivory palace, if there be but in it a godly minister and some few believers. Melancthon, going once upon some great service for the Church of Christ, and having many fears of the good success of his business, was much cheered up and confirmed by a company of poor women and children whom he found praying together for the labouring Church, and casting it by faith into Christ's everlasting arms. ⁽²⁰⁵⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 7:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Let us get up early to the vineyards.** Heb., Let us morning it. *Manicemas* (that is, Gellius' ⁽²⁰⁶⁾ word), Let us be up early and at it. Here she

²⁰⁴ Tom. iii. p. 81.

²⁰⁵ Selneccer. *Paedag. Christ.*

²⁰⁶ A. Gel. lib. iii., cap. 29.

promiseth not to be found henceforth unready, drowsy, sluggish, but night and day to watch and attend that hour, and to inquire and learn out all the signs and tokens when she may come to be perfectly knit to Christ. But it is worthy of our observation that she would neither go any way nor do anything without Christ's company, for she had lately felt the grief of being without him, though but "for a small moment," as the prophet hath it. She had felt herself that while in the suburbs of hell as it were. She therefore holds him as fast as the restored cripple did Peter and John; (**Acts 3:11**) she cleaves as close to him as Ruth did to Naomi; or Elisha did to his master Elijah, when now he knew he should be taken from his head. (**2 Kings 2:2**) She seems here to speak to Christ as once Barak did to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go." (**Judges 4:8**) And whereas she seemeth, as the forwarder of the two, to excite and exhort Christ to "get up early to visit the vines," &c., we may not imagine any unwillingness in him to the performance of his office as "shepherd and bishop of our souls," (**1 Peter 2:25**) or any need on his part to be quickened and counselled by her, as Manoah was by his wife, or Aquila by Priscilla, whence she is set before him, (**Romans 16:3**) for "who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" (**Isaiah 40:13**) But the Church requesteth these things of Christ for her own encouragement and further benefit; that having his continual presence and fellowship, she may the more cheerfully and successfully go on with her duty. So when we press God with arguments in prayer, it is not so much to persuade him to help us, "for the Father himself loveth you," (**John 16:27**) saith Christ, and needs no arguments, σποὶ δόντα καὶ αὐτὸν οἴσυνειν, ⁽²⁰⁷⁾ to incite or entice him to show us mercy, as to persuade our own hearts to more faith, love, humility, &c., that we may be in a capacity to receive that mercy that of his own accord he hath for us, and even waits to confer upon us. (**Isaiah 30:18**) Look how a man that would make a bladder capacious to hold sweet spices, blows it and rubs it, and blows it, and rubs it many times over to make it hold the more: so it is here. And as when a man that is in a ship plucks a rock, it seems as if he plucked the rock nearer the ship, whenas in very deed the ship is plucked nearer the rock: so when God's people think they draw God to them with their arguments, in truth they draw themselves nearer to God, who sometimes ascribeth that to us which is his own work, that we may abound more and more. *Certum est nos facere quod facimus, sed ille facit ut faciamus.* ⁽²⁰⁸⁾ True it is that we do what we do, but it is he that giveth us to do what we do in his service. The bowls of the candlestick had no oil but that which dropped from the olive branches.

Whether the tender grape appear. Heb., Open, and so prove itself to be a grape, which in the bud can hardly be discerned. True grace may be doubted about as long as it is small and feeble. Weak things are oft so obscured with their contraries that it remaineth uncertain whether they be or no. He that cried out, and that with tears, "I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief" (**Mark 9:24**)—that is, my weak faith—could not well tell whether he had any faith at all or not. Add growth to grace, and it will be out of question. Meanwhile that is a sweet promise, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy buds." (**Isaiah 44:3**) And again, "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all." (**Isaiah 65:8**)

And the pomegranates bud forth. (See Trapp on "**Solomon's Song 4:13**")

There will I give thee my loves. *i.e.*, The fruition of my graces, and fruits of thy faith, thanks, good works, &c. And this is that which Christ requireth of us all—viz., that we bestow all our loves upon him, even the liveliest and warmest of our affections. Love him we must truly, that there be no halting, and totally, that there be no halving. Hold him we must "better, dearer to

²⁰⁷ Homer.

²⁰⁸ Augustine.

us than ten sons," &c., and communicate all our loves to him as best worthy. What he gives us back again we may bestow upon others; we may love other things, but no otherwise than as they convey love to us from Christ, and may be means of drawing our affections unto Christ. We must love all things else as they have a beam of Christ in them, and may lead us to him; accounting that we rightly love ourselves no further than we love the Lord Jesus Christ with a love of complacence.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 7:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The mandrakes give a smell.** *Loves* and *mandrakes* grow both upon one Hebrew root and Tremellius renders it not *mandrakes*, but *lovely flowers*, yielding a savour pleasant to the eye, and sweet to the smell. The Chaldee paraphrast calleth it *balsam*. (*Legesis* August. lib. xxii. *contra Faust. Manichaeum*, cap. lvi.; Jun. in **Genesis 30:14**; Drus. in *fine Comment.* in Ruth). Aben Ezra saith that mandrakes are fragrant, and yield a pleasant savour; that they have head and hands like unto a man. But how they should be good to cause conception he wondereth, since by nature they are cold. Augustine saith that he made trial, and could not find any such operation to be in them, and that Rachel coveted them merely for their rarity, beauty, and sweetness. There is enough of these in the Church to draw all hearts unto her; but that many men have brawny breasts and horny heart strings.

And at our gates are all manner of pleasants. Or, Delicacies, precious and pleasant commodities whether fruits, metals, gems, jewels, *quicquid in deliciis habetur*, whatsoever is excellent and exquisite in any kind; this is the import of the Hebrew word. There is nothing of any worth but it is to be found in the Church. Her wise merchants, not content with the pearl of price, seek out other "goodly pearls," common gifts, which also have their use and excellence, (**Matthew 13:45-46**) they "learn to maintain good works, or honest professions for necessary uses; these things are good and profitable to men" (**Titus 3:8, 14**) Some think that the Holy Ghost here alludeth to the order of old, and still in use, of strawing the wedding house doors with sweet smelling flowers; others to the customs of those that have orchards, to lay up their fruits over the gate house.

New and old. As a good storer, that hath plenty and variety wherewith to please all palates, new for delights, and old for wholesomeness. The good scribe, well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, "throweth out ⁽²⁰⁹⁾ of his treasury things new and old, "—new for the unlearned, and old for the stronger stomach. Some delight in the sweetness of things, as in new wine. David tells them the Word is sweeter than live honey dropping from the honeycomb. Others say "the old is better," are all for profit, as elder people; he tells them there it is better than gold. (**Psalms 19:10**) In the Church's storehouse men shall be sure to meet with all that heart can wish, or need require.

Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved! *Propter te, Domine, propter te,* "Because of you, O God, because of you," is the Church's motto. As all his springs are in her, and all his offices and efficacies for her, so all that she has and is, is only for him, and a great deal more she could beteen him. Let Ephraim, that "empty" vine, "bear fruit to himself," (**Hosea 10:1**) and those hypocrites (**Zechariah 7:5**) fast to themselves; Christ's hidden ones hide all for him, set up and seek him in all they do or suffer, are wholly devoted to his whole service. ⁽²¹⁰⁾
{{field-off:Bible}}

²⁰⁹ ἐκβάλλει, (**Matthew 13:52**) *Extrudit copiose et alacriter.*

²¹⁰ εἰ πλεον εἶχον, πλεον δεῖδουν, *dixit ille Graeculus Augusto.*

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Song 8:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Oh that thou wert as my brother.** Heb., Who will give thee for a brother to me?—*q.d.*, Men may give me many other things, but God alone can give me thy brotherhood, love, and communion, which I wish above all, saith the bride here. "Spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ" (*Ephesians 1:3*) are chiefly to be desired and endeavoured after. *Quaerite primum bona animi*, saith philosophy, Seek first the good things of the mind. *Quaerite primum regnum Dei*, saith divinity, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness": and then other things shall seek you, shall be cast into the bargain as it were. Let the "many say, Who will show any good?" David prefers one glance from God's countenance before all the world's wealth. (*Psalms 4:7*) "Oh that Ishmael might live in thy sight," said Abraham. Oh that he might be "written among the living in Jerusalem," be an heir of life truly so called, for *Aeterna vita vera vita!* ⁽²¹¹⁾ "The Lord make his face to shine upon you," said the priests to the people. (*Numbers 6:24-25*) "Grace be to you, and peace," saith Paul; whatever else be wanting, "Covet earnestly the best things," saith he. (*1 Corinthians 12:31*) "With all thy getting, get understanding," saith Solomon. (*Proverbs 4:7*) He desired wisdom above wealth; and despatched the temple in seven years' time, whenas he was thirteen years ere he finished his own house, as holding it a work of less haste and care. Elisha begs a "double portion": the spouse (*Solomon's Song 2:5*) calls for whole "flagons"; nothing less would content her. The prophet Isaiah chides men for laying out their money on "that which is not bread," (*Isaiah 55:1-2*) or but *panis lapidosus*, bread made of gravel; and our Saviour bids, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to eternal life." (*John 6:27*) *Mors privare potest opibus, non operibus*: these die not with us (as Hortentius's orations did with him), but follow us to heaven when we die, and shall be "found to praise, honour, and glory at that day." (*1 Peter 1:7*) Hence the Church so earnestly desireth here to have more close conjunction and consociation with Christ "as a brother"; yea, as a most natural and kind hearted brother that had "sucked the breasts of her mother," that had been her *collactaneus*, and so more inwardly affected toward her, as Joseph was toward his brother Benjamin. (*Genesis 43:29-30, 34*) In sum, she wisheth that she may feel Christ dwelling in her heart; that he would remove all impediments of their happy conjunction, and hasten the accomplishment thereof in heaven.

When I should find thee without (or at the door), I would kiss thee. As the bride was wont to do the bridegroom, receiving and welcoming him with all comely familiarity and sweetness. "Kiss the son," and covet his kisses. (*Psalms 2:12; Solomon's Song 1:2*) Be not ashamed or afraid to perform all duties of a holy love and sound obedience towards him. He was not ashamed of us, when we had never a rag to our backs. (*Ezekiel 16:3-13*) He stretched the skirt of his love over us, and said unto us, "Live"; when he might well enough have loathed to look on us. (*ib. Ezekiel 16:6*)

Yea, I should not be despised. Heb., They should not despise me; or if they did, yet they should not dishearten me from duty. "If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile," said David to his mocking Michal. (*2 Samuel 6:22*) We may not suffer ourselves to be mocked out of our religion. Barren Michal hath too many sons that scorn the holy habit and exercises; but they shall be plagued, as their mother was, with continual fruitlessness; they shall also one day—viz., when they are in hell—behold those with envy whom now they behold with scorn; as the scoffers of the old world, from the tops of the mountains that could not save them, beheld Noah's ark floating upon the waters. It is as impossible to avoid, as necessary to condemn, the lash of lewd tongues, whether by bitter scoffs or scurrilous invectives, as full of scorn commonly as the wit of malice can make them. The Church here resolveth so to deport herself, as that none shall have cause to condemn her; or if they do, bravely to slight all

²¹¹ Aug., *De Pec. Mort.*, lib. i. cap. 11.

contumelies and contempts for her conscience, taking them as crowns and confirmations of her conformity to Christ.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Song 8:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I would lead thee and bring thee.** With solemnity and joy. She speaks it twice, as fully resolved to do it; and hereby to bind herself more straitly to a performance, I would not only kiss thee at the door, but bring thee into the house. Many are strict abroad and in company, but much too loose at home and in their own houses; follow these stage players to their dressing rooms, where they disrobe themselves, and you shall soon see what they are. Heed must be taken, say the very heathen, *Aedibus in propriis quae prava aut recta gerantur*. Religion admits not of that distinction between a good man and a good governor. If you will be for the public, be good in private; bear your own fruit, work in your own hives, reform your own hearts and houses, man your own oars, and make good your own standing. Cato could say that he could pardon all men's faults but his own. ⁽²¹²⁾ And Augustus, going about to redress some abuses in the state, was upbraided with his own domestic disorders. Abraham had a well ordered family; so had Joshua, (**Joshua 24:15**) David. (**Psalms 101**) And although his house were not so with God, yet that was all his desire. (**2 Samuel 23:5**) And he well knew that it was the care, not the cure, of his charge that he stood charged with. ⁽²¹³⁾ Noah may bring the Lord Christ into his house, and labour to set him up in the hearts of his children, speaking persuasively to that purpose; but when all is done, God must "persuade Japheth," and speak to his heart. Now this the Lord doth, *Monendo potius quam minando, docendo quam ducendo*. Hence the Church in the next words cries out,

Thou shalt instruct me. For so the text is to be rendered. Thou who art the arch-prophet, a teacher sent from God, anointed and appointed for the purpose to put divine learning into us, "thou shalt instruct or learn us." Now, *quando Christus magister, quam cito discitur quod docet*? saith Augustine. Christ is a quick teacher; and all his scholars are very forwardly. *Nescit tarda molimina gratia Spiritus Sancti*, saith Ambrose. God's people must needs be well taught, because they are "all taught of God." ⁽²¹⁴⁾

I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine. Such as we call *Ipocras*, which, besides the nature and strength of the wine itself, hath, by the mixture of many spices with it, great power and pleasantness, to the comforting of the heart, and satisfying of the smell. And this was the ᾠδακτρον *Minervale*, recompense, that Christ should have for teaching her. She resolveth to testify her thankfulness by her obedience, rendering unto him such fruits of faith and holiness as should be sweetened and spiced with his own Spirit in her, and should exceedingly delight him. Contrary to these λιπαρὰ καὶ λαμπρὰ, these "dainty and goodly fruits," (**Revelation 18:14**) are those nasty and naughty ones, (**Isaiah 5:4**) that, besides their stench, are so offensive to the taste that they cannot be eaten, they are so naughty. (**Jeremiah 24:2**) Wicked men's grapes are of gall, and their wine is venom; (**Deuteronomy 32:32-33**) both their natures and practices are abominable.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Song 8:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **His left hand should be under my head.** Or, prayerwise, Let his left hand, &c. Conscious and sensible of her own inability, she begs the benefit of both Christ's hands, and all little enough—his whole power and providence to support and relieve her.

*"Una est in tenui mihi re medicina, Iehovae
Cor patrium, os verax, omnipotensque manus."*

(**See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 2:6"**) {{field-off:Bible}}

²¹² Plut.; Dio.

²¹³ *Curam exegeris, non curationem.*—Bern.

²¹⁴ Θεοῦ ᾠδακτοί. (**John 6:45**).

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Song 8:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem. (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 2:7"*)

Why should you stir up? What shall you get by it? or what reason can ye give for it? But lust is headlong, and considers not what an "evil and bitter thing sin is." (*Jeremiah 2:19*) Besides, it so blears the understanding that a man shall think he hath reason to be mad, and that there is great sense in sinning. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Song 8:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?* (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 3:6"*) There are continual ascensions in the hearts of God's people while here. And whereas the men of this world, "which have their portion here," (*Psalms 17:14*) *animus etiam incarnaverunt*, as Bernard complaineth, and are borne downward to hell by their own weight; the saints of God are ever aspiring, and do "groan, being burdened," as knowing that "while they are at home in the body," such a home as it is, "they are absent from the Lord," (*2 Corinthians 5:4, 6*) from their heavenly home. Either Egypt was not Moses's home, or but a miserable one; and yet, in reference to it, he called his son, born in Midian, *Gershom*—i.e., a "stranger there." If he so thought of his Egyptian home, where was nothing but bondage and tyranny, what marvel though the saints think of that home of theirs above, and hasten to it in their affections, where is nothing but rest and blessedness?

Leaning upon her beloved. For otherwise she could not ascend, as unable to sustain her steps. (*Jeremiah 10:23*) The Church, as the vine, is the most fruitful, but the weakest of all trees, and must have a supporter; hence she "leans upon her beloved," which phrase, beside recumbency, denotes a more than ordinary familiarity, *qua solent amantes in sinus amasiorura se proiecere*, like as lovers throw themselves sometimes into their sweethearts' arms or bosoms.⁽²¹⁵⁾ Now thus to lean upon Christ is an act of faith, of "the faith of God's elect." Others seem to lean upon Christ, but it is no otherwise than as the apricot, which leaneth against the walls, but is fast rooted in the earth. So these lean upon Christ for salvation, but are rooted in the world, in pride, filthiness, &c., and though they make some assays, yet, like the door upon the hinges, they will not come off. See the folly and confidence of these wretched men (the same Hebrew word signifies both, and may both ways be taken, *Psalms 49:13*) graphically described by the prophet, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." (*Micah 3:11*) These men perish by catching at their own catch, hanging on their own fancy, making a bridge of their own shadow; they will not otherwise believe but that Christ is their sweet Saviour, and so doubt not but they are safe, when it is no such matter. They grow aged and crooked with such false conceits, and can seldom or never be set straight again. These must know that to rely upon Christ is to be utterly unbottomed of a man's self, and of every creature; and so to lean upon Christ alone, that if he fail thou sinkest, if he set not in thou art lost for ever. Papists think that as he that standeth on two firm branches of a tree is surer than he that standeth upon one; so he that trusteth to Christ and his own works too. But it must be considered, *first*, That he which looketh to be justified by the law is fallen from grace; "Christ is of no effect" unto him. (*Galatians 5:4*) He will not mingle his purple blood with our puddle stuff, his rich robes with our tattered rags, his eagles' feathers with our pigeons' plumes. There can be but one sun in heaven, *Sol quasi solus*, and they set up rush candles to the sun that join other saviours to this Sun of righteousness. *Secondly*, He that hath one foot on a firm branch, another on a rotten one, stands not so sure as if wholly on that which is sound. Away then with all such mock stays. See the fruit of creature confidence, *Job 6:17; 8:15*, and know that no man trusts Christ at all that trusts him not alone. He that stands with one foot on a rock, and another foot on a

²¹⁵ Brightman. *Sunt qui exponunt dilicians.*

quicksand, will sink and perish as certainly as he that standeth with both feet on a quicksand. See **Psalm 6:2; 2:5-6**.

I raised thee up under the apple tree, &c. Here the bride answereth to the bridegroom's question, Who is this? or, What woman is this that cometh up from the wilderness? &c., that goes in a right line to God, leaning on her beloved, that will not break the hedge of any commandment to avoid any piece of foul way? I am she, saith the Church, even the very same that raised thee up under the appletree, &c., viz., by mine earnest prayers. When thou wast asleep under the apple tree, and I had straightly charged the damsels of Jerusalem not to disquiet thee by their sins, yet I took the boldness to arouse thee, and say, as in **Psalm 44:23**, "Awake; why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever"; and with those drowning disciples, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Sometimes, saith one, God seems to lose his mercy, and then we must find it for him, as **Isaiah 63:10**, sometimes to sleep, and then we must waken him, quicken him. (**Psalm 40:17; Isaiah 62:7**) God will come, but he will have his people's prayers lead him, as in **Daniel 10:12**, "I am come for thy words." Christ himself is the apple tree here mentioned, as **Solomon's Song 2:3**. Though there are that interpret it as the cross, that tree whereon he "bare our sins in his own body." (**1 Peter 2:24**) Others better, of the tree of offence, the forbidden fruit. (**Genesis 2:16-17**) And that when Eve tasted of that fruit, which they herehence conclude to have been an apple, though the word be more general, *Nux enim pomum dicitur*, then, as Christ's mother, she brought him forth, by believing the promise there made unto her, that Messiah of her seed should break the serpent's head. Look how the Virgin Mary conceived Christ when she yielded her assent. When the angel spake to her, what said she presently? "Be it as thou hast said," let it be even so. She yielded her assent to the promise, that she should conceive a son, and she did conceive him. So Eve believed the promise of pardon and salvation, she "saw it afar off, was persuaded of it, and embraced it," (**Hebrews 11:13**) and is therefore said here to bear and bring forth Christ, yea, to travail of him with sorrow, as the word signifies; for as there is no other birth without pain, so neither is the newbirth. Those that have passed through the narrow womb of repentance, and been born again, will say as much. See **Isaiah 26:17**. If God broke David's bones, and the angel's back, saith one, he will break thy heart too, if ever he save thee. No sound heart ever went to heaven, as, in another sense, none but sound could ever come thither. *Cot integrum cor scissum*, "Rend your hearts."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Song 8:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Set me as a seal upon thine heart.** i.e., Be thou as "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." (**Hebrews 2:17; Exodus 28:21, 29**) Remember me for good, and make mention of me to thy father. Have me also in precious esteem, as great men have the signets upon their right hands; and as whatsoever is sealed with a seal, that is excellent in its own kind, as in **Isaiah 28:25**, *hordeum signatum*, excellent barley. Christ wears his people as a signet, or as great men wear their jewels, to make him glorious in the eyes of men; neither will he be plundered of them by the Church's enemies; to touch them is to "touch the apple of his eye," (**Zechariah 2:8**) that tenderest piece of the tenderest part. The proverb is, *Oculus et fama non patiuntur iocos*; The eye and the good name can bear with no jests. As the saints are in Christ's heart, *ad commoriendum et convivendum*, so they are also "upon his arm"; so that if they do out come and say in any danger or difficulty, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days," &c. (**Isaiah 51:9**) he will "redeem his people with his arm"; (**Psalm 77:15**) yea, with his "outstretched arm," (**Exodus 6:6**) that is, with might and open manifestation of his love; he will "awake as one out of sleep, and like a man that shouteth by reason of wine." (**Psalm 78:65**)

For love is strong as death. And yet death is so strong that it passeth over all men, (**Romans 5:12**) and devoureth them as sheep; (**Psalm 49:14**) as a rot it overruneth the whole flock, having for its motto *Nulli cedo*, I yield to none. Only love is "strong as death," nay, stronger. Jonathan would have died for the love of David, David of Absalom. Arsinoe interposed herself

between the murderers' weapons, sent by Ptolemy, her brother, to kill her children. Priscilla and Aquila for St Paul's life laid down their own necks. (**Romans 16:4**) Paul was "in deaths often" for Jesus' sake. Those primitive martyrs "loved not their lives unto the death." (**Revelation 12:11**) *Certatim gloriosa in certamina ruebantur*, saith Sulpicius; they were prodigal of their dearest lives, and even ambitious of martyrdom, that thereby they might seal up their entire love to the Lord Jesus. If every hair of mine head were a man, I would suffer death in the opinion and faith that I am now in, said John Ardley, martyr, to Bishop Bonner. ⁽²¹⁶⁾ *Ignis, crux, bestiarum conflictationes, ossium distractiones, &c.* Let me suffer fire, cross, breaking of my bones, quartering of my members, crushing of my body, and all the torments that men or devils can devise, so I may enjoy my Lord Jesus Christ, saith holy Ignatius, whose motto was *Amor meus crucifixus*, My love was crucified. Love is itself a passion, and delights to show itself in suffering for the party beloved; yea, though it were to pass through a thousand deaths for his sake. And this is here yielded as a reason why the spouse first awakened Christ, and now desires to be so nearly knit unto him, to be "set as a seal upon his hand, yea, upon his heart." "The love of Christ constrained" her, and lay so hard upon her, that she could do no less than beg such a boon of him, than covet such a courtesy as a compensation of her dearest love to him. And surely to account Christ precious as a tree of life, although we be fastened to him as to a stake to be burned; this is love; and this our labour of love cannot be in vain in the Lord.

Jealousy is cruel as the grave. Or, Zeal is hard as hell. This follows well upon the former, for, *Non amat qui non zelat*, saith Augustine. ⁽²¹⁷⁾ Zeal is the extreme heat of love and other affections for and toward any whom we esteem; burning in our love to him, desire of him, delight in him, indignation against any that speak or do aught against him. The object of zeal is either man, as **2 Corinthians 7:7**; **Colossians 4:17**;—Basil, venturing himself very far for his friend, and by some blamed for it, answered, *Ego aliter amare non didici*, I cannot love a man, but I must do mine utmost for him; or, secondly, God, as **John 3:17**; **2 Corinthians 7:11**; **Revelation 3:19**. And here our love will be, and must appear to be fervent, desire eager, delights ravishing, hopes longing, hatred deadly, anger fierce, fear terrible, grief deep, deeper than those black deeps (a place so called) at the Thames' mouth, whereinto Richard III caused the dead bodies of his two smothered nephews to be cast, being first closed up in lead, &c. ⁽²¹⁸⁾

The coals thereof are coals of fire. Or, Fiery darts that set the soul all on a light fire, and turn it into a coal or lump of love to Christ. The word here used is elsewhere taken for fiery thunderbolts, (**Psalms 78:48**) and for brass tipped arrows, that gather heat by motion, (**Psalms 76:3-4**) also for a carbuncle or burning fever. (**Deuteronomy 32:24**) The Church had said before, more than once, that she was "sick of love"; here she feels herself in a fever, as it were, or as if her liver were struck through with a love dart, by that "spirit of judgment and of burning" (**Isaiah 4:4**) kindling this flame of God, as she calls it here, upon the hearth of her heart. The word signifies the *consuming flame of God*; and zeal may be very fitly so called. For as it comes from above, even from the Father of lights, as the fire of the altar did, so it tends to him, and ends in him; it carries a man up, as it were, in a fiery chariot, and consumes his corruptions by the way. It quencheth also those fiery darts of the devil (as the sunbeams will put out the kitchen fire), and sets the tongue awork, as the Holy Ghost set on fire the apostles' tongues, (**Acts 2:2-4**) whenas wicked men's tongues, full of deadly poison, are yet further "set on fire from hell"; (**James 3:6**) yea, the whole man to work for God and his glory, as Elias with his *Zelando zelavi* (he sucked in fire with his mother's breast, as some have legended). St Paul is mad for God (so some misjudged him, **2 Corinthians 5:13**), as ever he had once been against him. (**Acts 26:11**) Peter was a man made all of fire, walking among stubble, saith

²¹⁶ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 1438.

²¹⁷ *Contra Adamant.*, c. 13.

²¹⁸ *Speed*, 935.

Chrysostom. And of one that desired to know what manner of man Basil was, it is said, there was presented in a dream a pillar of fire with this motto, *Talis est Basilius*; such a one is Basil. Such also was Savonarola, Farel, Luther, Latimer, that bold Valiant for Truth, who, when he was demanded the reason why there was so much preaching, and so little practised, answered roundly, *deest ignis*, the flame of God is wanting in men's hearts.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Song 8:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Many waters cannot quench love.** Water was proven long since to be above fire, in that ancient contest between those two nations about the precedence and precellence of their gods, the one worshipping fire and the other water. But though there be "gods many," and "lords many," yet to the Church there is but "one Lord," and to him she will go through thick and thin, through fire and water. Her love to him is such as no good can match it, no evil overmatch it; it cannot be quenched with any calamity; nay, it is much kindled by it, as fire in the smith's forge, or as lime that is the hotter for the water that is cast upon it. Elias would have water poured on the sacrifice (covered therewith), that the power of God might the more appear in the fire from heaven. Similarly Christ suffers the ship of his Church to be covered sometimes with waves of persecutions and afflictions, that the strength of their love to him may be the more manifested, and the "thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (**Luke 2:35**) It is easy to swim in a warm bath, and every bird can sing in a summer's day, but to swim to heaven (as Queen Elizabeth did to her throne) through a sea of sorrows, to sing (as some birds will do in the spring) most sweetly, then when it rains most sadly, that is a true trial indeed. Many will embark themselves in the Church's cause in a calm, that, with the mariners in the Acts, will flee out of the ship in a storm. Many will own a prospering truth, a blessing ark, but he is an Obed Edom indeed that will own a persecuted, tossed, banished ark, an ark that brings the plague with it. God sets a high price on their love that stick to him in affliction, as David did on those men that were with him at Gath, those Cherethites and Pelethites that stuck to him when Absalom was up. (**2 Samuel 15:18**) And notwithstanding their recent rebellion at Ziklag, he takes them to Hebron with him (where he was to be crowned), that as they had shared with him in his misery, so they might partake of his prosperity. Lo, thus likewise deals our heavenly David with all his fellow sufferers. He removes them at length from the ashes of their forlorn Ziklag to the Hebron of heaven. And at the general judgment, in that great amphitheatre of men and angels, Christ will stand forth and say, "Ye are they that continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom," &c. (**Luke 22:28-29**)

Neither can the floods drown it. *Surgit hic afflictio (Nehemiah 1:9)* This is not a vain repetition; but serves to show that no persecution, tribulation, anguish, though never so grievous—though the devil should cast out of his mouth water enough to carry us down the stream ⁽²¹⁹⁾ (*as Revelation 12:15*)—shall be able to separate the saints from the love of Christ. (**Romans 8:35**)

If a man would give all the substance of his house, &c.. *i.e.*, To buy this love of me, or to get it from me, I should cry out with Peter, "Thy money perish with thee," or with Luther, "*Contemptus est a me Romanus et favor et furor*, I care neither for Rome's favour nor fury. When they offered to make him a cardinal if he would be quiet, he replied, No, not if I might be Pope. And when they consulted about stopping his mouth with money, one wiser than the rest cried out, *Hem! Germana illa bestia non carat aurum*, Alack! that German beast cares not for money. Galiacius Caracciolus, ⁽²²⁰⁾ that noble Italian convert, left all for the love of Christ, and went to live a poor obscure life at Geneva. Where, when he was tempted to defect for money, he cried out, Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one day's society with Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit. And cursed be that religion for ever, that by such

²¹⁹ ποταμοφορητον.

²²⁰ His life, by Mr. Crashaw.

baits of profit, pleasure, and preferment, seeks to draw men aside from the way of truth and holiness. The Papists propose rewards to such as shall relinquish the Protestant religion and turn to theirs: as in Augsburg, where they say there is a known price for it of ten florins per year, and in France, where the clergy have made contributions for the maintenance of apostate ministers. ⁽²²¹⁾ *Stratagema nunc est Pontificum ditare multos ut pii esse desinant*, saith one ⁽²²²⁾ that was no stranger to them: It is a cunning trick that the popes have taken up to enrich men, that they may rob them of their religion. And though Luther would not swallow that hook, yet there are those that will, not a few. Tell men a tale of *utile*, usefulness, promise them preferment, and you may persuade them to anything. *Fac me Pontificem et ero Christianus*, said one Pammachius, a heathen, once to the Pope: Make me a bishop, and I'll turn Christian. But, as one said of Papists, that they must have two conversions ere they come to heaven—one from Popery and another from profaneness (like as grain must be first threshed and then winnowed)—so this money merchant, this preferment proselyte might have been a Christian at large, had he had his desired bishopric; but Christ never favoured any such self-seeking followers; (**Matthew 8:20; John 6:26**) their love he knows to be no better than meretricious and mercenary. It is a sad thing that any Augustine should have cause to comphdn, *Vix diligitur Iesus propter Iesum*, that scarce any man loves Christ but for his rewards; like the mixed multitude that came up with Israel out of Egypt, for a better fortune; or those Persians that, in Mordecai's days, for self-respect became Jews. All God's people should be like those Medes in Isaiah that "regarded not silver, and as for gold they delighted not in it." (**Isaiah 13:17**) Christ's love should be "better to them than wine" (**Solomon's Song 1:2**) and when in exchange for it, the devil doth offer them this world's good, they should answer him as the witch of Endor did Saul, "Wherefore layest thou a snare for my soul to cause me to die?" (**1 Samuel 28:9**) or, as the vine and fig tree in Jotham's parable answered the rest of the trees, "Should I leave my fatness and sweetness," (**Judges 9:11**) derived unto me from Christ, and so go out of God's blessing into the world's warm sun? God forbid that I should part with my patrimony, as Naboth said; take an apple for paradise, as Adam did; lose the love of Christ for the world's blandishments, &c.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Song 8:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **We have a little sister.** Thou, Lord, and I have such a sister—sc., the Church of the Gentiles, known to thee, and afore appointed to conversion, as James speaketh in that first Christian council, (**Acts 15:18**) from the beginning of the world; unknown to me—more than by hearsay from the holy prophets, who "prophesied of the grace that should come" (**1 Peter 1:10**) unto her—but not unloved or undesired. Now, therefore, as a fruit of my true love unto thee, such as no floods of troubles can quench or drench, no earthly commodity can compass or buy off, I desire not only to deliberate with thee about the enlargement of thy kingdom, by the accession of the elect Gentiles thereunto, but also by making, as I may say, large and liberal offers, set forth my care and study for their eternal salvation. See the like affection in St Paul toward his countrymen the Jews, proceeding from that full assurance that he found in himself. (**Romans 8:38-39; 9:1**) And learn we to pray as earnestly for their conversion as they have done for ours; longing after them from the very heart rooted in Jesus Christ, (*as* **Philippians 1:8**) and turning to the Lord, that they may sooner find compassion. It is Hezekiah's reason, and a very remarkable one (**2 Chronicles 30:9**)

And she hath no breasts. *i.e.*, She is not yet *Nubilis apta viro*, marriageable and fit for Christ, to be presented as a chaste virgin unto him; she wanted such paronyms as Paul was to do it for her. (**2 Corinthians 11:2**) She had not an established ministry to nurse up her children with it. And at this same pass was the old Church at first, not only small, but unshapen.

²²¹ *Spec. Europ.*

²²² *Joh. Bapt. Gell., dial. 5.*

(**Ezekiel 16:7-8**) A society of men without the preaching of the Word is like a mother of children without breasts. All the Church's children must "suck and be satisfied"; (**Isaiah 66:11**) they must desire the sincere milk of the Word and grow thereby, (**1 Peter 2:2**) not like the changeling Luther speaks of, ever sucking, never battling. Such shall be made to know that their mother hath *verbera* as well as *ubera*—rods as well as dugs. Their father will also repent him, as once David did of his kindness to Nabal, and take up his old complaint, **Isaiah 1:2**, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner," &c., the most savage creatures will be at the beck and check of those that feed them; disobedience, therefore (under means of grace especially), is against the principles of nature. It is to be "like the horse and mule," yea, like the young mule, which hath no sooner done sucking her dam's teats, but she turns up her heels and kicks her.

What shall we do for our sister. Love is not more cogitative than operative, and delights to be doing for the beloved. "I love the Lord," &c., "What shall I render unto him? I will pay my vows," &c. (**Psalms 116:14**) Jonathan will disrobe and strip himself even to his sword and belt for David, because he "loved him as his own soul." (**1 Samuel 18:3-4**) Shechem will do all that can be done for his beloved Dinah. The Macedonians will over do it for their poor brethren; Paul's love to the Jews was like the ivy, which if it cleave to a stone or an old wall, will rather die than forsake it. (**Romans 9:3**) He tells his Hebrews of their labour of love. (**Hebrews 6:10**) All love is laborious.

In the day when she shall be spoken for. Or, Wherein speech shall be had concerning her, viz., for a husband for her; how we may best prefer her in marriage. The care of disposing young people to fit yoke fellows, lay upon their parents and other kindred, The Church, as an elder sister, shows herself solicitous, and propounds the matter to Christ, as the only best husband for her, the partition wall being broken down. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Song 8:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}If she be a wall, we will build upon her, &c. Christ answers, If she be, as she ought to be, strong and well grounded in the faith, able to bear a good weight laid upon her, as a wall, pillar, and ground of truth, not sinking or fainting under the heaviest burden of these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, but patient and perseverant in the faith unto the death, then will I do all for her that may be done, to make her happy. This speech is somewhat like that of Solomon concerning Adonijah, "If he show himself a worthy man," &c. (**1 Kings 1:52**)

We will build upon her a palace of silver. The whole blessed Trinity will have a hand in building the Church of the Gentiles upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. (**Ephesians 2:20**) God "plants the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, that he may say to Zion, Thou art my people." (**Isaiah 51:16**) None can come to Christ except God the Father draw him. (**John 6:44**) Christ the second person is both "author and finisher of our faith." (**Hebrews 12:2**) The Holy Ghost is "the same Spirit of faith" in David and Paul, (**2 Corinthians 4:13**) and is received by "the hearing of faith." (**Galatians 3:2**) He is "the God of all grace," (**2 Peter 1:19**) *antecedent, concomitant, subsequent*. We have nothing of which any of us can say, *Mihi soli debeo*, I am not bound to God for it.

And if she be a door, &c. As she is "the house of God, and gate of heaven." (**Genesis 28:17**) If she will open the "everlasting doors to the King of glory," (**Psalms 24:7**) and open "a great door and effectual" to his faithful ministers, (**1 Corinthians 16:9**) who come to "build her for a habitation of God through the Spirit." (**Ephesians 2:22**) If she open the gates, "that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in," (**Isaiah 26:2**) then will the Lord Christ "enclose her," board her, and beautify her with fair, sweet, and strong cedars, as with curious and costly wainscot, which shall be *monimentum, munimentum, ornamentum*, &c. But

all this is promised upon the condition that she be a wall and a door, that is, that she receive and retain Christ with her; for otherwise she can claim nothing. He may desert her without breach of covenant, as he did the old Church, and many particular Churches of the New Testament now under the Turk, for their perfidy and apostacy. The Church of Rome, though utterly revolted, yet lays strong claim to Christ still; and concludes, "I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day. For, strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (**Revelation 18:7-8**) (*See Trapp on "Revelation 18:7"*) (*See Trapp on "Revelation 18:8"*) About the year of grace 1414, Theodoricus Urias, an Augustine friar in Germany, said that the Church of Rome was, even so long since, become *ex aurea argenteam, ex argentea ferream, ex ferrea terream, superesse ut in stercus abiret*,⁽²²³⁾ of gold silver, of silver brass, of brass iron, of iron clay. There remains nothing now, but that of clay she become dung, to be swept out of doors with the besom of destruction.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Song 8:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I am a wall; and my breasts like towers.** If she be a wall, saith Christ. I am a wall, saith this Church of the Gentiles; I will carefully keep the doctrine of truth committed unto me, I will stand firm in the faith, being founded upon the rock of ages. And whereas lately I was looked upon as breastless, (**Solomon's Song 8:8**) now my breasts are fashioned, (**Ezekiel 16:7**) yea, they are grown far greater than those of mine elder sister's; so that they look "like towers." The Church of the Gentiles, though little at first, and scarce considerable, yet after Christ's ascension, was marvellously increased and multiplied; so that she herself stood amazed to see her children come from far, flying to her as a cloud, most swiftly, and in such flocks, as if a whole flight of doves, driven by some hawk or tempest, should scour into the columbary, and rush into the windows. (**Isaiah 60:8**)

Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. Heb., Peace: even as that Jerusalem Shulamite; nothing inferior to the old Church; yea, before her in this, that she for present is fallen off, and "through her fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." (**Romans 11:11**) But when God shall have united these two sticks, (**Ezekiel 37:19**) and made way for those kings of the east, (**Revelation 16:12**) then it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, "What hath God wrought?" (**Numbers 23:23**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Song 8:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Solomon had a vineyard in Baalhamon.** So hath Christ in a "very fruitful hill." (**Isaiah 5:1**) Solomon's vineyard must needs be of the best, for he abounded both with wealth and wit, to make it so. He let it also to farm for a very great rent, which sheweth the fruitfulness of it, so many vines set for so many silverings. (**Isaiah 7:23**) But Solomon's vineyard falls far short of Christ's (wherewith it is here compared in many respects). For as it is nothing so fruitful, so he was fain to let it out to vinedressers. He could not dress and manure it himself, keep it in his own hands, as his father David his; (**1 Chronicles 27:27**) neither could he take all the fruit, for the tenant also must live, and reason good. If Solomon have a thousand, the poor labourers may well have two hundred. But I, saith Christ here, neither let out the Church, my vineyard, but look to it myself, though I have a great deal of pains with it; nor suffer any part of the profits to go from me, so jealous I am of mine inheritance, being ever in the midst of it. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Song 8:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**My vineyard, which is mine, &c.** And therefore most dear unto me, for ownness makes love. *Patriam quisque amat: non quia pulchram, sed quia suam.*⁽²²⁴⁾ Every man loves his own things best. The Church is Christ's own by a manifold right, by donation, conquest, purchase—not with silver and gold, but with the dearest and warmest blood in all his heart. (**1 Peter 1:18**) No wonder therefore though she be always before him; though he look carefully to her that cost him so dear, that he trust not

²²³ Jac. Revius, *De Vit. Pontif.*, p. 229.

²²⁴ Seneca.

others with her, as Solomon was forced to do; but whomsoever he employs about her—"for we are labourers together with God," saith the apostle; "ye are God's husbandry" (**1 Corinthians 3:9**)—himself is ever one. *Ipse adest et praeset*, he is present and president. "Feed my sheep," said he to Peter, but do it for me, as the Syriac translator, respecting the sense, adds there. (**John 21:15**) "Take not unto thee the instruments of a foolish shepherd," (**Zechariah 11:11**) that is, *forcipes et mulctram*, as an ancient saith, like those that are more intent, *attensio gregis quam attentioni, fisco quam Christo*. Peter must not do any of this, much less must he "lord it over God's inheritance," as his pretended successors do, with whose carcasses therefore Christ shall shortly dung his vineyard, and water the roots of his vines with their blood. He must look to lip feeding, and, when himself is converted, "strengthen his brethren"; neither must he intervert or take to himself any part of the fruits, as Solomon's farmers did. He may not seek his own things, but the things of Jesus Christ. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water," but, since it is "God that gives the increase," let God reap all the glory; they shall also "reap in due season, if they faint not," if they grow not "weary of well doing." (**Galatians 6:9**) (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 8:11"*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Song 8:13]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Thou that dwellest in the gardens.** *i.e.*, O thou Church universal, that dwellest in the particular churches, frequently called gardens in this book. The French Protestants at Lyons called their meeting house paradise.

The companions hearken to thy voice. The angels, so some interpret it, learn of the Church, and profit in the knowledge of the "manifold wisdom of God" in man's redemption. (**Ephesians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Peter 1:12**) Or rather, thy fellowChristians, thine obedient children, that will hearken to their mother's counsel. No sooner can she say, "Hear and give ear, be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken it," but they "give glory to the Lord their God," (**Jeremiah 13:15-16**) glorify his Word, (**Acts 13:48**) set to their seals, (**John 3:33**) dispute not Christ's commands, but despatch them; *Illi garriant, nos credamus*, said Augustine of heretics that would not be satisfied. The philosophers called the Christians *credentes*, believers, by way of reproach; because they believed God upon his bare word. "We believe and know," saith Peter. (**John 6:69**) And "we believe and speak," saith Paul after David. (**2 Corinthians 4:13**) And we believe and practise, as Noah, and those other worthies did, (**Hebrews 11:7**) laying faith for a foundation of all their doings and sufferings in and for the Lord, like as (**Ezra 6:4**) the foundation of the temple was laid with "three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber." This is the guise of the Church's children; they are soon persuaded to believe and obey their mother, whom they look upon as the pillar and ground of truth.

Cause me to hear it. (*See Trapp on "Solomon's Song 2:14"*) Tremellius renders it, *Fac ut me audiant*, Cause them to hear me: deliver nothing to them for truth but what is consonant to my word of truth; let all thy doctrines bear my stamp, come forth *cum privilegio*, carry mine authority. What said Augustine to an adversary—it was Faustus the Manichee, I thing—What matter is it what either thou sayest or I say to this or that point *Audiamus ambo quid dicit Dominus*, Let us both hear what God saith, and sit down by it. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Song 8:14]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Make haste, my beloved.** Heb., Flee, or speed thee away, as Amaziah said to Amos, "Go, flee thee away into the land of Judah." (**Amos 7:12**) And as a senator of Hala in Suevia wrote to Brentius, *Fuge, fuge, Brenti, cito citius citissime*, Make all possible speed, haste, haste, haste; so the Church is at it here, with her "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." (**Revelation 22:20**) *O mora! Christe, veni*. Oh delay, Christ come. Thus, as this book began with a wish, so it ends. *Tota vita boni Christiani sanctum desiderium est.* ⁽²²⁵⁾ The whole life of a good Christian is a holy wish. He loves, and longs, and looks for Christ's second appearance, and even spends and exhales himself in continual sallies

and egressions of affection unto him in the meanwhile. He hath taken some turns with Christ upon those "mountains of spices, "—so heaven is called for its unconceivable height and sweetness; he hath tasted of the grapes of this celestial Canaan; hence he is as eager after it as once the Gauls were after Italy, when they had once tasted of the sweet wine of those grapes that grew there.⁽²²⁶⁾ The old character of God's people was, they waited for the consolation of Israel, Christ's first coming. Now they long as much for his second as the espoused maid doth after the marriage, as the apprentice for his freedom, the captive for his ransom, the traveller for his inn, the mariner for the haven, "looking for, and hasting⁽²²⁷⁾ the coming of that day of God." (**2 Peter 3:12**)

Soli Deo gloria aeternum {{field-off:Bible}}

²²⁶ Plut. in *Vita. Camilli*.

²²⁷ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν, see *Isaiah 16:5*, Septuag.