

An
EXPOSITION

**Of the first Chapter of the
Song of Solomon**

**Wherein the Text is Analyzed, the
Allegories are explained, and the hidden
Mysteries are unveiled according to
The Proportion of Faith.**

WITH
SPIRITUAL MEDITATIONS
Upon every Verse

By Hanserd Knollys

*My mouth shall speak of wisdom and the meditation of my heart shall be of
understanding, Psal 49: 3*

*This is a great Mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church,
Eph 5: 32*

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**To the right Honorable
Francis Lord Willughbye
Baron of Parham,
And His most pious Lady,
And their religious Children.**

Right Honorable,

I have not presumed to prefix your name with respect to any worth in this work performed on my part. Only, I am desirous to express my singular gratitude and observance to your Lordship and to your most noble family. My poor labors in expounding this and other chapters of this book (as I fulfilled the daily course of my ministry in your Lordship's house) were not without good success through the blessing of God. Which hath encouraged me, not only to offer the Exposition thereof to you the more deliberate and serious consideration by the reading of it, but also to publish it under your Lordship's patronage for the benefit of others. In this mysterious marriage song there be diverse persons bearing their parts. As first, the spiritual husband, called the Churches beloved; secondly, a gracious wife, called the spouse of Christ; and thirdly, holy children, called the daughters of Zion. Will it please your Honors to assimilate this household of God by bearing your parts in this spiritual Song? Then I do humbly beseech you my most noble lord, let it be your part to consider that as there is a way (a new and living way) wherein none but the redeemed shall walk, so there is a Song (a new and spiritual song) which none but the redeemed can learn. That new and living way (my lord) is Christ in the New Covenant who is the only way to the Father neither is there salvation in any other. To believe in Christ and to live godly in Christ is the only way to heaven. There are other ways that seem right to men, but the end of those ways are death. And that new and spiritual song (my lord) is the song of the Lamb which the bride the Lamb's wife and spouse of Christ doth sing, saying, I am my beloved's and my Beloved is mine, etc. which may well be called the Song of Songs. For this song sung with in the Spirit by faith with grace in the heart maketh melody to the Lord, but all other songs will end in sorrows and all carnal rejoicing will at the last be turned into mourning when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

Madame, I well know that your honor will most gladly bear a part also in this marriage song which you may do with much spiritual delight and no less profit to your precious soul by searching into the profound mysteries thereof which are veiled under various metaphors and hid up in continued allegories as being the most choice secrets and chiefest treasures of the unsearchable riches of the love and grace of Christ.

Elect Ladies, you are also much concerned to bear a part in this spiritual song. For you are first espoused virgins to Jesus Christ and secondly you are virgin daughters of Zion to whom Christ hath given the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And thirdly, you are of the number of the hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed virgins who shall stand with the Lamb upon Mount Zion, having the seal of the Spirit of God in your hearts, the name of the Father written in your foreheads and the harps of God and golden

vials full of sweet odors in your hands, prepared to sing Alleluia, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God, Alleluia, Amen. Alleluia. Praise God all ye his servants. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

And now Right Honorable, if my small and weak endeavors to unveil the mysteries, to open the metaphors and to explain the allegories of this song in expounding and interpreting the historical, prophetic and spiritual sense thereof may but afford your Honor's and any other precious soul's the least measure of light and understanding therein, I shall rejoice in the Lord and desire God may have all the glory whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son for whose sake I am

Your Honor's Servant,
Knollys

AN EXPOSITION Of the first Chapter of the SONG of SOLOMON

Chapter I.

Verse 1. The Song of Songs which is Solomon's

This verse containeth the title of this book wherein you have, first, the nature of it-a song; secondly, the excellency of it-the song of songs; and thirdly, the penman of it-*which is Solomon's*. This book is a spiritual song touching Christ and his Church of which subject David sang, Psa 45 and so did the prophet Isaiah chap 5:1-7 *Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine*, Cant 6:1. This is called *Επιδαλαίρηος*, a song of betrothing and TRDYRYS, a song of loves because this spiritual ode doth celebrate the mutual nuptial loves of Christ and his spouse in a mysterious marriage song. A spiritual song is for the most part an argument of a spiritual joy and holy rejoicing in the Lord, Psa 8:7 with praise and thanksgiving to God, Psa 96:1-4 *sung with grace in the heart*, Col 3:16, by the assistance of the holy Spirit of God, 1 Cor 14:15.

1. Meditation

Spiritual songs do become spiritual souls espoused to Jesus Christ, Psa 33:1-3 & 149:1, 2. Moses, Exod 15:2; Deborah, Judg 5:12; David, 2 Sam 22:12, and all Israel did celebrate their days of solemn thanksgiving for their deliverances and mercies received with singing spiritual songs, Numb 21:17. Christ and his disciples sang a hymn after the

Lord's supper, Mat 16:30. Paul and Silas sang praises to God, Acts 16:25. The Churches of Ephesus and Colosse were commanded by the Apostle to sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, Eph 5:19 & Col 3:16.

This ingemination of the word Song doth speak forth the excellency of the matter which was a usual manner among Hebrews in expressing such things as they esteemed very honorable or accounted very dishonorable, as a servant of servants, that is, the lowest and basest of servants. Gen 9:15 The God of gods, that is, the Most High God and the Lord of Lords, that is, the most mighty Lord and the King of kings, that is to say, the most glorious King; so the Song of songs, that is, the most excellent song.

The excellency of this song will appear in that:

1. It contains the great mystery of Christ and his Church;
2. The style thereof (though it express things very darkly in metaphors and allegories, yet when opened and understood) is most proper and elegant. For the shadows do set off and increase the splendor of the whole piece. And,
3. The matter of it is an ecclesiastical history, prophetically relating the state of the Church and people of God in the present and succeeding ages. In which respects this scripture doth admit of much variety of interpretation in regard of the literal, mystical and spiritual sense thereof which none can understand, but those that are taught of God, Matt 4:34.

2. Meditation

As there is a way (a new and living way) in which none but the redeemed shall walk, Isa 35:8, 9, so there is a song (a new and spiritual song) which none but the redeemed can learn. Rev 14:3-5. The penman of this song was Solomon the son of David who was a type of Christ:

1. In his name of peace, Solomon (said God) shall be his name and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. 1 Chr 22:9 & 1 King 4:24. And Christ is called the Prince of peace, Isa 9:6.
2. In his wisdom, 1 King 3:12 & 1 King 10:24. Only Christ hath preeminence in wisdom above Solomon, Matt 12:41. And,
3. In his kingly office. And the people said God save King Solomon, 1 King 1:39. Christ also was proclaimed King, Matt 21:5-12. Solomon is called the preacher, Eccl 1:1 & 12:9, 10, but Christ is the great prophet, Acts 3:22,23 whose words are spiritual life, Joh 6:63. God called Solomon his son, 2 Sam 7:14, 15, but Christ his only begotten Son, Joh 1:14 & 3:16. God loved Solomon, 2 Sam 12:24, 25, but Christ is his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, Matt 3:17 & 2 Pet 1:17 and in whom all his sons and daughters are accepted, Eph 1:6. All these particulars prove that Solomon was not only a great man, a wise man, but a good man, a godly man, a Saint, a child of God in everlasting covenant with God, 2 Sam 7:14, 15 compared with Psa 89:33, 34.

Solomon being now taken up in the Spirit with heavenly contemplations of the holy communion between Christ and his spouse wherein his soul had real and experimental enjoyment of his Beloved for Solomon loved the Lord, 1 King 3:3. In the title of this book, he laid aside all his own titles of worldly dignity, earthly majesty and honor and called it Solomon's Song, not King Solomon, not Solomon the Preacher, not Solomon the wise, the great King, but plain Solomon.

3. Meditation

Although the titles of earthly dignity and worldly honor are lawful, Acts 26:25-27 & 1 Pet 3:5, 6, yet a gracious soul living in the enjoyment of the loves of Christ can lay them aside with respect to himself. How often did David lay aside the title of his kingly office and honor in the book of the Psalms, Psalm 3 to the 10th Psalm, the title of those and many others is A Psalm of David, not King David. And the Apostle who sometime magnified his office, Rom 11:13 and other dignities, 2 Cor 11:22, 23, yet when it came to visions and revelations of the Lord, then he hid all those dignities aside and said, I knew a man in Christ caught up to the third heavens, 2 Cor 12:1, 2.

Verses 2, 3 and 4 Let Him kiss me &c.

In these three verses you have:

- I. The Church's confession of Christ's favor towards her, verse 4, ***The King hath brought me into his chambers***, amplified by the effects of that favor; to wit, 1. Spiritual joy we will be glad and rejoice in thee. 2. The recording of Christ's love: ***we will remember thy love more than wine***.
- II. The Church's profession of her spiritual affection unto Christ: ***The upright love thee***, amplified by a reason thereof, verse 3, ***Because of the favor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee***.
- III. The Church's prayer wherein: 1. She affectionately defineth the manifestation of his favor and pledge of his love in the ministry of the Gospel, verse 2, ***Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth***, and gives a reason of her desire: ***For thy love is better than wine***. 2. She begs the attractive power of the Spirit of Christ upon her heart, verse 4, ***Draw me***, and promiseth her evangelical obedience unto Christ in all his ways: ***we will run after thee***.

In the letter of historical part of these three verses Solomon declared the state of the Church during the time of his reign and dominion over all Israel which was a time of peace to the Church of the Jews, 1 Kings 4:25. The prophetic mystery of this part of the Song may fitly be accommodated unto the peaceable state of the Churches of Christ under the Gospel in the days of the Apostles: ***Then had the Churches rest, and walking in the fear of the Lord***, that is to say, worshipping God in his ordinances, ***for they continued in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers***, Acts 2:42, 46. ***And in the comfort of the Holy Spirit***, Acts 9:32. The spiritual sense of this scripture is applicable unto the condition of every Saint with respect unto the first love of his espousals, Jer 2:2, 3: ***In the day of the gladness of his heart***, Cant. 3:11 ***When the King brought him into his chambers***, Cant. 1:4.

Thus Solomon brings in the Spouse of Christ personating the Church of the Jews under the law, in the letter, the Churches of believers under the Gospel in the mystery and every particular Saint in the Spirit, singing,

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, etc. ***Let him***. She doth not name him, but it appeareth (verse 4) that she intended King Jesus her beloved as Mary did, John 20:15,

Sir, If thou hast born him thence, etc. She meant her Lord Jesus Christ. Neither doth the name herself, but it was the Church of Christ, his spouse, his dove, Cant. 2:14 who is here personated.

1. Meditation

Christ and his spouse know each other better than by name, that is, by outward appearance. *I know my sheep and am known of mine*, John 10:14. They know each other's voice, Isa 30:9 &c. John 10:4. They know each other's face, Cant. 1:14 & 2 Cor 4:6. They know each other's hearts, Jer. 20:12 & Cant. 8:6.

Let him kiss me. It was the custom of friends to salute with a kiss as a pledge of compassion, Luke 15:20 also of blessing, 2 Sam 19:19 and of love, Gen 29:11-13. *Great one another with a kiss of love*, 1 Pet 5:14. *Let him kiss me*, that is, let Christ my beloved manifest his compassion, blessing and love unto me his spouse. It is usual in scripture by a kiss to understand the things signified thereby. *Every one shall kiss the lips of him that giveth a right answer*, Pro 24:26, that is to say, shall favor and honor him. *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, that is to say, are joined together.

2. Meditation

Gracious souls do greatly desire some pledge or manifestation of Christ's love, favor, grace and blessing. The spouse was lovesick for Christ and longed for some love-token from him. She could not live without the loves of Christ, nor be satisfied without some pledge of his love, some manifestation of his favor and some communication of his grace, Cant. 2:4-6

With the kisses of his mouth. Kisses, one pledge of Christ's love, one manifestation of his grace, one enjoyment of himself could not satisfy the spouse. She doth affectionately desire and pray for kisses, that is to say, abundance of grace and peace, joy and comfort, blessings and favors from Christ which God blesseth his poor Saints withal in Christ Jesus, Eph. 1:1-4. Of his mouth, that is, the words of Christ's mouth. And all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, Luk. 4:12, to wit, the doctrine of the Gospel preached by the Apostles, Acts 15:7. The promises of grace which Christ speaketh into the hearts of his Saints with spirit and life, Joh. 6:63. The fruit of the lip which God creates to speak peace to him that is near and to him that is far off, Isa 57:19, that is, both to Jew and Gentile through believing, Rom. 15:13 in Christ, his mouth is most sweet, Cant. 5:16.

3. Meditation

The gracious words of Christ spoken in the ministry of the Gospel to the ear and applied by the Spirit of God to the heart of his spouse and people, do communicate abundant grace, peace and spiritual blessings unto their souls, Eph. 1:1-3 *He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches*, Rev. 2:17.

For thy love is better than wine. Love or loves, to wit, nuptial loves, conjugal loves, divine and spiritual loves of Christ whereof his kisses were a pledge. She speaks in the plural number to note: 1. The abundance and increase of Christ's love; 2. The constancy

and continuance of Christ's love, and; 3. The endless and everlastingness of Christ's love unto his spouse, his Churches and his Saints.

4. Meditation

The love of Christ, to wit, his heart affection, unto his spouse is abundant, constant and everlasting. 1. Christ's love is abundant. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*, Rom 5:5. 2. Christ's love is constant. *Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end*, Joh 13:1. And, 3. Christ's love is everlasting. Jer 31:3 *I have loved thee with an everlasting love*. Christ cannot, will not cease to love his Saints. He may hide his face, but he will not, cannot withhold his bowels, Isa 57:17, 18 compared with Jer 31:18-20 and Isa 49:14-16.

Is better than wine [or, good before wine], that is to say more pleasant, sweet, comfortable or refreshing than wine. *Wine maketh glad the heart of man*, Psa 104:15. It maketh the *heart merry*, Eccl 10:19. It causeth a man of an heavy heart to forget his poverty and remember his misery no more, Prov 31:6. Wine being an excellent creature is [sinecdochically] put for all creature-comforts, wherewith the loves of Christ being compared, doth far excel. Good, that is to say, positively good, or absolutely good, to wit, good in itself and good in its communication. Comparatively good, if compared to wine or any other creature comfort, it is better than wine. Superlatively good. If by wine you understand all the good things of this life, all creature excellence whatsoever, the loves of Christ are preferred by his spouse before them all. Thy loves are good before wine as exceeding and excelling all the things of this world in the highest degree.

5. Meditation

The loves of Christ to his spouse do exceed and excel all the creature-comforts, environments and excellencies of this world whatsoever. Psa 30:7 *How excellent is thy loving-kindness?* Beyond all expression. *Thy loving-kindness is better than life*, Psa 63:3. Better than honor, riches, etc. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor 2:9. *Who can comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?* Eph 3:18, 19. The exceeding unsearchable riches of his grace is showed in his loving-kindness towards his spouse and people, Eph 2:7 & 3:8 which made the Apostle cry out, Rom 11:33, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

**Verse 3. Because of the savor of thy good ointments poured forth,
therefore do the virgins love thee.**

This verse containeth the reason why the spouse so affectionately desired the grace, favor and blessings Christ, *because of the savor of thy good ointments*, and why the upright virgin souls so loved Christ: *thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee*.

1. Meditation

The spouse (Churches and Saints) have and can give a sanctified reason for their spiritual affection unto Christ and for their affectionate desires of spiritual communion with Christ, Joh 4:29; Psa 116:1; Cant 5:8-10.

The words are an elegant periphrasis or circumlocution declaring his name whose communications of grace and pledges of love the spouse so affectionately desired.

Thy name is as ointment poured forth. The name of Christ is here described by an apt similitude, to wit, ointment set forth: 1. By the fragraney of it, ***the savor of thy ointment***; 2. By the sovereignty thereof, ***good ointment***; 3. By the variety, ***ointment***; and 4. By the abundance thereof, ***poured forth***, which showeth the freeness of the dispensation.

2. Meditation

There is abundance of excellency, sweetness and sovereignty in the name of Christ. ***O Lord our God, How excellent is thy name in all the earth***, Psa 8:1. ***His name alone is excellent***, Psa 148:13. ***My meditation of him shall be sweet***, Psa 104:34. ***And his fruit was sweet to my taste***, Cant 2:3. ***His mouth is most sweet***, Cant 5:13, 16. ***The name of the Lord is a strong tower***, Pro 18:10. ***They that know thy name will trust in thee***, Psa 9:10.

By the name of Christ in scripture is meant:

1. Himself, who in respect of his divine nature is God, Rom 9:5, of his human nature is man, 1 Tim 2:5. And of the union of both natures in the word (who is the second subsistence in the divine essence, 1 Joh 5:7). He is called Immanuel, that is, ***God with us***, Matt 1:23.
2. His offices, who in respect of his prophetic office is called the ***Christ of God***, Luk 9:20; of his priestly office is called ***Jesus***, Matt 1:21 and of his kingly office is called ***the Lord of Lords***, Rev 19:16.
3. His attributes, in which respect Christ is called ***Light***, John 1:9; ***life***, Joh 14:6; ***manna***, Rev 2:17; ***bread***, Joh 6:43 and ***water of life***, Rev 22:17.
4. His relative name, or name of relations, in which respect Christ is called ***Father***, Isa 9:6; ***an husband***, 2 Cor 11:2; ***a brother***, Cant 8:1; ***a friend***, Cant 1:16; ***an head***, Col 1:18; ***our righteousness***, Jer 23:6; ***our sanctification***, 1 Cor 1:3 and ***our salvation***, Luk 2:30.
5. The ordinances of God are understood by his name, 1 King 9:3, especially the preaching of the gospel, Acts 9:15.

In all which respects the name of Christ is like ointment which hath an excellent sovereign virtue and a sweet comfortable, delightful savor.

As ointment. A good name is compared to precious ointment, Eccl 7:1. There are two sorts of ointment mentioned in scripture: first, compounded by the apothecary, and used 1. To anoint the body, Mark 14:3, 8; 2. To pour into wounds, Luk 10:34 and 3. To make the face to shine, Psa 104:15. ***Let thy head lack no ointment***, Eccl 9:8. Secondly, commanded by the Lord: 1. Under the law, Exod 30:22-25 wherewith a. The tabernacle, vs. 26, b. The vessels, vss.27-29 and 3. Aaron and his sons vs. 30 were anointed. 2. Under the Gospel wherewith the elders of the Church are to anoint them that are sick or infirm in the name of the Lord, Jam 5:14.

The name of Christ is like ointment to the Saints' souls in all these particulars if spiritually applied by faith.

Ointment. Good ointments, to wit, the Spirit of grace and the graces of the Spirit, 1 Joh 2:20, 27 wherewith:

1. Christ the King, Priest and Prophet of his Church was anointed above his fellows, Psa 45:2, 8; Heb 1:9; Isa 11:2; Joh 1:14, 16; and,
2. The Saints being members of his mystical body (the Church) whereof Christ is the Head, are anointed in their measure, 2 Cor 1:21; Joh 1:16; 1 Joh 2:20, 27; Eph 4:7.

3. Meditation

The application of Christ's name by faith in the communication of his Spirit and grace unto his spouse and Saints will heal their wounded spirits, Isa 61:1-3, recover their sick souls, Cant 2:4-6, make them shine in their conversations, Isa 60:1-3, and consecrate them as vessels of honor and a royal priesthood unto the Lord, 2 Tim 2:21 & 1 Pet 2:5, 9.

Poured forth. To wit, from one vessel into another (to be used and applied to the purposes aforesaid. And this is done first when the Saints in preaching, prophesying and Christian conference, communicate their spiritual gifts and experiences one to another, Zech 4:2, 3, 10-14. Secondly and more effectually, when Christ either mediately or immediately effuseth his Spirit and grace out of himself into the hearts of his Saints, Psa 133:2, 3; Zech 12:10; Rom 5:5 **which is shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior**, Tit 3:4-7.

This effusion or pouring forth of good ointment causeth a sweet savor which is fragrant in smell like the smell of spikenard, Cant 1:12 which made the smell of the spouse's ointments much better than all spices, Cant 4:10, who was typed out by Isaac (the son of the freewoman, Gal 4:22-28) of whom his father said (when he smelled the smell of his raiment which was indeed the goodly raiment of his elder brother put upon him) **See! The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed**, Gen 27:15, 27, 28. The smell of the spouse's garments is like the smell of Lebanon, Cant 4:11, when clothed upon with the garments of Christ that smell of Myrrhe and Aloes and Cassia, Psa 45:2, 7. For God his God hath anointed him, Psa 45:5, and Christ her Lord hath anointed her, 1 Joh 2:20, 27.

By spiritual savor you may understand (by a synecdoche) all the objects of spiritual senses as tasting, &c. **And his fruit was sweet to my taste**, Cant 2:3, which are exercised, Heb 5:14. Whilst the name of Christ is as ointment poured forth in the ministry and administrations of the gospel, wherein is made manifest the sweet savor of his knowledge, 2 Cor 2:14, 15.

4. Meditation

The Saints do exercise spiritual senses whilst Christ poureth forth the savor of his spiritual graces in the ministry of the word, and administrations of the Gospel, 1 Joh 1:1-4 & 1 Pet 1:2, 3; Cant 2:3.

These ointments are called **good ointments** from the virtue, efficacy and benefits which poor Saints receive thereby. 1. The Spirit is good, Psa 143:10. 2. The favor of God is

good, Psa 4:6. 3. The promises of Christ are good, Isa 52:7 & Rom 10:15. And all spiritual blessings in Christ are good in themselves and in their communications. The Saints receive much spiritual good by the pouring forth of the Spirit and grace of Christ, Mic 2:7; Isa 32:15.

Therefore do the virgins love thee. Virgins, to wit, the spouse's companions, Psa 45:14, believers espoused to Jesus Christ, 2 Cor 11:2, who are not defiled with the false and superstitious worships of Babylon, Rev 14:4, wise Christians, who having oil in their vessels with their lamps (that is to say, Christ's Holy Spirit and sanctifying graces in their hearts) go out of themselves, out of Babylon to meet the Bridegroom, Matt 25:1, 4, 10, for they love him, Cant 1:4. **The upright love thee. Thy love is better than wine, therefore do the virgins love thee.** The Saints' love to Christ is the effect of Christ's love to them, 1 Joh 4:19. **Love thee**, that is to say, they have spiritual desires, heart-thirstings and soul-longings after Christ, Psa 73:25. O that I had Christ! Ah, that Christ would manifest himself unto me! O that God would reveal Christ in me! Give me grace, &c. **I am sick of love**, Cant 2:5 and cannot live without renewed loves of Christ, the presence of my beloved, &c.

5. Meditation

Christ alone is the most desirable object of a believer's love. Psa 73:25: **Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.** Which love-sick desire to enjoy her beloved, engaged her heart to run after him which that she might do the better and with more freedom and spiritual liberty. She puts up another petition wherein the spouse begs the attractive power of the Spirit of Christ upon her heart to draw her.

Verse 4. Draw me and we will run after thee, &c.

God draweth souls, either by outward means and mercies only which is sufficient to leave them without excuse, Rom 1:19, 20, but not to effectual salvation. So did God draw all Israel after the flesh, Hos 11:4, 8, 12. Or else together with outward means by his Holy Spirit, Jer 31:3, which is effectual: first, in their calling and conversion unto Christ, Joh 6:45; secondly, unto their progress and growth up in Christ. And so Christ draweth all his Israel after the Spirit, Joh 12:32. This drawing in the text relateth principally to the latter sense. **Draw me**, to wit, effectually and powerfully and that not only unto Christ in conversion, but after Christ in conversation, 1 Joh 2:6. Draw me not only from the world, from Satan, from sin and from self, but allure me and incline my will and affections, my resolutions, desires and loves after thee my beloved Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Meditation

Outward means and mercies may engage persons to follow Christ for loves. The Spirit and power of grace must cause them to follow Christ for love, Joh 6:26; 2 Cor 5:14; Psa 110:3.

Souls need drawing by the Spirit of God in the means of grace and that not only in their first conversion, but afterwards in their Christian conversation. They need such powerful drawing in their first conversation because they have:

1. No active power of themselves to come to Christ, Joh 6:44.
2. No subjective power of themselves to submit unto Christ, Rom 8:7

But on the contrary, they have:

1. a resisting power in that will to refuse the offers of grace, Joh 5:49; and,
2. a contradicting power, opposing the offers of grace in the preaching of the Gospel, Acts 13:45.

They have need of such powerful drawing after conversion because:

1. of strong corruptions opposing and hindering them from following Christ, Gal 5:17
2. of the weakness of grace whereby they faint and wax feeble in the way of holiness, Heb 12:12, 13.

2. Meditation

Gracious souls are not satisfied with grace received, but desire and pray for more.

They know:

1. there is more in Christ to be received, Joh 1:16;
2. the grace of yesterday is not sufficient for the duty and work of this day, 2 Tim 2:1;
3. their vessels are not full. They have not attained. They are not perfect, Phil 3:12-15;
4. grace in truth engageth the heart after growth in grace, 2 Pet 3:18;
5. the beginning of grace causeth the soul to go on unto perfection, 2 Cor 7:1;
6. a small measure received maketh a Saint restless and unsatisfied until it come unto the measure of its fullness, Eph 4:7, 13.

We will run after thee. The words are a metaphor borrowed from persons who run in a race, 1 Cor 9:24, and fitly applied unto Christians, Heb 12:1, which signifieth:

1. the spouse's readiness of affection to follow her beloved, Isa 55:5. As Elisha who left his yoke of oxen and ran after Elijah when he had cast his mantle upon him, 1 King 19:19-21;
2. the Saints' celerity or speedy motion after Christ, Psa 119:60 ***I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.***
3. The unweariness of the Lord's people to follow Christ in his ways, Isa 40:31 ***They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary.***

In that she saith ***after thee*** it implieth:

1. that she had not attained, neither was already perfect. She counted not herself to have apprehended, Phil 3:12-14; but,
2. that the reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressed and followed hard after Christ, Psa 63:8 ***My soul followeth hard after thee.***

3. Meditation

Christ's powerful drawing maketh the Saints willing to follow him in all his ways, Psa 110:3 ***In the day of thy power thy people shall be willing.*** The will being thus efficaciously and sweetly drawn by Christ doth will that which is good freely and really. Rom 7:18 ***To will is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward***

man, Rom 7:22. Ask the sun why it shineth. The answer is because its his nature: the sun cannot but shine. The fire cannot but heat. So, if you ask a gracious soul why do you pray so often, mourn for sin so much, hear sermons so constantly, wait on God so diligently in all his ordinances, why do you love Christ and so prize Christ and so press after the mark of the high calling in Christ, why do you follow so hard after Christ? A good and honest heart would give this answer: It is my new nature. I am partaker of the divine nature, 2 Pet 1:4 and I cannot but love Christ and prize him. ***The love of Christ constrains me***, 2 Cor 5:14. I cannot but pray, mourn, hear and wait on him in all his ways. My beloved draweth me with the cords of conjugal and covenant love, Hos 11:4 and I am made willing with desire and delight to follow and run after him.

4. Meditation

Though the Saints cannot keep pace with Christ in walking exactly after his example, yet they are willing and resolve to run after him and to follow his steps, Psa 63:8; Phil 3:12-14. ***He that saith he abideth in Jesus ought himself also so walk even as he walked***, 1 Joh 2:6. ***For hereunto are we called, Christ having left us an example that we should follow his steps***, 1 Pet 2:21. Which though the Saints cannot do exactly in all things, yet they are willing and resolve so to do by his strength and in their measure, Psa 119:32, 60 & Phil 3:13, 14. They set the Lord always before them, Psa 16:8. And they incline their hearts to perform his statutes always even unto the end, Psa 119:111,112. Yea, and it is their sorrow and burden when they fall short, or do not walk up to the rule of a new creature and they cry after him, follow hard after him and run after him still keeping Christ in their eye, Psa 25:15 & 123:1, 2, & 121:1, 2. ***Mine eyes*** (saith David) ***are ever towards the Lord***.

The King hath brought me into his chambers. The King, viz. ***Solomon***, who brought the congregation of Israel in to the Temple which he builded at Jerusalem for the worship of God, 1 King 8:1, 10, 62, 66. But in the mystery of this scripture is meant King Jesus who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, 1 Tim 6:15, 16.

5. Meditation

Soul government solely belongeth unto Jesus Christ. The Lord is our Judge. The Lord is our Law-giver. The Lord is our King, Isa 33:22. The King of Zion, Psa 2:6 and the King of Saints, Rev 15:3. The government shall be upon his shoulders, Isa 9:6. Hence may be truly inferred that:

1. Saints must not be the servants of men in the things of Christ, 1 Cor 7:23. For ***none can serve two masters***, Matt 6:24. If they seek to please men, they are not the servants of Christ, Gal 1:10. They ought to obey God rather than men, Acts 5:29 and not worship God after the commandments, traditions and doctrines of men, Col 1:8, 20, 22.
2. Sin and grace cannot reign together in one and the same heart, Rom 5:21. ***Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are under grace***, Rom 6:14. The Saints may not serve their lusts, but their Lord Jesus. ***Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof***, Rom 13:14.

3. Christ and Antichrist (the man of sin) are opposite in their government about spiritual matters, 2 Thes 2:3, 4. Christ giveth liberty of conscience unto his Saints, Gal 5:1, 2. Therefore his yoke is easy, Matt 11:28-30. And they sit down under his shadow (or government) with great delight, Cant 2:3. But Antichrist opposeth Christ and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, showing himself that he is God by imposing laws, commandments and traditions of men upon the Saints and Churches of God contrary to Christ, (compare 2 Thess 2:3, 4 with Col 2:8, 20, 22, 23) using a coercive power to force their obedience unto an observance of such antichristian inventions and superstitious traditions of men, Joh 9:22, 34 & 3 Joh 9, 10, 11.

His chambers. Christ hath his guest chamber, Mar 14:14, his bride chamber, Matt 9:15, and his bed chamber, Cant 3:7, to wit, his sanctuary, Exo 15:17, 18, his temple, 1 King 8:1, 10, 62, 66 and his Church, Acts 2:47, into which Christ brought his people in their assemblies, Acts 1:13, 14, to partake of his holy ordinances, Acts 20:7, 8, 11, wherein the Saints had communion, 1 Cor 10:15, 16, 17, not only one with another, but also fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ in the Spirit, 1 Joh 1:3, 4, to their comfort.

6. Meditation

Christ bringeth believers into his Churches and giveth them spiritual communion with himself in his holy ordinances, Joh 10:9; Isa 25:6. **The King brought me into his chambers.** Christ bringeth believers into his Churches: first, by opening their hearts to desire it, Psa 27:4; and, secondly, by opening the hearts of his people in the Church to receive them, Acts 9:26-28. And then Christ doth open his own heart unto them and doth admit them into a more inward and sweet communion with himself in his holy administration, Rev 3:20; Cant 5:1. **All my springs are in thee**, Psa 87:7.

We will be glad and rejoice in thee. *We*, that is, the whole Church which is but one (Cant 6:9) mystical body whereof Christ is the Head, Col 1:18. And in that respect used in the singular number, **draw me, hath brought me**, But consists of many members, 1 Cor 12:12, 27, united by the Spirit of love unto the Church, the body, Col 2:2, 3, and in that respect used in the plural number: **We will run after thee. We will be glad and rejoice in thee.**

7. Meditation

The spouse of Christ is but one mystical body consisting of many spiritual members compacted and fitly joined together.

1. One body, which is the Church of the first born, written in heaven, Heb 12:22, 23.
2. Many members which are [conjunctim] al the Churches of the Saints, 1 Cor 14:33, and every individual believer, 1 Cor 12:12, 27.
3. Compacted and fitly joined together, their hearts being knit together in love, Col 2:2 and in faith, Eph 4:13, faith in Christ and love to all the Saints, Col 1:4. We will be glad, &c.

Gladness and joy in the Lord is a spiritual affection in a gracious heart, Gal 5:22. Seeking the Lord in his way, Psa 105:3, 4, springing from faith in the love of Christ to his

soul, 1 Pet 1:8, whereby he is enlarged to delight in the Lord above all things, Psa 37:4 and against all discouragements, Hab 3:17, 18 to rejoice in the God of his salvation.

8. Meditation

Christ in his Churches, ordinances and holy administrations is the object of the Saints' joy, Psa 73:25. ***Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*** None, but Christ, none but Christ in promises, in duties, in ordinances, in Churches, saith a gracious soul, can satisfy me. It is not communion with Saints, enjoyment of ordinances and the privileges of Church fellowship that doth quiet and comfort the hearts of Saints, but Christ himself by the communication of his holy Spirit and sanctifying grace therein unto their poor hunger-thirsting souls.

Thus believers live above ordinances upon Christ in the use of ordinances, neither resting in them, nor slighting of them. They esteem a name in God's house (which is the Church of God, 1 Tim 3:15) better than sons and daughters, Isa 56:5, because they enjoy Christ's presence there, Matt 18:20, and the satisfying goodness of the house of God, Psa 65:5 & 36:7-9.

We will remember thy love more than wine. Of the loves of Christ, you read in verse 2 and in what respects Christ's love is better than wine unto which I refer you:

To remember Christ's love is to celebrate the memorial thereof, Psa 20:7, as the spouse did in this scripture where he records the loves of Christ and often maketh mention thereof. And good reason, for Christ records the remembrance of her love to him, Jer 2:2, ***3 I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousal, &c.*** This engaged her affections and endeared her heart and that in sincerity of Spirit to love Christ which she thus expresseth.

The upright love thee. Upright in heart, Psa 94:15, in speech, Isa 33:15, and in way, Psa 119:1. Love here is a conjugal spiritual love which doth affect both union and communion with Christ her beloved whose excellency consists in its entireness, fervency and fruitfulness, Rom 7:4

9. Meditation

The remembrance of Christ's love to his Saints engages and endears their hearts who are upright to love him, because he first loved them, 1 Joh 4:19, died for them, Rom 15:13, and washed away their sins in his own blood, Rev 1:5, 6.

Verses 5 and 6: I am black, but comely (O ye daughters of Jerusalem) as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon, &c.

These two verses are an aversion wherein the spouse turneth her speech from her beloved unto the daughters of Jerusalem to prevent their scandal or offense at the Church's affliction and her member's defection. And this she doth:

1. by a confession of her deformity. ***I am black.*** Which she aggravateth by a comparison ***as the tents of Kedar.***
2. By a refutation of contempt ***but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem*** which she illustrateth by a similitude ***as the hangings of Solomon.***

3. By an admonition, verse 6, ***Look not upon me because I am black***, amplified by a threefold reason of her blackness:
 - a. from the efficient cause thereof ***because the sun hath looked upon me.***
 - b. From the subordinate cause ***my mother's children were angry with me. They made me the keeper of the vineyard.***
 - c. From the meritorious cause, ***but mine own vineyard have I not kept.***

I am black. The spouse of Christ in the letter and history of this scripture was black:

1. by Solomon's fall into the sins of adultery and idolatry, 1 King 11:1-8.
2. By Rehoboam's folly in refusing good counsel and forsaking the law of the Lord, 1 King 12:8 & 2 Chron 12:1-3.
3. By the defection of ten tribes who revolted from the House of David and apostatized from the God of Israel, 2 King 12:16, 19.

In the prophetic mystery of this scripture you have described the blackness of the Churches of Christ under the Gospel. By reason: first, of their persecutions, Acts 8:1-3 & 1 Thes 1:4; secondly, of their false teachers, Acts 20:29, 30 & 2 Pet 2:1-3.; and, thirdly, of the errors, schisms and divisions amongst them, 1 Cor 11:18, 19 & 1 Cor 15:12. Which blackness overspread the face of the Churches in Asia, Rev 2 & 3 chapters.

In the spiritual and allegorical sense of this scripture by blackness is meant: first, the temptations of the Saints, Job 30:30 ***my skin is black upon me***; secondly, the afflictions of believers, Lam 4:7, 8 ***Their visage is blacker than a coal***; and, thirdly, the corruptions of the Lord's people which makes them empty and void, faint and feeble and much pain is in all loins, Nahum 2:10. And the faces of them all gather blackness.

1. Meditation

Sin with the effects thereof, to wit, contentions and divisions in the Churches, persecutions and afflictions upon the members thereof and the desertions and sorrowful mournings of the true servants of God for those miseries do overcloud the face of the spouse of Christ and very much darken the Saints of God. Lam 2:1 ***How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel?***

But comely. A metaphor taken from a woman. Jer 6:2 ***I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.*** Whose comeliness consisteth:

1. In the fairness of complexion. ***Thy countenance is comely,*** Cant 2:14.
2. In a just proportion of parts, Cant 7:1-6, where Christ commending his spouse from head to foot sings forth her beauty, saying, ***How fair and how pleasant are thou, O love, for delights?*** The spouse's beauty is spiritual, called ***the beauty of holiness,*** Psa 110:3 which is the ornament of the hidden man of the heart. Psa 45:13 ***The king's daughter is all glorious within.*** And this comeliness Christ put upon her when he entered into covenant with her, Ezek 16:8, 14. ***Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,*** Psa 90:17. Thus, she is changed into his image, 2 Cor 3:18. And bears the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor 15:49 which Christ looking upon, saith, ***thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee,*** Cant. 4:7, 9. ***Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.*** Thus Christ is overcome with his spouse's beauty, Cant 6:4, 5, 9, 10.

2. Meditation

The image of Christ, consisting in righteousness and true holiness, is the spouse's spiritual beauty and maketh the Saints comely in the eyes of Christ, Psa 45:1; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; Ezek 16:14.

O ye daughter of Jerusalem. By Jerusalem we may understand the Church of God on earth, and that from these resemblances:

1. Jerusalem was the city of the great King, Psa 48:1-3. So the Church of God is called **the city of the living God**, Heb 12:22, 23. And all the Saints are fellow citizens, Eph 2:19.
2. Jerusalem was the throne of God, Jer 3:14-17. So the Church of God is called Christ's throne, Zech 6:12, 13. **And the elders clothed with white raiment sit round about the throne**, Rev 4:2, 4, 6.
3. Jerusalem was a free city honored with many privileges and immunities. There was the temple, the oracles, the covenants, the law and the service of God, Rom 9:4 & Acts 2:5, 42, 47. So the Church of God is privileged with Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, 1 Cor 12:28 & Eph 4:11-13. Also with his holy ordinances, 1 Cor 11:2 & Acts 16:4. **Jerusalem which is above is free which is the mother of us all.** Gal 4:26. **The Church of the firstborn.** Whose daughters are:
 - a. All the Churches of the Saints, 1 Cor 14:33; Cant 2:7, whereof every particular Church hath the common: **1. Name**, 1 Cor 1:1 & 1 Thess 1:1; Rev 21:1, 8, 12, 18; Rev 3:1, 7, 14; **2. Nature**. Eph 2:21, 22; 1 Pet 2:4, 5. **3. Power**, 1 Cor 5:4, 12 & 14:24, 29; 2 Thes 3:6, 14, 15.
 - b. All the Saints in every Church of Christ, Cant 3:10, called **Zion, converts**, Isa 1:27, and, **the sons of Zion**, Lam 4:2. **For of Zion shall be said this and that this man was born in her. The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people that this man was born there, Selah.** Psa 87:5, 6.

The Jews used to call the whole, the mother and the parts, the daughters, Ezek 16:45, 46, 48. The Saints are called the daughters of Jerusalem: first, because they are (being added to the Church, Acts 2:47) presented as chaste virgins to Jesus Christ, 2 Cor 11:2. Secondly, because they were young converts newly espoused to Jesus Christ, Cant 3:10, 11. Thirdly, because they were in a seeking condition (some of them) inquiring into the excellencies of Jesus Christ, Cant 5:8, 9 & 6:1. These are called to consider that the Church is comely although she be black.

3. Meditation

If young Christians would consider the Church's beauty and comeliness, they would not be so much offended at her infirmity and blackness. Cant 6:4, 10 **Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun? Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem.** Though the Church be like a woman in the wilderness, yet she is like a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, Rev 12:1, 5, 6. **I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman**, Jer 6:2.

Though the Church be compared to the tents of Kedar, the Arabian shepherds, Ezek 27:21, for blackness, yet she is resembled to the curtains of costly hangings of Solomon for her comeliness. Kedar was one of Ishmael's sons, Gen 25:13. And as the father was a mocker and a persecutor of Isaac, Gal 4:28-31, so his offspring were such as hated peace, Psa 120:5, 6. Their tents were made of goats' hair which was dark and blackish, very mean in outward appearance whereby is figured forth the adversity and calamity of the Church. And yet the tents of Kedar were exceeding rich within, full of all rich merchandise, pearls and precious jewels as *Solinus in Polychist, cap. 46* and *Plin. Hist. Lib. 6. Cap. 28*. Do report.

So the Churches and Saints, though exercised with tribulations, afflictions, persecutions, corruptions and desertions, which make them to appear outwardly dark and black, yet whilst they enjoy pure ordinances, Gospel privileges, spiritual gifts and sanctifying graces, they are beautiful, fair and comely.

As the curtains of Solomon or Hangings of Solomon, Josephus, lib 8, c.2. Amig. Doth report that Solomon's hall had three several hangings of tapestry. Every one more costly and rich than other and behind them a wall of black marble, curiously wrought with imagery. And the learned judge them hangings to be here intended by these curtains of Solomon. But in as much as the Church's beauty is hereby described, I rather by the curtains of Solomon understand an illusion unto the curtains of the tabernacle, Num 4:25, 26, which were very beautiful, Exod 36:8, 13. Within these curtains was the Ark of God, 2 Sam 7:13. And they were a type of the Church of God in its beauty and glory, Isa 54:1, 2. *Even the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*, Rev 21:2. *Arrayed in fine linen, white and clean which is the righteousness of the Saints*, Rev 19:7.

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

In these words the spouse or Church of Christ doth admonish the daughter of Jerusalem not to sleight the ordinance of God, not to neglect communion with the Churches of Saints, nor to despise the Church or any Saint therein or any member thereof because she is black. *Look not upon me*, to wit, with disdain; Mich 4:11. *Let her be defiled and let our eye look upon Zion*; nor with reproach. Obadiah 12, 13 *Thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother... Thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity*; neither with an outward eye; 2 Cor 10:7 *Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?*; lest they should be moved by the Churches afflictions, 1 Thess 3:3.

1. Meditation

The Saints ought not to disdain the Churches of Christ, or neglect the ordinances of God, nor slight or reproach the people of God because of the Churches afflictions, persecutions and tribulations. Gal 4:13, 14 *Ye know that through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you and my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected.* 1 Thess 1:6 *and ye became followers of me and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit.*

Because the sun hath looked upon me.. these words contain the first reason of the spouse's blackness drawn from the efficient cause thereof, to wit, God's anger against her manifested by afflicting her. Which dispensation of God towards his people is here and in other scriptures expressed by this metaphor of the sun. God is called a Sun, Psa 84:11, as in respect of his shining and looking upon the face of his anointed with favor, Psa 34:9. So in respect of his burning anger, Heb 12:29. Thus the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire, Exod 14:24. ***And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel who had appeared unto him twice,*** 1 King 11:9. ***I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me and brought me into darkness,*** Lam 3:1, 2. This made her black, Lam 1:12, 13, and covered with a cloud, Lam 2:1-3. By the sun is meant persecution and tribulation also which ariseth from formal hypocritical professors, Matt 13:6, 21, when God doth persecute them in his anger.

2. Meditation

God's angry countenance appearing unto his Church and people in their afflictions doth grievously trouble their souls, Lam 2:1-4. ***My mother's children were angry with me, &c.*** These words declare a second reason of her blackness, to wit, the persecution she met with from the ten tribes which are here called her mother's children, or sons of her mother who revolted from Judah and Rehoboam, 1 King 12:16, 19. These sons or children of her mother were the Scribes, Pharisees and Elders of the Jews who persecuted the Church at Jerusalem, Acts 8:1. Of which number was Saul who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, Acts 9:1, 2. And this was their anger against the Church and the sincere hearted members thereof. Such also were false brethren who unawares creep into the Church, Gal 2:4, 5. And false teachers, not sparing the flock, Acts 20:29, 30.

3. Meditation

False ministers and formal professors have (in their anger) stirred up persecution against the Churches and sincere servants of Christ, Acts 13:50 & 14:2 & 6:12 & 21:27.

They made me the keeper of their vineyards. This was the effect of their anger. They uses a coercive power over her conscience and compelled her to observe their traditions and idolatries, Hosea 13:1, 2. ***Let men that sacrifice kiss the calves.*** Matt 15:3, 9; Mark 7:13. By the vineyards here (opposed to her own vineyard) are meant false Churches, false assemblies, such as were the assemblies at Dan and Bethel where they worshipped before the calves that Jeroboam had set up, 1 King 12:26-33, which was a sin equivalent with worshipping devils. 2 Chr 11:15 ***And he ordained him priests for the high places and for the devils and for the calves which he had made,*** & 1 Cor 10:20, 21.

4. Meditation

It is a great sin and of dangerous consequence for the people of God to submit unto any impulsive or coercive power of the supreme Magistrate imposing or prescribing a false worship, Isa 29:13-15.

But mine own vineyard have I not kept. These words contain the third reason of the Churches blackness, expressing the meritorious cause thereof, to wit, her own neglect of her duty and unfaithfulness to her trust. For although Rehoboam and Judah kept the charge of the Lord and observed his ordinances for a short time, 2 Chron 11:16, 17, yet within five years Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him, 2 Chr 12:1, 2. This neglect of her own vineyard is more prophetically expressed and expounded, Isa 5:1-7, by the Prophet.

5. Meditation

It is a grievous sin to be negligent in keeping of the ordinances of God which he hath committed to the Churches and Saints. ***Thus saith the Lord God, this is Jerusalem. She hath changed my judgements into wickedness and hath not walked in my statutes, but hath defiled my sanctuary, &c.*** Ezek 5:5-13 & 20:19-21 & 48:6-13. ***And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things. And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.*** Mal 2:1-3, 8, 9. ***Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.***

Verses 7, 8 Tell me (O thou whom my soul loveth) where thou feedest, &c.

The spouse having confessed her blackness, occasioned by Solomon's fall, Rehoboam's folly and Israel's defection and having also admonished the daughters of Jerusalem not to look upon her with an evil or disdainful eye in the day of her affliction, she now turns her again unto Christ by way of petition unto whom Christ gives a gracious answer.

In these two verses you have first the Church's prayer and secondly Christ's answer thereof. In the spouse's prayer, verse 6, observe:

1. How she styleth her beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ. ***O thou whom my soul loveth!***
2. Wherein she desireth his direction. ***Tell me*** a. ***where thou feedest*** b. ***where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon.***
3. The reason of her desires emphatically expressed by a pathological expostulation. ***For why should I be as one that turneth aside, &c.***

Which argues:

1. Her unwillingness to wander out of Christ's way
2. The unreasonableness of the thing if she should do so, 1 King 12:28-30

Christ's answer of her prayer, verse 8, consisteth:

1. Of the gracious compellation which Christ gives his spouse, his Churches and every particular Saint. ***O thou fairest among women.***
2. Of a tender supposition of her ignorance in the particulars touching which she enquired his instruction. ***If thou knowest not..*** And,
3. Of an holy direction:
 - a. to forsake all false assemblies and worship. ***Go thy way forth, &c.,*** to wit, from Dan and Bethel and so from Babylon.
 - b. To join unto the Church and worship of God. ***And feed thy kids besides the shepherds tents,*** that is, return to Zion and Jerusalem which the Priests and

Levites did, and such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, 2 Chron 11:13-16

Tell me, &c. That is, direct us, show us and declare plainly unto us, Psa 25:4, 5. Gracious souls address themselves unto Jesus Christ for his counsel to them in all their doubts. So did all the faithful among the ten tribes of Israel. There was a great change:

1. in the government of the Commonwealth of Israel;
2. in the worship of God.

Ten tribes rent from Judah and joined with Jeroboam and most of them sacrifice at Dan. And they that sacrificed, kissed the calves, but in this great change, the faithful among them enquired of God saying **Tell me, &c.**

1. Meditation

When there is a change of civil government in a Commonwealth, or the worship of God in the Church, then the faithful (especially if doubted) ought to inquire and ask counsel of the Lord and to seek to him for direction. The woman of Samaria in this case asked and enquired of Christ touching the worship of God, Joh 4:19, 20 **Our fathers worshipped in this mountain and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.** And so did all the faithful among the ten tribes, 2 Chr 11:16.

This the Saints ought to do first because the Lord Jesus Christ hath the government laid upon his shoulders and he is the only wise counselor, Isa 9:6. Secondly, because Christ is faithful as a son over his own house, the Church, Heb 3:5-7. Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, **Today if you will hear his voice.**

O thou whom my soul loveth! O! This interjection doth not only betoken the spouse's affection, but it is the Spirit's rhetoric whereby he helpeth her to sigh and groan forth her zealous love unto Christ and her most affectionate desires to be instructed and directed by him in her doubts and difficulties. Isa 26:8, 9 **O thou, &c.** Christ is the object of his spouse's affections. It was not his spiritual gifts, privileges, ordinances, graces and other spiritual blessings, but himself also, yea, himself alone in the absence and want of his ordinances (which she was then seeking after) that she longed and so much desired to enjoy. **O thou whom my soul loveth.** The affection which the spouse so pathetically expressed here was her soul's love to her beloved Lord Jesus. Of this virgin love to Christ something was hinted in the exposition of the 3 and 4 verses unto which I refer you & only take notice of the constancy of the spouse's, the Church's, the Saints' affection unto Christ in all the changes that happened both in the Church and Commonwealth.

2. Meditation

Gracious souls are constant in their love to Jesus Christ in all changes. If others change their King, the spouse will not change hers. Isa 33:22 **The Lord is our King. He will save us.** If others change their god, the faithful will not change their God. Josh 24:16, 21, 24 **God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods. The Lord our God will we serve and his voice will we obey.** If Christ afflict his spouse, his Saints, yet will she love him. Cant 3:1-4 **By night on my bed** (to wit, of affliction, Rev 2:22) **I sought him whom my soul loved.** If he deserts her, yet she loveth him, yea, grows sick of love in his absence. Cant 5:6, 8 **I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself**

and was gone. I charge you, O daughter of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved that ye tell him that I am sick of love.

The Saints have good reason to love Christ in all changes, for:

1. Christ changeth not. Mal 3:6 ***I am the Lord. I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Christ Jesus the same yesterday and today and forever,*** Heb 13:8.
2. Christ sweeteneth and sanctifieth all changes unto his Saints and maketh all work together for their good, Rom 8:28. Christ's presence in a prison, Christ's love in all our losses, Christ's smiles in a dark hour and a day of desertion, Christ's visits upon a sick bed, O how comfortable, how cordial they are unto poor hearts! In a word, there's enough in Christ to sweeten and sanctify any condition to a gracious soul.
3. Christ loves the Saints in all the changes that come upon them, Joh 13:1. Jesus having loved his own, which are in the world, he loved them unto the end. His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, Lam 3:22, 23. Therefore the Saints have cause to love him, 1 Joh 4:19. This soul love to Christ will cause the Saints to sell all for Christ to communicate all with Christ and to do nothing without the love and good liking of Christ.

Where thou feedest, &c. Feeding comprehendeth all the duties of a pastor or shepherd. First, a shepherd doth take the charge of the flock, so doth Christ take care and charge of the whole flock of God, Joh 10:2-4, 14, and commands his under-shepherds (the ministers) to take the oversight thereof, 1 Pet 5:1-4. Secondly, Christ (the good shepherd) maketh his flock to lie down in green pastures and leadeth them besides still waters, Psa 23:1-3. He giveth them hidden manna, Rev 2:17, and living water, Rev 7:17. ***For the lamb shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water.*** Thirdly, Jesus Christ (as a shepherd) doth govern and order his flock, Ezek 34:11-16, 22. ***I will feed my flock*** (saith the Lord). ***I will seek that which was left and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken and strengthen that which was sick.*** Fourthly, Christ (like a shepherd) doth defend and preserve the flock of God from the wild beasts of the field. Isa 11:6-9 ***They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*** As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, also he will deliver it and passing over, he will preserve it, Isa 31:5.

Christ doth thus feed his flocks (to wit, his Churches and Saints) by his faithful ministers and elders of the Churches of God whom the Holy Spirit maketh overseers over the flock, Acts 20:28 & 1 Pet 5:1-4

3. Meditation

The ministry of Christ is a soul-seeding ministry, Eph 4:11-13. The work of the ministry is:

1. To convert souls, Acts 26:16, 18 & 1 Cor 4:15. ***For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel,*** 1 Cor 3:5.
2. To feed souls. Jer 3:15 ***I will take you one of a city and two of a family and I will bring you unto Zion. And I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*** And Acts 20:17, 28.

3. To comfort souls and to bind up the broken hearts of his people, Isa 40:1. ***Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith you God. Speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem.*** And 1 Thess 3:2
4. To strengthen and confirm souls. Isa 35:3 ***Strengthen the weak hand and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them which are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.*** And Acts 14:21-23.
5. To establish souls. 1 Thess 3:2 ***And I sent Timotheus, a minister of God, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith.*** And Rom 1:11, 12.
6. To save souls. 1 Cor 1:21 ***It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.***

This soul ministry of Christ was that which the spouse inquired after, saying, ***Tell me (O thou whom my soul loveth) where thou feedest.*** She concludes that Christ had a soul feeding ministry by whom he did feed his flock like a shepherd, Isa 40:11. Only she queries where it is and desires Christ's direction to find it.

4. Meditation

Gracious souls do greatly desire to enjoy the ministry of Jesus Christ. Cant 2:3 ***I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.***

Where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon. By *noon* you may understand, first, a time of tribulation, Matt 13:6, 21; 1 Pet 4:12-17, occasioned through temptations, 1 Pet 1:6, 7, corruptions, Psa 49:5 & 40:11-13 and persecutions, 2 Tim 3:10-12. And in this respect the spouse inquired of Christ where the Churches, the Saints resting place was.

5. Meditation

Christ hath a resting place for his Churches and Saints in time of tribulation, 2 Thess 1:4-7. And you who are troubled, rest with us, Rev 6:9-11. Christ is the Saints' rest, Psa 116:7. ***Return unto thy rest, O my soul,*** Psa 37:7. Rest in the Lord! Christ is the Saints' hiding place, Isa 32:2. And there was the hiding of his power, Hab 3:4. ***Thou art my hiding place. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble,*** Psa 32:7.

Christ maketh his Saints to rest:

1. By believing in him and living by faith upon him. Heb 4:3 ***For we which have believed, do enter into rest.*** Matt 11:28 ***Come unto me (saith Christ) all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.***
2. By walking in the ways of God. Jer 6:16 ***Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old path where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your soul.***

Secondly. By *noon*, you may also understand a time of most clear light, Joh 11:16-19. ***Because thou shalt forget thy misery and thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth and thou shalt make thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down and none shall make thee afraid.*** Thus the words contain a prophecy of glorious Gospel times. Compare Isa 60:1-3, 13, 15, 18, 19-22 with Zeph 3:8-15.

6. Meditation

The Saints shall have a time of clear light and shining glory wherein they shall enjoy peace and rest from all their tribulations and persecutions. Psa 37:6, 7 ***And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgement as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.*** Matt 4:16. Poor Saints, know ye that ere long it will be break of day with you. The Day-Spring from on high will visit you that sit in darkness. Yea, the Sun of Righteousness will arise, Isa 60:1-3. And there will be a noon-day of shining glory upon you ere long, Isa 24:15, 16. ***From the utmost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the Righteous.***

The Lord who is the Shepherd of Israel will make his Saints to lie down in green pastures, Psa 23:1-3. To wit, his holy ordinances, the provision of Zion which he will abundantly bless and cause it to satisfy the hungry souls of his people. ***For the Lord hath chosen Zion, saying, this is my rest forever,*** Psa 132:8, 9, 13-16.

And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat and for a place of refuge for upon all the glory shall be a defense, Isa 4:4-6

And under his shadow shall the flock of Saints sit down with great delight and having rest from their tribulations and persecution, they shall chew the cud as the clean beasts (which were for sacrifice) did when they lay down and rested at noon-day under some shadow after they'd been fed and watered and were quiet. So shall the Saints do. They shall in the noon-day of their rest and peace by spiritual meditation and contemplation call to mind and bring to remembrance the Lord's gracious dealings with them. And whilst they are ruminating thereon, their souls will be so refreshed, comforted and filled with joy and glory, that they shall sing forth the goodness of the Lord, Isa 51:11. ***The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing to Zion.***

For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? These words contain the reason of the spouse, her petition to Christ for his direction, emphatically expressed by a pathetic expostulation. For why, &c.? Whereby she intimateth:

1. Her unwillingness to go astray from Christ her beloved and turn aside after other lovers;
2. The unreasonableness of the thing, viz. to forsake the true God, his holy ordinances and pure worship, and go after false gods, the ordinances of men, and the idolatrous or superstitious worships of the world.

By the flocks of thy companions. You may understand:

1. Those assemblies of false ministers and formal professors at Dan and Bethel who worshipped and kissed the calves, Hos 13:2, 3. The false ministers were those Priests that Jeroboam made of the lowest of the people (which were not the sons of Levi, 1 King 12:31) whom he ordained for the high places, for the devils and for the calves which he had made, 2 Chron 11:5. The formal professors were those idolatrous people that went to worship before the calves which Jeroboam set up in Bethel and the other in Dan which became a sin and snare unto Israel, 1 King 12:28-33.
2. Those assemblies of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Synagogue of Judea and in the Temple at Jerusalem, who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogues of Satan, Rev 3:9. And do worship God in vain, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, Matt 15:9. They were the flocks of his companions. Which false and formal worship both in the mountain of Samaria and in the temple

at Jerusalem Christ witnessed against saying *the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what*, Joh 4:20, 21.

3. Those assemblies of antichristian ministers and people of the world who wonder after the beast and do worship the beast that did arise up out of the Sea of Rome and do worship the image of that beast and have the name of the beast in their foreheads or in their right hand, Rev 13:1, 3, 16, 17. Rome is the mystical Babylon and the mother of harlots, Rev 17:5. And all antichristian assemblies of false ministers and formal professors are her daughters who commit spiritual whoredoms, because of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, Nahum 3:4-6. These are flocks of his companions which she would not turn aside after, nor assemble with. ***For why should I be as one of them?***

That turneth aside, or veileth herself, to wit, as harlots used to cover themselves with a veil (so did Tamar, Gen 38:14, 15 whom Judah thought to be a harlot and came in unto her.) Why should I be as an harlot to commit spiritual whoredom with other lovers, by worshipping false gods, or the true God in a false manner. Therefore she desired direction from Christ himself and prayed that he would send forth his light and his truth to lead her and bring her to his sanctuary, Psa 43:2, 3 ***Why go I mourning? (as the mourning women that are covered or veiled, that go about the streets***, Jer 9:17, 18.) ***Covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with crying out insomuch that he regardeth not the offering anymore, or receiveth it with good will at mine hand***, Mal 2:13.

7. Meditation

Faithful souls ought not to turn aside unto any false or formal worship. God blamed the people of Israel because their fear towards him was taught by the precepts of men and threatened to seal up all vision and to covet their seers, Isa 29:9-14. Christ reproveth the Scribes and Pharisees because they worshipped God formally, hypocritically and superstitiously, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, Matt 15:9. And the Angel denounceth the wrath of God against those that worship the beast and his image and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, Rev 14:9, 10. It is a sin and will be a snare to leave Christ and his holy ordinances and pure worship and true ministry and turn aside unto false ministers, superstitious worships and traditions of men. Col 2:8, 20, 22, 23 ***Beware lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.***

Verse 8. If thou know not (O thou fairest among women) go thy way forth, &c.

This verse containeth Christ's answer unto his spouse's petition wherein you may observe:

1. His tender supposition of her ignorance which Christ upbraideth not, James 1:4, only takes occasion thereby to instruct her. ***If thou knowest not***, or for as much as thou knowest not.

The spouse's ignorance did not discourage her to seek Christ's direction. *Tell me where thou feedest*, nor did her nescience hinder his instruction. *If thou know not*, follow the footsteps of the flocks, &c.

1. Meditation

Christ will instruct ignorant souls when they seek direction of him in doubtful cases, Prov 1:20-23 & 9:4, 6. Christ by his word giveth understanding to the simple, Psa 119:130. *If any want wisdom, let him ask it of God and he will give him liberally*, Jam 1:4 *He will teach sinners in the way*, Psa 25:8; Isa 2:3. *Christ teacheth by his Spirit*, Joh 14:26; Psa 32:8.

2. Observe his gracious compellation. *O thou fairest among women!* Which fitly answereth unto her loving appellation. *O thou whom my soul loveth!* Whereby is discovered:
 - a. The sympathy between Christ and his spouse. *O thou!* O that God would speak, Job 11:5 O that thou hadst hearkened! Isa 48:18.
 - b. The commendation of his spouse's beauty above all others in the highest degree. *The fairest among women.* She said that she was comely, verse 5. The Prophet compared her to a comely and delicate woman, Jer 6:2. But Christ sets forth her beauty in the superlative degree, Cant 4:7. *Thou art all fair my love. There is no spot in thee* as Solomon commendeth the virtuous woman, Prov 31:10-29. *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.* So Christ praiseth his spouse above all others and beyond all expression saying, Cant 7:6, *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love for delight!* Thus Christ gets into the Saints' hearts and doth win their affections (ere they are aware) by his sweet insinuations, Cant 6:12. *His mouth is most sweet and his lips drop sweet smelling Myrrhe.* The Saints wonder at the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth, Luk 4:12.

2. Meditation

The Saints are exceeding fair and beautiful in the eyes of Christ though black and unlovely in their own and the world's apprehension. The Church (and people of God) being conscientious of their own deformities, confessed that she was black, verse 5, but Christ, beholding the Church (and all his Saints) in the new and everlasting covenant with himself, sees her a perfect beauty through his comeliness put upon her. Ezek 16:8, 14 *For he hath clothed her with the garments of salvation. He hath covered her with the robe of righteousness*, Isa 61:10. *And he hath sanctified and cleansed her with his precious blood from all sin*, 1 Joh 1:7 *and made her all glorious within*, Psa 45:13. *And so presents her to himself a glorious Church not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing*, Eph 5:27.

The Church's (the Saints') beauty is derivative. The Church shineth in the light beams and glory of Christ. Isa 60:1-3. *The Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. Arise, shine for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* The Saints' beauty doth not appear all the night of their afflictions, temptations, persecutions and tribulations until the say dawn and the Day-Star arise in

their hearts, but when through the tender mercy of God, the Day-Spring from on high hath visited them, so that it is break of day with them, and the bright shining morning of their spiritual resurrection breaks forth and the Sun of Righteousness is risen in their souls, then they are like the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, Rev 12:1. So lovely, fair and comely is the Church and Saints in the eyes of Christ, Cant :4, 10. ***Thou art beautiful, O my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, &c. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.***

3. Observe his holy direction which consisteth of two parts:

a. Christ doth direct his Church (and Saints) to go forth by the footsteps of the flock;

b. Christ doth instruct them to feed their kids besides the shepherds' tents.

Go thy way forth. Or go forth for thyself, to wit, from Dan and Bethel, for thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, ***Seek ye me and ye shall live, but seek not Bethel for Bethel shall come to naught,*** Amos 5:4-6 and so it did 2 King 23:3, 15, 25. And so from Babylon, Rev 8:2, 4, 5, ***Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues.***

3. Meditation

The first step towards the true worship of God is to forsake the assemblies of false worship and to separate from them. When God chose a people for himself to worship him, he severed them from all other people, Lev 20:26. And the Lord commanded his Saints under the Gospel to separate themselves from unbelievers, 2 Cor 6:14-18. ***Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, &c.***

By the footsteps of the flock. That is to say, follow the example of those Priests and Levites who left their possessions and such of the people as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel who came to Jerusalem to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their Fathers, 2 Chron 11:13, 14, 16, and the examples of other faithful Saints and servants of the Lord and the Churches of God. ***Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ,*** 1 Cor 1:1, 3. ***Who hath given us an example that we should follow his steps,*** 1 Pet 2:21. So to walk in the steps of your father Abraham is to follow his example, Rom 4:12. ***Be ye followers of us and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an example,*** Phil 3:17.

4. Meditation

Doubting Saints are directed by Christ to walk after the examples of his Churches and people and to imitate them in the worship of God, 1 Cor 4:16, 17; Heb 6:12. 1 Thes 2:14 ***For ye brethren became imitators of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.*** The practice of Christ or his Apostles, or of any of the Churches in any part of the worship of God recorded in the scripture may be imitated by the Saints of God in succeeding generations. These things were written for our learning, Rom 15:4. Christians ought to look upon the Apostles, ministers and Saints in the Gospel how they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of God. We should look how they believed, how they lived and how they worshipped and follow their steps.

And feed thy kid, &c. Where you have:

1. Christ's tender care of young Christians, called kids;
2. The Church's duty to provide them pasture. ***Feed thy kid.***

Kids are the young of the flock, either of the goats or of the sheep. Exod 12:5, 6 ***Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. Ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats.*** And by these kids you may understand young believers, Zion's converts, the daughters of Jerusalem who are young virgins espoused to Jesus Christ whom Christ called his lambs and whom he will have his ministers to feed. Joh 21:15 ***Simon, lovest thou me more than these? Feed my lambs.*** The same charge Christ here gives his Church, to feed her kids.

Feeding here is a metaphor borrowed from shepherds who are said to feed their flocks when they bring them unto green pastures or other places where they may feed, Gen 37:12, 13, 16. So the Church is here directed by Christ to feed her kids, that is, to bring them to the ordinances of God which are like green pastures that there they may feed, Psa 23:1-4 & Ezek 34:14. ***I will feed them in a good pasture and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.***

5. Meditation

As Christ hath taken care to give pasture so it is the Church's duty to feed her kids.

1. Christ hath taken care to give pasture for:
 - a. He gave a feeding ministry, Eph 4:11-13 & Jer 3:15. ***I will give you pastors according to mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.***
 - b. He gave his holy ordinances, 1 Cor 11:1, by his Apostles to the Churches for the feeding, nourishing, strengthening and establishing of the Saints.
 - c. He gave authority and power to his ministers and Churches to rule, govern and order the Saints who are the members of the Churches, 1 Cor 5:4, 12; 1 Thess 5:12, 13; Heb 13:7, 17. The Saints ought to be subject to their elders and one to another in the Church, 1 Pet 5:5. And the Church ought to be subject unto Christ, Eph 5:24.
2. Its the Church's duty to feed her kids, for:
 - a. She ought to stir up her ministers to be vigilant and diligent in their work and office of feeding, both by teaching and ruling. Col 4:17. ***And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfill it.***
 - b. She ought to exhort her members to draw near to God in his holy ordinances not forsaking the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, Heb 10:21-25.
 - c. She ought to bring her children to God's ordinances to give them the breasts of her consolations and to see that every lamb feed in its own place. Isa 49:20-23 and Isa 66:10-12, 20. ***And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord, to my holy mountain Jerusalem. And they shall feed every one in his place, Jer 6:3. Then shall the lamb feed after their manner, Isa 5:17. And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, Isa 14:30.***

Besides the shepherds tents. These words contain a description of the place where the Church was directed to feed the kids. By tents you may understand the Churches of God compared to the tents of Judah, Zach 12:7. The tabernacle of Shiloh, Psa 7:60 was called God's tent. Unto which tabernacle or tent all the Israel of God was to come and worship. Deut 12:5-8. ***Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put his name even unto his habitation shall ye seek and thither thou shalt come. And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your vows and your free-will offerings and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks. Ye shall not do after all the thing that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is upright in his own eyes.***

The shepherds are the Lord's pastors and ministers of Christ, to wit, the Priests and Prophets under the Law and the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers under the Gospel who are shepherds under the chief Shepherd Christ Jesus, 1 Pet 5:1-4.

6. Meditation

Whosoever hath the care and charge of souls ought to bring them to the congregations of the Lord's people where his faithful ministers dispense his holy ordinances that they may be fed and nourished, converted and comforted, sanctified and saved by the Spirit and grace of God in Jesus Christ. ***And feed thy kids besides the shepherds tents.***

Are they thy kids, the young ones of thy holy family which God hath made the like a flock? Psa 107:41. Then it is thy duty to feed them ***besides the shepherds tents. I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him (or according to his example) to keep the way of the Lord,*** Gen 18:19. And believing parents ought to walk in the steps of their Father Abraham, Rom 4:12, bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph 6:4. That they may continue in the doctrine of truth and faith which they have learned in their youth. ***Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it,*** Prov 22:6. Josiah proved godly betimes, 2 King 22:1, 2. David was taught of God in his youth, Psa 71:17. And Samuel feared God when he was young, 1 Sam 2:18, 26 & 1 Sam 3:1, 10, 11, 19. Timothy from a child did know the holy scriptures, 2 Tim 3:14, 15 and proved a good minister of Jesus Christ nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, 1 Tim 4:6. The elect lady's children, some of them, were found walking in the truth, 2 Joh 4. O that every father of a family would put on good Joshua's godly resolution. Josh 23:15 ***But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.***

And if Kings of the earth would be the Saints' nursing fathers and the Queen their nursing mothers (laying aside their coercive power) to bring Zion's sons in their arms and her daughters upon their shoulders to the Churches and ordinances of the Lord, submitting themselves to the yoke of Christ, it would be their benefit and Zion's glory, Isa 49:22, 23 compared with Isa 60:4, 5, 7-9, 13-16.

Verses 9, 10, 11. I have compared thee (O my love) to a company of horses in Paraoh's Chariots, &c.

Christ having directed his spouse where to feed and find his presence, to wit, in his ordinances, which she might enjoy by following the footsteps of the flocks, that is to say, the examples of the Churches and Saints (recorded in the Scripture of truth, written for

our learning) to the shepherd' tents where the Apostles and Pastors of Christ did feed his sheep and lambs, now, to the end he might support his Church and Saints under their despondencies and comfort them against their tribulations, Christ doth in these three verses prescribe them an heart cheering cordial which his Spouse must receive by faith in this manner:

1. When she thought sadly of her blackness and deformity which happened unto the Church by the folly of Rehoboam who forsook the Law of the Lord and all Israel with him for which cause Shishak King of Aegypt came up against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the House of the Lord and Israel became his servants, 2 Chr 12:11, 2, 8, 9. Then she should drink the loves of Christ contained in this ninth verse.
2. When she was troubled for want of Christ's presence and was at a great loss in her spirit for want of his true ministry, Churches and ordinances which she knew not where to find, nor how to enjoy, Joh 4:19-21, and her spirit failed, Psa 143:6-8, then she might receive the comfort of Christ's love manifested to his Spouse in the 10th and 11th verses.

In the ninth verse, Christ comforts the heart of his Church under the service of the King of Aegypt, telling her though she was in some bondage by that servile state under Pharaoh like the horses which drew Pharaoh's triumphant chariots who were under the reins and whip of the drivers, yet, ***I have compared thee (O my love) to my company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*** Wherein you may observe:

1. The affectionate and sweet epithet Christ giveth unto his Church and Saints, ***O my love!***
2. The comparison by which Christ setteth forth his Church's beauty, strength and comeliness under her servitude. ***By the horses in Pharaoh's chariots.***

I have compared the, O my Love! &c. This epithet Christ giveth to his Spouse, Churches and Saints often times in this Song and by it is intimated that the Church is the object of Christ's love, Eph 5:25. The greatest out-goings of love and friendship from Christ is towards his Spouse, his Churches, his Saints, Psa 87:2, 5, 6. ***I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee,*** Jer 31:3. Christ and his Saints have mutual and cordial love one to another, 1 Joh 4:19. They feed together, Rev 3:20, and have fellowship together, 1 Joh 1:3. This gracious compellation Christ gives his Church under her captivity, her bondage, her affliction and her servitude when she was like horses in Pharaoh's chariot. And that because she had forsaken the Law of the Lord. Only the Church humbled herself and repented and therefore though God would not deliver Israel from Shishak King of Aegypt, but they must be his servants, 2 Chr 12:5-8, yet he would not pour his wrath upon Jerusalem, but grant them some deliverance because he loved them. ***O my love!***

1. Meditation

Christ may change the Church's condition, but he will not change his affection towards her. ***O my Love!*** God many times varieth his dispensations towards his people, but he never varieth his affections. He may hide his face, but he will not withhold his heart from his Saints. Compare Isa 57:17, 18 with Jer 31:3, 18-20. The Lord may alter his affections, but he is constant in his affections to his Spouse, Joh 13:1. The Churches of

Saints and the Saints in the Churches may meet with many changes in the world in their outward condition, but yet their Lord Jesus Christ loves them. He loves them in poverty, in prison, in bonds, in afflictions. He loves his under persecution, reproach, tribulation. He loveth his when others are lords over them and serve themselves on them. Yea, notwithstanding the changes of their condition of soul, yet Christ is unchangeable in his love to his poor Saints. If they cool in their spiritual affections to Christ and fall from their first love, yet he loveth them. If they (under their hours of temptation and desertion, or the working of some corruption) doubt of his love to their souls and have hard thoughts of God, yea, and conclude against themselves that Christ doth not love them, no, nor never will love them, yet Christ hath, doth, and will love them to the end, Joh 13:1. Christ loves his Saints when others hate them, reproach and persecute them. He loves them when they loath themselves and are most vile in their own eyes. Cant 1:15 ***Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair.***

I have compared thee to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots or to my mare, or my troop of horses. I have compared thee or supposed thee, or imagined thee, or thought thee to be like godly horses fit for battle. Christ doth esteem of his Churches and Saints not as they are in themselves or in account of others, but as they are in himself and according to the use and improvement which he will make of them, or the work that he is purposed to do by them. Jer 51:20 ***Thou art my battle axe, and weapons of war. Thou art my troop of horses, &c.***

Christ compared his Church to his company or troop of horses to note and declare the strength and victory which God would give them over the Egyptians and over all his Church's enemies. In which respect his Prophets (who were to lead his people and to be as the goats before the flock) were called the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, 2 King 2:12 & 13:14. And the Lord's flock (who are to follow their leaders) is compared to his horse in battle. ***For the Lord of Hosts hath visited his flock, the House of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in battle.*** Zac 10:3-5 ***And they shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies because the Lord is with them.*** And Cant 6:4, 10, 12, Christ compares Jerusalem to an army with banners and the chariots of a willing people.

In Pharaoh's chariots. Pharaoh was a name common to all the Kings of Egypt, as Pharaoh Neco, 2 King 23:29 and Pharaoh Hophra, Jer 44:30. So here Pharaoh Shishak, 2 Chr 12:2, 9, King of Egypt, who was an enemy unto Judah and made war against the people of God into whose hands God gave his Israel, 2 Chr 12:7, 8. ***They shall be his servants (saith the Lord) that they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. But I will grant them deliverance. And the Land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt because of the counsel of the Lord of Hosts which he hath determined against it,*** Isa 19:17, 20. So they shall overcome and destroy all their enemies.

2. Meditation

Christ will so manage his cause in the hearts and hands of his Saints (having armed them with the valor and strength of his Spirit and grace) that he will overcome and destroy his enemies by them, Rev 17:14.

The beast and the false prophet, the whore and the ten Kings, these shall make war with the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful, Rev 19:19-21. ***And I saw the beast and the Kings of the earth gathered together to make war against him that sate on the horse*** (the white horse, verse 11, who went forth conquering and to conquer, Rev 6:2) ***and against his army*** (which followed him upon white horses, verse 14) ***And the beast was taken and with him the false prophet and the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse, whose name is the King of Kings***, verse 16. By these are meant all the enemies of Christ and of his Saints.

Therefore Christ compared his Spouse, his Saints, unto his goodly horse in the battle, Zac 10:3, and to the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, 2 King 13:14. Also, to an army with banners, Cant 6:4, 10. And here Christ compared his Saints unto a company of horses in Pharaoh's triumphant chariots of war and owneth them for his troops, saying ***I have compared thee (O my Love!) to my troop of horses in Pharaoh's chariots***. An instance and lively resemblance of the victory over Christ's enemies by his Saints you have recorded, 2 Chr 20:1-25, where we read that the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir came to war against Jehosaphat, King of Judah and Jerusalem (a type of Christ, his Church and Saints) that great multitude pitched in Hazazon-Tamar which is Engedi. Verses 1, 2 ***The King and all Judah gathered together in the house of the Lord and stood before the Lord and they prayed and prophesied and sang the victory over and the destruction of all their enemies***, verse 5, 12-15, 22.

3. Meditation

The spirit of faith in prayers and prophesyings of the Saints will certainly effect the ruin and utter destruction of all their enemies, Zac 4:6, 7. ***Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts***. Now the Egyptians (and all other enemies of Christ) are men and not God and their horses are flesh and not Spirit, Isa 31:3-5. No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, Isa 54:17. ***The Governors of Judah shall say in their hearts the inhabitants of Judah shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God***, Zac 12:3-5.

O ye Saints! Pray in faith and prophesy in faith by the Spirit of the Lord and your enemies will fall. Ye shall not need to fight, for Christ's enemies and yours will every one help to destroy together. Jehosaphat the King and the people of Judah were praying. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel in the midst of the congregation and he said, ***Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, for the Lord will be with you***, 2 Chr 20:13-19. And they were so fully persuaded of the victory and of the enemy's destruction that they sang and praised God for it before they came to engage the enemy, 2 Chr 20:20-24. The King said ***Hear O Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in the Lord your God so shall ye be established. Believe his Prophets so shall ye prosper. And he appointed singers unto the Lord and that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army and to say, Praise the Lord for his mercy endureth forever***. And when they began to sing and to praise the Lord, the enemies were smitten, ***every one helped to destroy another***.

O ye enemies of Christ and of his Churches and Saints, ye shall know that Jesus Christ is King of Kings and in righteousness he doth judge and make war, Rev 19:11-16, and the worm Jacob is Christ's battle axe, Jer 51:20, whereby he will destroy kingdoms. His praying Saints and prophesying servants are the Lord's company of horses though now in Pharaoh's chariots, under the powers of the earth who lord it over the Lord's heritage. The Saints are his goodly horse in the battle and they shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies, Zac 10:3-5, because the Lord is with them.

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

Christ having set forth the church's courage under her captivity, comparing her to his troop of horses and foretold her victory over all her enemies, typed forth by Pharaoh King of Egypt whose servants now they were and being subdued by war, are compared to horses in Pharaoh's chariots. He doth in this verse and the next following describe the Spouse's, the Church's and the Saint's beauty by apt similitudes under the reign of Abijah and Asa Kings of Judah.

Thy cheeks are comely, &c. The spouse's cheeks are (by an synecdoche) her face or countenance which is comely and beautiful in the eyes of Christ, Cant 2:14. *thy countenance is comely.* The Spouse's face, cheeks or countenance is the image of Christ in her heart, that is, her inward glory, Psa 45:13. She bears the image of the heavenly and her eyes ravish Christ's heart, Cant 4:9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes.* Which comeliness is set forth with rows of jewels. A metaphor borrowed from women in those eastern countries who used to wear pendants and jewels of precious stones by which the Prophet Ezekiel set forth the beauty of the Church of the Jews and of every particular believer espoused unto Christ. Ezek 16:12 *And I put a jewel on thy forehead and earrings in thine ears, &c.* Those rows of jewels or stones are the spiritual ornaments wherewith Christ adorneth his Church and Saints which was also figured by the precious stones in the wall of that great City, the holy Jerusalem, Rev 21:10, 11, 19, 20. Also thereby we may understand the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit which was the Church's beauty figured by those precious stones in Aaron's breastplate, Exod 28:15-21. The glory and beauty whereof is there described, first, by the order of the stones in their rows, for every precious stone was set in its place and in its order, verses 17-20.

1. Meditation

Order is an ornament unto the Churches and Saints of Christ. Col 2:5 *Joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* ! Chr 15:13 *The Lord our God made a breach upon us for that we sought him not after due order.* And in 1 Cor 14:40 *Let all things be done decently and in order.* Secondly, the glory and beauty thereof is declared by the engraving of every stone in all the rows like the engraving of a signet-everyone with his name shall they be, verse 21. These engravings signify and figure forth the Epistle of Christ written and engraven by the Spirit of God in the hearts of his Saints with his spiritual gifts and sanctifying graces which is the beauty and glory of the Church and Saints.

2. Meditation

The epistle of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God in the hearts of believers makes them comely and beautiful in the eyes of Christ.

1. the Saints are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, 2 Cor 3:3, 4.
2. Christ by his Spirit writes his new name in their hearts, Rev 3:12, 13 *which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it*, Rev 2:17
3. The image of Christ into which the Saints are changed by the Spirit of God, 2 Cor 3:18, and those spiritual gifts and graces engraven upon the new heart of true believers make them a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a diadem of beauty in the hand of their God. Isa 62:2, 3 *The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness and all Kings thy glory and thou shalt be called by a new name.*

Thirdly, the glory and beauty thereof as described also by the setting of every stone in gold in their enclosings, verse 20. Every spiritual gift and grace are set in Christ (as in gold) within the hearts of the Saints (as in their enclosings) so that no gift nor grace of the Spirit is alone. Faith, love, meekness, patience, zeal, humility and all the rest are linked and joined together in the heart of a poor saint, Joh 1:16. And thus it is with every believer in his measure, Eph 4:7. Yea, and every Saint is joined and engrafted or set into Christ (his head of gold, Cant 5:11) and also united and knit together unto the Church as members of Christ's mystical body (in their enclosings) Acts 2:47

3. Meditation

The union of the saints in Christ (as their head) and with the Church (as his mystical body) also the unity of the gifts and graces of the Spirit in their hearts make them lovely and comely in the eyes of Christ.

The union of the Saints in Christ is the unity of faith, Eph 4:13. Their union with the church is the unity of love, Col 2:2. The unity of their gifts and graces is unity of the Spirit, 1 Cor 6:17. The whole believer is united to whole Christ. Our faith is faith in Christ and our love is love in Christ and so every grace in every believer is grace in Christ (as precious stones set in gold in their enclosings) and this is the Saint's beauty and spiritual glory.

Thy neck with chains of gold. The neck is part of the body next the head about which men and women did use to wear chains of gold for honor and for ornaments, Gen 41:42, and so are the Saints adorned. Ezek 16:11 *I decked thee also with ornaments. I put bracelets upon thy hand and a chain on thy neck.* By chains of gold you may understand:

1. The spiritual laws of Christ which are called his yoke, Matt 11:29, 30, unto which the Saints are to submit their neck and account it their dignity as well as their duty, their privilege as well as their allegiance to be found obedient to all Christ's commandments and observing of all his holy ordinances.

4. Meditation

The yoke of Christ's spiritual laws and holy ordinances put upon the neck of his disciples is no abridgement of the Saints' liberties, but an enlargement of their beauty and dignities, Matt 11:28-30 and Pro 1:8, 9. ***My son hear the instruction of (God) thy Father, and forsake not the law of thy mother*** (Jerusalem which is above who is the mother of us all, Gal 4:26). ***For they shall be an ornament of grace to thine head and chains (of gold) about thy neck.*** Christ's laws being obeyed and his ordinances observed is the Church's praise, 1 Cor 11:1, 2. ***I praise you, brethren, that ye have kept the ordinances as I delivered them unto you.***

2. By those chains of gold you may also understand all the graces of Christ joined together as links making one chain of grace pt upon the neck of a poor Saint, Pr 3:22. ***So shall they be life unto thy soul and grace unto thy neck.***

5. Meditation

The variety of spiritual gifts and graces which poor Saints receive from Christ are a greater beauty and glory unto them than all the rows of jewels and chains of gold are to the rich and great ones of the world. Pro 20:15 ***There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.*** Cant. 4:9 ***Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes with one chain of thy neck.*** O how is the heart of Christ taken with the graces of his Spirit in the hearts of his Saints!

3. Those chains do also dignify the bonds and persecutions which the Saints and Servants of God do suffer for Christ and the Gospel, Acts 28:20. ***For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*** And 2 Tim 1:16 Onesiphorus was not ashamed of the Apostle's chain, that is to say, of the persecutions which he suffered for the Gospel of Christ which sufferings have their glory, 1 Pet 4:14-17, and the Saints prove more than conquerors at last, Rom 8:35-39.

6. Meditation

Though the Saints are bound with chains of persecution under the coercive power of antichristian Magistrates, yet their chains (their sufferings) are their glory. And they shall be loosed from their bands and chains (delivered from their sufferings) and they shall bind their persecutors in chains. Psa 149:8, 9 ***This honor have all his Saints to bind Kings in chains and to execute the judgement written.*** Luke 19:27 ***But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.***

Though the Church was in bands and chains under Shishak King of Egypt, yet God was purposed and promised to deliver her, 2 Chron 12:6, 7, 12, and foretold her that the Egyptians her enemies should come after her in chains and fall down to her, Isa 45:1-18 & Isa 60:1-16, 22. ***The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, &c. And I will glorify the house of my glory and I will make thee an eternal excellency. I the Lord will hasten it in his time.***

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

In the former verse was set forth the Church's present beauty under the government of Abijah and in this verse you have a promise of the Church's and the Saints' future glory illustrated:

1. By a reformation of religion;
2. By the execution of good laws; both which were performed in the reign of Asa King of Judah, 2 Chron 15:13, 16, 18

We will make thee borders of gold. In this promise of the Church's future glory observe:

1. The person promising, God the Father, Word and Holy Spirit who is three divine subsistences in one divine essence, 1 Joh 5:7, ***We***;
2. The act of God's power effecting this promise, ***We will make***;
3. The thing promised, to wit, future glory, figured forth here by borders of gold and studs of silver; and,
4. The person unto whom this gracious promise of greater glory is made, ***thee***, which is the Church and Saints of God, Isa 60:1, 2, 7, 15, 19-22.

The words of this verse being granted by all expositors to be (in the mystery of this scripture) Christ's promise to his Church of future glory. And this word (***we***) expressing the person that made this promise. It must necessarily be understood to be Christ unto whom this word of the plural number (***we***) may as properly be applied as the word (***us***). Gen 1:26 ***Let us make man in our image.*** For by him were all things created, Col 1:16-18. ***We***, that is to say, Christ who is God, Rom 9:5 the Father, Isa 9:6, the Word, Rev 19:13 and the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor 3:17, which are one in essence and three in witness, 1 John 5:7. And therefore he is often in the scripture of truth described by a word of plural number and so here, ***we will make, &c.***

1. Meditation

The great mystery of the trinity in unity and unity in the trinity is unveiled and revealed in the face of Christ by the Spirit of God and word of the scripture unto the hearts of believers, 2 Cor 4:6.

The only way of the true and right knowledge of God is by Christ. John 1:18 ***No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*** Christ is the image of the invisible God, Col 1:15, the brightness of his glory and the character of his substance, Heb 1:3, by whom God giveth forth a perfect representation and manifestation of himself. John 14:9 ***He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.*** And verse 7, ***If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.***

So that in Christ, God the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit (who are the trinity, or three divine subsistences, that bear record in heaven, 1 John 5:7) is to be seen and known as by name, image and operations and that in the unity of the divine nature, for these three are one, 1 John 5:7. It is the incommunicable privilege of Christ to behold and enjoy the full vision and fruition of God, Matt 11:27. ***As he and his Father are one,*** John 10:3 God doth make known himself unto his Saints by Christ, 2 Cor 4:4-6. As he is Emmanuel, God with us, Matt 1:23 who manifesteth himself unto believers, Joh 14:20, 21. ***At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you.***

We will make thee. Consider here:

1. The good pleasure of God's will, *we will*. This favor is not forced. It's free grace which Christ promiseth his Spouse, his Church, his Saints.

2. Meditation

It's mercy, not merit, that moved Christ to give his Saints grace and to promise his Church future glory. and if God will love the Saints freely, Hos 14:4, 5, pardon their sins for his own sake, Isa 43:21-25, and justify them freely, Rom 3:24, sanctify them and save them by grace, Eph 2:8, what hath any poor tossed, tempted, troubled soul to say against this rich and free grace of God towards poor sinner in Jesus Christ? Rom 9:15, 16 ***For he saith, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*** It's God's good will. So if God will glorify the house of his glory and make the place of his feet (his Zion) glorious, Isa 60:7, 13, 15, even an external excellency, who hath anything to say against it? ***We will make thee.*** Consider:

2. The act of Christ's power. To make is to create, Isa 65:18. ***Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.*** Which is thus expressed, Isa 60:15 ***I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.*** Isa 45:8 ***I the Lord have created it.*** What the hand of the Lord doth, he is said to create, Isa 41:20.

3. Meditation

The Saint's grace and glory both in the beginnings and increasings thereof are the operations of God the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit.

We will make thee, &c.

- a. A new creature, Eph 2:10 ***for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus, &c.*** Whosoever is in Christ is that new creature, 2 Cor 5:17.
 - b. A renewed inward man, 2 Cor 4:16. ***The inward man is renewed day by day.*** The inward man is the new man, the man within, the hidden man of the heart, the spiritual man, the man in Christ who is renewed daily by the Spirit of God, Tit 3-7.
3. A New Jerusalem, rev 21:2-7. ***Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, &c.*** Isa 65:18 ***I will glorify the house of my glory,*** Isa 60:7, 13, 15.

Now all this grace and glory is figured out here by ***Borders of gold and studs of silver.*** Or, by rows of gold and specks or knobs of silver. These borders or rows signify a comely and orderly disposing of things for honor and ornament. Isa 54:11-13 ***And all thy borders of pleasant stones.*** And hereby was typed forth the righteousness of the Israel of God after the Spirit in the Lord's portion of his holy land. Compare Ezek 4:1, 2 with Isa 60:21. And by stud, speck or knob of silver which were for greater beauty, luster and glory unto the Church and Saints, you may understand the variety of spiritual gifts and graces yet more plentifully bestowed upon the Churches and Saints in Gospel times, 1 Cor 12:4-11, which Christ promised to give unto them.

4. Meditation

The ministrations of the Spirit under the Gospel with the gifts and graces accompanying the same are much more glorious and excellent than those under the Law, 2 Cor 3:7-11, therefore called:

- a. The ministration of the Spirit, verse 8;
- b. The ministration of righteousness, verse 9, and
- c. The excellency appeared in that the ministrations of the Gospel are to remain, verse 11.

Verses 12, 13, 14. While the King sitteth at his table, my Spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof, &c.

These verses contain the Spouse's commendation of the excellencies of her beloved Lord Jesus by the redolency of those sanctifying fruits of his Holy Spirit which Christ had communicated unto her. The fragrantcy and odoriferous sweetness whereof she doth metaphorically illustrate by three excellent spices in a continued allegory.

In this 12th verse are two things especially to be observed. First, the mutual fellowship between Christ and his Spouse, his Churches, his Saints. *The King setteth at his table. I will sup with him and he with me.* Rev 3:20 *Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John 1:3. Secondly, the effect of her fellowship with her beloved, to wit, the odor and savor of her spiritual gifts and fruits. *My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.* 2 Cor 2:14 *Now thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.*

While the King. The King (in the history of this scripture) was Jehosaphat the King of Judah who reformed religion, sent his Princes to teach in the cities of Judah *and with them he sent Levites and they taught the people*, 2 Chron 17:5, 8, 9. By the King (in the mystery of this scripture) is meant the Church's beloved Lord Jesus who is King of Zion. Psa 2:6 *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.* And Christ (in the spiritual sense of this scripture) is the King of Saints. Rev 15:3 *Just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints.*

1. Meditation

The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Saints and the King of Zion and shall be King over all the earth, Rev 15:3; Psa 2:6 & Zach 14:9

1. The Lord Jesus Christ setteth up his kingdom of grace in the hearts of believers, Luk 17:20. The kingdom of God is within you. This is the kingdom of God's grace, which reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom 5:21. The Lord is our King and he will save us, Isa 33:23. Thus Christ is throned and crowned in the day when any soul is espoused unto him as a chaste virgin, 2 Cor 11:2. *Go forth ye daughters of Jerusalem and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals*, Cant 3:11. The love of which espousals Jesus Christ never forgetteth, but it is always fresh upon his heart. Jer 2:2, 3, *I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.*
2. The Lord Jesus Christ setteth up his kingdom in Zion amongst his Saints in his Churches. In Gospel times this was foretold by his holy Prophets. Isa 24:23 *when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, even in Jerusalem*; also, Mic 4:6, 7 *In that*

day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth and I will gather her that is driven out and her that I have afflicted and I will make her that halteth a remnant and her that was cast far off a great nation & the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from hence forth even for ever. Which prophecies were in part fulfilled when Christ came in the flesh, Zach 9:9, 16 (& Joh 12:15 *Fear not O daughter of Zion. Behold thy King cometh*) called his 12 Apostles and instructed them concerning his kingdom, Acts 1:3. The keys of the kingdom of his Church, of Zion, he gave to his Apostles, Matt 16:18, 19.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ will set up his kingdom on the earth, in this world, to wit, a kingdom of righteousness, Psa 45:6 & Heb 1:8. But unto the Son God saith *Thy throne O God is for ever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.* Isa 32:1 *Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness.* Jer 23:5, 6 *And a King shall reign and prosper and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. He shall execute judgement and justice in the earth &* Jer 33:14-16. The open vision of this kingdom of Christ is given to the faithful witnesses who shall rise and prophesy saying *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever,* Rev 11:3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17. The God of heaven will set up this kingdom of Christ in the days of the Kings of the world, Dan 2:44. And will give it unto Christ his Son, Dan 7:12-14 and to his Saints, Dan 7:27. And all dominions shall serve and obey him.

This King hath three sorts of enemies opposing him in these his kingdoms, who say, (as that noble man did in the parable touching the kingdom, Luk 19:27) *But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.*

- a. The natural man is an enemy unto Christ's kingdom of grace, Rom 8:7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor 2:14,* but is alienated and an enemy to Christ and the kingdom of his grace in the hearts of his people through wicked works until he be converted and reconciled, Col 1:21.
- b. The man of sin and Son of perdition is an enemy unto Christ's kingdom in Zion, 2 Thes 2:3-8. *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,* or that is worshipped and that in the Temple of God (the Churches of Christ so called, Eph 2:19-22). *This is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son,* 1 John 2:22. The Beast and the false Prophet who would keep the people of God in Babylon and would not suffer them to return to Zion, but makes war against Christ and his Saints, Rev 19:19-21. *And the Beast was taken and with him the false Prophet who deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image and were destroyed.*
- c. A mighty man who shall arise and will be an enemy unto Christ's kingdom in the earth. As Doeg against David, Psa 52:1, 5-7, or as Herod against Christ, Matt 2:1-3, 16, or that other Herod with his men of war who set Christ at naught, Luk 23:11. The great day of the Lord is near. It is near and hasteth greatly even the voice of the day of the Lord. The mighty man shall cry there bitterly, Zeph 1:4-14. This mighty man is he that in the time of the fourth kingdom upon earth shall arise after the ten Kings are risen. And he shall be divers from them and he shall subdue three Kings or kingdoms. And the Saints shall be given into his hands 24 months,

but the judgement shall sit and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it to the end. Dan 7:23-27.

Sitteth at his table. While the King was in his round. This manner of speaking alludeth unto the Jewish form of sitting at the table. The Hebrews were wont to sit round about the table at their feasts in a circumference or circle, 1 Sam 16:11. ***For he will not round until he come hither.*** Which phrase showeth that Christ did not sit at table and sup alone, but was accompanied with his Saints, Luk 22:30. ***That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.*** This kingdom of his Church, the keys whereof he gave unto his Apostles, Mat 16:18, 19. And his table in his kingdom is the Lord's table, to wit, his holy ordinances (especially that of the Lord's supper, 1 Cor 10:21, called the Lord's table) where Christ sits and sups with his Saints. As the Tabernacle wherein God was present was rounded about with elders of Israel, Num 11:24, 25, when God put his Spirit upon them wherein were his ordinances, called his table, Mal 1:7-9. So the Throne whereon Christ sitteth (to wit, his Church wherein are his ordinances and his table, 1 Cor 11:2) was surrounded with the 24 Elders clothed in white raiment, Rev 4:2, 4, which Elders were his Saints, his Spouse, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, for the fine linen (which was their white raiment) is the righteousness of Saints, Rev 19:6-9.

2. Meditation

Christ and his Saints do enjoy mutual communion and spiritual fellowship one with another at the Lord's supper and in all other his holy ordinances. 1 Cor 10:15-17 ***I speak as unto wise men. Judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?***

Christ sups with his Saints and the Saints sup with Christ in his holy ordinances. Rev 3:20 ***Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.*** Christ giveth his Saints spiritual bread, hidden manna, new wine and water of life at his supper and in his ordinances and bids them ***Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved,*** Cant 5:1. Thus Christ maketh them a feast of fat things full of marrow (full of divine sweetness and comfort in her enjoyments of himself) and wine in the lees well refined (abundance of his Holy Spirit receiving and refreshing the souls of his poor hungry and thirsty Saints) in his holy ordinances, Isa 25:6. The Saints when they sup with Christ, have meat and drink which others know not of. Those believers who slight or neglect any of the holy administrations and ordinances of God, do want that fellowship with the Father and that communion with Jesus Christ in the Spirit which other believers do enjoy, 1 Joh 1:1-4. ***That which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled, of the word of life declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*** O dear friends! Be not wanting in your precious souls either in slighting or neglecting the ordinances of God. Why should you cry, O my leanness, my barrenness, &c? Seeing Christ in the great day of the feast stands and cries ***if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink,*** Joh 7:37-39. How unkindly do ye deal with Christ to slight and neglect or refuse his gracious invitations to heavenly banquets at his table? Isa 50:1 & Rev 22:17. ***The Spirit and the Bride saith Come and take the water of life freely.***

My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. These words declare the effect of the Spouse's fellowship with her beloved the Lord Jesus Christ, the King while he sat at his table. Spikenard is a very pleasant and precious fruit and of great estimation [Plin. Lib. 12. Cap. 12.] such was that ointment wherewith Mary anointed our Savior Jesus Christ unto his burial, Mark 14:8 & Joh 12:3. ***Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly and anointed the feet of Jesus and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.*** By this odiferous nard you may understand the spiritual gifts and sanctifying graces of Christ in the hearts of believers which in their communion with Christ do send forth a redolent sweet savor, Cant 4:13-16.

3. Meditation

The fruits and graces of the Spirit in the hearts of believers acted and drawn forth by Christ in their communion with him in his holy ordinances give a sweet savor, Ezek 20:40, 41. ***For in my holy mountain, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel serve me, there will I require thy offerings with all your holy things and there will I accept them. I will accept you with your sweet savor, &*** Cant 4:10. The smell of the Spouse's ointments is better than all spices. Cant 7:13 ***The mandrakes give a smell and at our gates are all manner of all pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*** They are not only a sweet savor unto Christ, but unto others also. 2 Cor 2:14, 15. ***Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.***

Verse 13. A bundle of Myrrhe is my well beloved unto me. He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

In this verse you have, first, the Spouse, the Churches, the Saints high esteem of Christ declared:

- a. By her compellation, ***my well beloved;***
- b. By a fit comparison. ***As a bundle of Myrrhe unto me.***

Secondly, the Spouse's holy resolution to entertain Christ into nearest and dearest communion. ***He shall lie all night between my breasts.***

A bundle of Myrrhe, &c. Myrrhe was one of the principal spices in the holy ointment, Exod 30:2, 3. It was offered to Christ at his birth, Matt 2:11, and with it his body was anointed at his death, Matt 19:39, 40. It was used also in perfumes, Cant 3:6, and was of a sweet smell, Cant 5:5, and called pure Myrrhe, Exod 30:23. Pliny. Lib. 12. Cap. 16 reporteth that there is an odiferous tree called Stacte or Myrrhe, bitter in taste, but sweet in smell unto this bitter-sweet gum. The Spouse compares Christ crucified whose sufferings though very bitter unto him were exceeding sweet and sovereign unto her.

1. Meditation

The bitter agony and sufferings of Christ applied by the Spirit and faith unto poor souls are exceeding sweet. Eph 5:2 ***Christ hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.*** The fellowship of Christ's sufferings maketh the Spouse's fingers drop with sweet smelling Myrrhe, Phil 3:10 &

Cant 5:5. And his lips (to wit, his promises of pardon and grace, spoken unto the hearts of his Saints) drop sweet smelling Myrrhe, that is to say, are full of divine sweetness, Cant 5:13.

A bundle of Myrrhe or a bag of Myrrhe. By which metaphor is implied, first, the abundance & variety of spiritual excellencies in Christ, to wit, of the Spirit and of spiritual blessings, Eph 1:3. Secondly, a plentiful preservative against the infection of sin and its ill savor. Sin is said to be sealed up in a bag or bundle, Job 14:17, which sendeth forth an ill savor and is very bitter, yea, and infecting to the hearts of Christians. Therefore Christ crucified is compared to a bundle of Myrrhe that the benefits of his death and resurrection may comfort and preserve the souls of believers from the bitterness and deadly infection of sin and his pardoning sanctifying grace may be a sweet smelling savor in the soul.

2. Meditation

Christ is most sweet unto poor souls when sin is most bitter. Rom 7:22-25 ***O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*** When a soul is under the conviction of sin, sees his lost and perishing estate, is troubled and burdened with the guilt and pollution of his iniquity, O how sweet is the love of God in Christ applied by faith in a promise of grace unto his heart by the Spirit of God? And what an excellent sovereign cordial is Christ in any of the promises, duties or ordinances unto a wounded conscience, an afflicted spirit and poor disconsolate soul troubled for sins? Isa 61:1-3 & Matt 11:28, 29 ***Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden and I will give you rest and you shall find rest to your souls.***

He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. By ***breasts*** are here meant the hearts of believers which is Christ's bed chamber, Cant 3:7, where he who is her beloved Lord and husband is most really and cordially entertained by his Spouse into nearest and dearest communion of the marriage covenant.

3. Meditation

A Christian's heart is Christ's lodging. Eph 3:17 Christ dwells in their hearts by faith. Psa 152:13, 14 ***That is my rest for ever. Here will I dwell for I have desired it.*** O blessed guest! My well beloved Lord Jesus Christ shall have my whole heart for his bed chamber and he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. The Saints desire to have their hearts prepared as a bed of spices to entertain their spiritual husband with faith, love and all other fruits of the Spirit. Cant 7:13. And Christ perfumeth the Saints' hearts with his Myrrhe, to wit, his Spirit and grace, Jam 4:6.

By ***night*** you may understand:

1. A time of rest, peace and pleasure. Isa 21:4 with Eccl 2:23. The Spouse could not rest without the presence and enjoyment of her Lord Jesus Christ. If a poor soul lodge upon a bed of down, it cannot rest unless it have Christ in his arms. What outward peace, pleasure and quiet enjoyments soever, a gracious soul may profess in this word, yet it cannot rest nor be satisfied without the bosom of Christ. The soul hath no peace, takes no pleasure in any creature comforts, unless it have the

embracings of Christ. Whatsoever creature enjoyment or contentment believers have in this life, yet they reserve their hearts for Christ and for his loving kindness.

4. Meditation

Gracious souls cannot rest satisfied in all creature enjoyments without the presence. Loves and manifestations of Jesus Christ. Cant 3:1-4. Christ is the top of all the new creatures' contentments, Col 3:11. The Lord Jesus is the Chief of all the spiritual man's relations, Cant 5:10, 16. None lieth so near the Spouse's heart as her well beloved. Her spiritual husband only is admitted into secret communion with her heart, he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

2. By night you may also understand a time of affliction, Lam 3:1, 2, whether through dark desertion, or stormy temptation &c. Whether through violent persecution or prevalent corruption, &c. However it is night with the Spouse, the Churches, the Saints of God when they are under any such kind of dispensations and during that dark and cloudy dispensation, the Spouse most affectionately desires heart communion with her beloved.

5. Meditation

Christ hath most of his Spouse's affections when she is exercised with greatest afflictions, Cant 5:8. Then she was sick of love. She could not live without Christ in her arms, in her bosom, yea, in her very heart. He shall lie all night (to wit, of affliction, temptation, persecution and desertion) betwixt my breasts. Oh! What heart workings have gracious souls after Christ under these dispensations afore mentioned! How are their desires enlarged and their loves increased at such times towards Jesus Christ! And if he delay his coming and communion with them, then they suddenly grow heart sick for his presence, Cant 2:4, 5, 6. *Stay me with flagons. Comfort me with apple for I am sick of love.*

Verse 14. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyard of Engedi.

In this verse the Spouse further setteth forth the excellencies of Christ her beloved by another metaphor, to wit, *Camphire*, amplified first by the plenty of it, *a cluster of Camphire*, secondly by the place thereof, *in the vineyard of Engedi*.

My beloved is unto me, &c. That which I would have you especially to observe in these words is the Spouse's propriety of faith unto whole Christ. *My beloved* doth express an act of faith, *My Lord and my God*, Joh 20:28, 29, also of affection, *my beloved friend*, Cant 5:16. *This is my beloved* and *this is my friend*. *My beloved Father*, Isa 9:6 & 2Cor 6:18. *I will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters and my beloved husband*, Hos 2:7, 16, 17, 19, 20. *Thou shalt call me Ishi*, that is to say, *my husband*.

6. Meditation

They who are espoused unto Christ in spiritual relation should be constant in their spiritual affection unto him. Christ loveth his to the end, Joh 13:10, so should every believer love him forever, Psa 116:1 & Matt 22:37.

Souls ought not to cool in their spiritual affections unto Christ Jesus, Jer 2:5, 13. **Thus saith the Lord, what iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me?** Christ doth take it unkindly that any believers should leave their first love, Rev 2:4. And this they do, first, when they neglect to live by faith, Heb 1:12. Secondly, when they growing secure & careless, do neglect holy duties, Cant 5:2-4. Thirdly, when they either fall into some gross sin, or allow themselves in some secret lust, Heb 3:13, which hardeneth the heart.

The Spouse did not only profess her faith in owning Christ and declare her affection towards him in calling Christ her beloved. **My beloved is mine**, Cant 6:3, but she doth also testify her experience of Christ, saying, **my beloved is unto me, &c.**, whereby the Spouse doth appropriate whole Christ unto herself and speaking in the singular number, she would teach every particular Church and every individual Saint to apply whole Christ by faith unto themselves.

7. Meditation

Faith doth apply whole Christ unto every particular Saint and makes them sing, **my beloved is mine. Christ is mine. My Lord and my god**, Joh 20:28, 29

My beloved is unto me, &c. All that Christ is, he is to me. A friend to me, a Father to me, an husband to me. Christ is light to me and life to me. **He is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption unto me**, 1 Cor 1:30. Christ is my joy, my comfort, my peace, my Mediator, my Advocate, my Savior, yea, Christ is all and in all to me, Col 3:11.

Whatsoever scripture of truth witnesseth that Christ is, even those who have union in him, relation to him and communion with him by the Spirit and faith, Christ is the same unto every individual believer. And none know experimentally what Christ is to his Spouse, his churches, his Saints, but those souls that have the communications of himself, of his holy Spirit & of his saving grace applied by faith unto themselves, Rev 2:17. **None knows, but he that receiveth.**

Who knoweth that divine light, life and glory which is revealed by the Spirit in the heart of a believer, but himself, 1 Cor 2:9-12. Or who can tell what spiritual comforts, what refreshing joys and what unspeakable peace Jesus Christ is unto any poor soul, save he or she that do enjoy it and himself with it, 1 Pet 1:3, 5, 8. Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory through believing in Christ. O blessed Saint! What is Christ to thee?

My beloved is unto me the chiefest of ten-thousand. He is my Lord, Phil 3:8, my King, Rev 15:3, and my All, Col 3:11. O sinner! What is Christ to thee?

Christ is nothing to me. I see no form nor comeliness in him saith the ignorant, unbelieving sinner, Isa 53:1-3, that I should desire him. Away with him! Crucify him! **We will not have this man to reign over us**, Luk 19:14.

Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked. It shall be ill with him. Woe unto their soul for they have rewarded evil unto themselves, Isa 3:9-11 & Luk 19:27.

As a cluster of Camphire. The word is sometimes taken for the name of a tree called a Cypress tree which preserveth from putrefaction and yieldeth a sweet savor. And also, the Septuagint translation render the word here, A cluster of Cypress is my beloved unto me. This Cypress is a tree, shrub or plant of rare virtue and operation whose fruit grew in great clusters which were both beautiful and medicinal. Also it signifieth a propitiation, Deu 21:8, an expiation, Pro 21:18 and a ransom, Isa 43:3. And so the Spouse here may have reference to the works and fruit of Christ's death whereby he became a cluster of redemption unto his Church. For as a cluster consisteth of many berries compact together in one bunch, so the redemption of Christ hath all saving mercy, sanctifying grace and everlasting love compacted together and all have their fragrantcy and spiritual operation in the application thereof unto believers. Eph 5:2 ***Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.***

8. Meditation

The benefits which believers have by the redemption of Christ crucified are very many, very efficacious and very sweet.

1. In general, all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus are the benefits of our redemption by Christ, Eph 1:3-7.
2. In the particular, our union by faith, the pardon of our sins, our reconciliation with God, the sanctification of our hearts and lives, our peace of conscience and the salvation of our souls are the benefits of our redemption by Christ, 2 Cor 1:30. These are as a cluster of Camphire, full of divine virtue and spiritual sweetness unto believers when they can apply these benefits unto themselves by faith.

In the vineyards of Engedi. Engedi was the name of a place in the land of Canaan, the lot of the Tribe of Judah in the wilderness, Josh 15:62. A very fruitful soil famous for vineyards and fruitful trees, also strong holds, 1 Sam 23:29 & Ezek 47:6-12. This Engedi was the place where the Children of Moab and the children of Ammon came against Jehosaphat to battle called Hazazon-Tamar which is Engedi, 2 Chron 20:1-24. This noteth unto us the great redemption, salvation and victory which the Church and every particular Saint shall obtain by Christ crucified over all their enemies, 1 Cor 15:57 & Rom 7:24, 25 & Rom 8:37-39.

9. Meditation

Christ will be a stronghold and horn of salvation unto his Churches and his Saints in the midst of their greatest dangers, Isa 4:5, 6 & Psa 18:1-3. Christ hath been with his people in six troubles and in seven he will not forsake them, Job 5:19. ***For he hath said, No, I will not leave thee, no, no I will never forsake thee,*** Heb 13:5, 6. Five negatives are here used by the Spirit to confirm their faith.

Also by vineyards you may understand the Churches of Christ. Isa 5:7 ***The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.*** The Church of the Jews was God's vineyard, Cant 8:12. ***My vineyard which is mine before me.*** The vineyards of Engedi do resemble the Churches of Saints in Gospel times (especially the says of the Apostles) for fruitfulness which was the Spouse's commendation both metaphorically and prophetically sung by Christ, Cant 4:13-16. ***Thy***

plants are an orchard of Pomegranates with pleasant fruits, Camphire and Spikenard all the trees of Frankincense, Myrrhe and Aloes, with all the chief spices. Such were the Churches in Galatia, Asia and Thessalonica, 2 Thes 1:3. ***We are bound to thank God always or you brethren as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly and the love of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.***

These fruits of the Spirit did flow from Christ. Hos 14:8 ***from me is thy fruit found.*** Christ is the vine, Joh 15:1, and the fruits of his Spirit are the clusters of grapes, Gal 5:22, 23. And his Churches of Saints are the vineyards, Cant 8:12. And the Saints are the grape gatherers, Cant 7:11-13. And the ordinances of God are the basket wherein the bunches of grapes are put by the husbandman (who is God the Father, Joh 15:1) that the Saints may receive them by the hand of faith. Jer 6:9 ***Turn back thy hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets.*** Go again to God's holy ordinances where by the hand of faith thou mayest receive spiritual gifts and fruits from Christ and enjoy abundance of sweet communion with Christ who will be as a cluster of Camphire in the vineyards of Engedi unto thy soul.

10. Meditation

The Saints have most constant sweet communion with Jesus Christ at his holy ordinances in his Churches, 1 Joh 1:3 & Psa 132:13-15. ***I will abundantly bless her provision and her saints shall shout for joy.***

When a gracious soul comes to the Church of God and enjoys communion with Christ in his holy ordinances, he is like one in the vineyards of Engedi gathering the first ripe fruits, such as his soul desireth. And Christ is as a cluster of Camphire unto him, full of divine sweetness and spiritual blessings. There the Saints have hidden manna, sincere milk, spiritual bread and living water, meat and drink which others know not of, spiritual joys, peace and comforts which strangers do not intermeddle with. Psa 65:4 ***Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee that he may swell in thy court. He shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of the holy temple,*** to wit, the Church and ordinances of God. There the Saints have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 Joh 1:3. There Christ and his Saints sup together, Rev 3:20, and he makes them a feast of fat things full of marrow, Isa 25:6, that maketh the Spouse sing unto her well beloved a song of her beloved touching his vineyards, Isa 5:1.

O how are the hungry thirsty souls of the poor Saints revived, refreshed, comforted and satiated with the communications of the Spirit and grace of Christ in his holy ordinances? When the Lord meets them, manifesteth himself to them, speaketh gracious words unto their hearts and witnesseth his love and sealeth it by his Spirit in the promises of the new covenant.

**Verses 15, 16, 17. Behold thou art fair, my love. Behold thou art fair.
Thou hast dove's eyes, &c.**

Christ and his Spouse do in these verse renew the praises one of another more succinctly than before and with greater plainness.

1. Christ commends her beauty, verse 15;

2. The Spouse praiseth her beloved, verse 16.
 3. Both Christ and his Spouse do jointly commend the Church's glory, verse 17.
- In this 15th verse, Christ's eulogy is amplified:
- a. By an introduction which consisteth of two parts:
 1. a word of attention and that doubled, **Behold, Behold**, not only to satisfy her doubts, but also to move admiration.
 2. A title of affection, **my love**.
 - b. By a two-fold assertion:
 1. Of the Spouse, the Church's, the Saints' spiritual beauty which is also doubled noting both the certainty and the eminency thereof. **Thou art fair, thou art fair**.
 2. Of her chastity and spiritual understanding! **Thou hast dove's eyes**.

Behold thou art fair, my love, thou art fair. The poor Saints (who are the precious sons of Zion and the comely daughters of Jerusalem) do very much desire to be beautiful and lovely in the eyes of Christ, but they are apt to look altogether upon their own deformities, defilements, pollutions and corruptions whereby it comes to pass that they lie under great doubtings, darkness and despondencies in their own Spirits, dare not, cannot believe that they are comely in the eyes of Christ. They see not the inward beauty and spiritual glory of the new man, the hidden man of the heart. Now Christ being formed in them and seeing his own image in their hearts, doth not only witness their spiritual beauty and hidden glory, but calleth them to Bethel, that is, to consider and to look upon the truth of grace in themselves.

Behold, Behold. The word being doubled notes unto us these things, viz.

1. the Saint's backwardness, indisposition and slowness of heart to believe and to be persuaded what Christ hath done for them, what grace he hath bestowed upon them and what spiritual blessings of the New Covenant God hath blessed them with in Christ Jesus.

1. Meditation

Christ would have his Saints to believe what he hath done for them, what grace he hath wrought in their hearts and what spiritual blessings he hath blessed their souls with in heavenly things. Christ doth say to every poor doubting soul, as he did to the Ruler of the Synagogue, Mark 5:36 **Be not afraid, only believe.**

2. It is a note of wonder and admiration, Isa 7:14. **Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.** And so here, **Behold thou art fair.** It is no less wonderful that a poor sinner should be born of God, Joh 1:12, 13, and become the sons of God, Gal 3:26, and also be made partaker of that divine nature, 2 Pet 1:4, yea, and be sanctified in Christ Jesus, called a Saint, 1 Cor 1:1, 2, and washed from his sins in the blood of Christ, Rev 1:5, and presented to God in the righteousness of Christ without spot, Eph 5:26, 27.

2. Meditation

When Christ manifesteth the work of regeneration and sanctification in the hearts of his Saints and calleth and causeth them to behold it by faith, they cannot but wonder and

admire the free grace of God in Christ Jesus unto their souls, Psa 31:19, 21. ***Blessed be the Lord for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness. O how great is thy goodness!*** & Psa 118:21-25. ***I will praise thee for thou hast heard me and are become my salvation. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes.***

When God revealeth Christ in any poor soul and by his Spirit showeth unto him the things that are freely given him of God, speaking pardon and peace unto him in a promise of free grace witnessing the Father's love and his sonship by the Spirit of adoption, Oh! How doth that poor Saint admire the free grace of God in Christ and wonder at the love of God in Christ to his soul. What? Is it so indeed? Hath God loved me with an everlasting love? Is God my Father? Is Christ mine? Am I a child of God? In everlasting covenant with God? And shall I have eternal life? Who am I? Oh how vile am I? How defiled, polluted and sinful am I? What! Love me, pardon my sin, make me an heir of grace, give me a kingdom? Oh the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God in Christ to poor lost perishing sinners!

My love. Christ calleth his Spouse his love:

1. Because she is the subject of his love. His love is settled upon her. Christ's love and delight from all eternity was in the Father and the Father's love and delight was from everlasting in Jesus Christ his Son, but it did not rest there. Pro 8:22, 23,30, 31 ***I was set up from everlasting and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth and my delights were with the sons of men.*** For Christ setteth his love upon his Zion, his Churches and in the hearts of his Saints. Psa 87:2, 3, 7 & 132:13-15 and Joh 14:21. ***And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and will love him and will manifest myself unto him.***
2. Christ calleth her his love because she is the object of his love. His love is communicated to her & his heart's delight and desire is unto his Spouse, his Churches, his Saints. Cant 7:10 ***I am my beloved's and his desire is towards me.*** The greatest out-goings of the heart of Christ are towards his Saints, Jer 31:3, 20. The Saints' hearts are the receptacle of Christ's love. Though Christ loveth all men as he did that young man, Mark 10:21, yet he loveth his Spouse, his Churches, his Saints with a peculiar love, Joh 15:9, 10 ***As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love. O what manner of love is this!*** 1 Joh 3:1, 2. No love like Christ's and the Father's love in Christ, Joh 17:23, 26.

3. Meditation

The Saints are both the subjects and the objects of the heart loves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Christ bestows his love upon them which he manifested:
 - a. In giving himself for them, Gal 2:20;
 - b. In drawing them unto himself, Jer 31:3;
 - c. In washing away their sins in his own blood, Rev 1:5;
 - d. In sanctifying them by his Holy Spirit, 2 Thes 2:15;
 - e. In preserving them in himself, Jude 1; and,
 - f. In saving them by grace, Eph 2:8 and sealing them unto the day of redemption, Eph 4:30.

2. When Christ hath made his Saints lovely, he looks upon his own image in them and loves them because he sees his own spiritual gifts and graces in their hearts wherewith Christ is ravished, Cant 4:9. Before we be actually his, he loved us with a love of good will as beholding us in his Father's choice and given himself in election, Jer 31:3, and therefore gave himself for us, Eph 5:2, and when we lay in our blood, our time was the time of love and Christ took us out of our blood and spread his skirt over us (put his righteousness upon us) and entered into covenant with us and we became his, Ezek 16:6, 8-14.

But when Christ hath called, justified and sanctified his elected ones, made them partakers of his divine nature, given them his Holy Spirit, changed them into his own image and planted the seeds of his grace in their hearts & they begin to bud, grow and bring forth the spiritual fruits of faith, love, humility, zeal, patience, meekness and self-denial in their lives and conversations to the praise of the glory of his free grace, then Christ loveth them with a love of most intimate friendship. Then he loves them as a Father, yea, with the same love that the Father loved him. Joh 15:9, 10. Then he loveth them as a husband, Isa 54:5-14, with a conjugal marriage love, his bosom heart love. Then Christ dwells in their hearts, opens the secrets of his soul unto them and sheddeth abroad his love in their hearts by his Holy Spirit which he hath given them.

Thou art fair, thou art fair. This gemination noteth:

1. The certainty, and,
2. The eminency of the Spouse's, the Church's and the Saints' spiritual beauty and inward glory

The word signifieth fair or beautiful, not only in color, but in comely proportion and parts, such as engageth affection and draweth love and complacency, Cant 4:7 & 7:6 ***How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights.*** As if Christ wanted words to express the Spouse's beauty and comeliness as one ravished with her love, he breaks for into admiration. ***How fair and how pleasant, &c.*** Thus Christ gets into the hearts of his poor Saints & doth win upon them and gain their affections (ere they be aware, Cant 6:12) by his sweet insinuations.

Also the doubling of the word holdeth forth both variety of beauty and perfection of beauty as ***Peace, Peace,*** is perfect peace, Isa 26:3. So ***fair, fair,*** noteth perfect beauty, Psa 50:2. Also it denoteth eminent beauty and comeliness. As ***high, high,*** is very high and ***low, low,*** is very low, so ***fair, fair,*** is very fair or exceeding beautiful, Ezek 16:13, 14. ***Thou was exceeding beautiful.***

4. Meditation

The Churches and Saints of God do excel in spiritual beauty and are most fair and lovely in the account of Christ, Psa 16:3; Pro 31:10, 29.

The Church of the Jews was beautiful, fair and comely in the days of Hezekiah, 2 Chron 29:3-36 & 30:1-12, 17 & 31:2-21. The churches of believers were beautiful and glorious in the days of the apostles, acts 9:31; 2 Thes 1:3. And every Saint is fair and lovely in the days of its first espousals, Jer 2:2, 3 and Ezek 16:13, 15. Christ beholdeth his people as covered with the robe of his righteousness and clothed with the garments of his salvation and made all glorious within, Isa 6:10 & Psa 45:13. ***Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee,*** Cant 4:7 & Eph 5:27.

1. Christ is the church's beauty as he is the head of the church and the savior of the body, Eph 5:23. And Christ is also the Saint's crown of glory and diadem of beauty, Isa 28:5, for he is their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, 1 Cor 1:30.
2. The churches and Saints are beautiful and comely in respect of all the holy ordinances of God and administrations of Christ which they do or may enjoy, 1 Cor 11:1, 2 & Psa 48:1, 2 & 78:3, 5-7. **All my things are in thee.** There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, 1 Cor 12:4-7.

Thou hast dove's eyes. By *eyes* you may understand:

1. spiritual knowledge and divine illumination called the eyes of our understanding, Eph 1:18. Enlightened with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and renewed in the Spirit of our mind by putting on the new man, Eph 4:23, 24.
2. By *eyes* you may also understand the ministers of Christ in his Churches who were called seers, 1 Sam 9:9 & 2 King 17:13, and *eyes*, 1 Cor 12:16, 17, 21, 27, 28 & Rev 4:6, 8, and therefore are said to be the Saints' guides, Heb 13:7, 17. False ministers are called blind guides, Mat 23:16, 24.

Doves are fearful, peaceable, innocent creatures, Mat 10:16 which do fly to the clefts or holes of the rock for safety, Jer 48:28. God compares his mourning Saints to doves in the valleys, Isa 38:14. And his Saints under their captivities, bondages and sufferings, God compares unto doves whose wings are covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold, Psa 68:13. So here Christ compareth his Churches & Saints with respect unto the spiritual light and understanding which they and their teachers have and shall receive from the unction of his Holy spirit unto *dove's eyes*, Cant 4:11. **Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair, thou hast dove's eyes, &c.**

5. Meditation

The spiritual understanding and experimental knowledge which the ministers and Saints have in mysteries of God and godliness accompanied with a chaste, holy and harmless conversation (as becomes the Gospel) renders Zion to be very beautiful. Faith can see him that is invisible, Heb 11:27, and behold the things not seen, Heb 11:1.

1. The spiritual understanding and experimental knowledge which the ministers and saints in the Churches of Christ have in the mysteries of God and godliness, doth render Zion to be very beautiful. This was a part of the Church's glory and beauty in the days of the Apostles, Eph 2:3-6; Col 2:2, 3. And their chaste, holy and harmless conversation was another part of the Church's dignity and comeliness, 2 Tim 3:10, 11 & Phil 1:27 & 2:15.
2. Spiritual light will be the glory of Zion, of the Church and Saints when God shall restore Jerusalem, Isa 60:1-3, 19, 20. **The Lord shall arise upon thee and his glory shall be seen upon thee. The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God thy glory.** And their holiness and purity shall also be Zion's glory in that day, Isa 60:15, 17, 20, 21, 22. **Then saith the Lord, I will make thy officers peace and thine exactors righteousness. Thy people also shall be all righteous and I will make thee an eternal excellency. I the Lord will hasten it in his time.**

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

The Spouse doth return praise unto Christ her beloved expressing his beauty which she setteth forth:

1. by a note of admiration;
2. By a title of affection, *my beloved*;
3. By an affection of his excellent beauty, *thou art fair*;
4. By an addition to his praise, *yea pleasant*; and,
5. By the blessing of their mutual marriage communion, *also our bed is green*.

Behold thou art fair, my beloved. As if she should say, my beloved Lord Jesus Christ. I have in obedience unto thy command, considered of that spiritual beauty and comeliness which I received from thee and do admire that beauty in its fountain, even thyself, my beloved for *thou art fair* and whatsoever beauty I have, I have it from thee and from thy fullness have we all received grace for grace.

6. Meditation

Christ is most beautiful in himself and the fountain of all the spiritual beauty in the Churches and Saints, Cant 5:9, 10, 16.

Christ is beautiful in himself if considered:

1. In the form of a servant, Phil 2:7. Isa 42:1 **Behold my servant in whom my soul delighteth.** Isa 49:6 **It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.** If the feet of the messengers (who bring glad tidings of salvation to the ears of poor lost and perishing sinners, Rom 10:15) be beautiful, how beautiful is Christ crucified (who purchased that salvation for them and brings the glad tidings thereof into their hearts and preacheth the Gospel of peace to their souls, Eph 2:16, 17) unto his Saints who hath done all this for them in the form of a servant. Christ is more beautiful if considered:
2. In the form of a Son, Dan 3:23, bearing the image of the Father, Heb 1:3. In whose face the Saints do behold the light of the glory of God, 2 Cor 4:6. And in beholding are changed into the same image from glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor 3:18, by whom believers are made sons, Joh 1:12, and receive the Spirit of sonship or adoption, Gal 3:26 & 4:6, whereby they can call God their Father, Rom 8:15, 16. And by that Spirit of adoption & sonship, all the Saints have access through him unto the Father, Eph 2:18, and many other dignities and privileges of sonship which are glorious liberties of the sons of God. Christ is most beautiful if considered:
3. The brightness of his glory, Heb 1:3. The appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, Ezek 1:26, 28. The full knowledge of God in Christ is too wonderful and high to be attained by believers whilst they are in this corruptible state and tabernacle of clay, Job 11:7, 8 & 1 Tim 6:16. **He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto whom no man hath seen nor can see.** Yet, Christ is that

living Word of God whereby God speaks forth himself and the riches, yea, and fullness of his grace and glory in such a measure and by such ways and means as the creature is made capable to receive the discovery thereof, 2 Cor 4:6. ***For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*** And when the Saints are in the visions of the glory of God and see by faith that invisible glory in the face of Jesus Christ, they can experience this admirable transcendent beauty of Christ which the Spouse here sings of and say Amen to it.

Thou art fair my beloved.

Christ is the fountain of all the spiritual beauty in the Churches and in every Saint. It is he that decketh his Spouse, his Churches and his Saints with spiritual ornaments of grace, Ezek 16:11, 12, clothes her with the garments of salvation and covers her with the robe of righteousness, Isa 60:10. Christ beautifieth his Saints with the gifts and fruits of his Holy Spirit and adorneth them with faith, love, patience, zeal, meekness, humility and self-denial. Thus they are beautiful through Christ's comeliness which he puts upon them, Ezek 16:13, 14. ***Lo every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,*** Eph 3:7 & Joh 1:16. ***And from his fullness have we all received and grace for grace.*** Thus the Spouse gives the praise of the grace of God in her unto Christ from whom she received it, admiring and commending his beauty and that with lively and spiritual affection unto himself.

My beloved. Something hath been spoken of the Spouse's, the Churches' and the Saints' affections unto Christ in the 7, 12 & 14 verses. The sweet gradation in her variety of expression noteth the ardency of her affection unto Christ whom the Spouse styleth ***my beloved***, verse 14. ***My well beloved***, verse 13, ***O thou whom my soul loveth!***, verse 7. Christ was the sole object of her soul's love in the day of her espousals whereof Christ keeps a divine record, bearing the remembrance of their kindness and cordial loves in his heart, Jer 2:2. ***Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.*** And doth the Spouse cool in her spiritual affections unto Christ, or fall oft and leave her first love? Nay, she is constant in her love to Christ as appears by this continued epithet ***my beloved***. Which words express:

1. Her propriety in Christ;
2. Her affection to Christ [the word ***beloved*** (being an adjective, must have a substantive supplied) and implies];
3. Her relation unto Christ who is her ***beloved friend***, Cant 5:16; ***Father***, 2 Cor 6:18 and ***Husband***, 2 Cor 11:2.

7. Meditation

Gracious souls are greatly in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and being espoused unto him, they own a propriety in him, have near and dear relation to him and he is the only object of all their spiritual affections.

Love is such a boundless affection that when it is once fixed upon a suitable object, it know no measure nor no end of its longing and thirsting desires to enjoy its beloved. It was so with David's soul, Psa 73:25. ***Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*** And thus it was with the Spouse, Cant 2:5. ***Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apple, for I am sick of love.*** O how highly do gracious

souls esteem Christ! Phil 3:7-9. How do they love him? Cant 5:8, and prize him? 1 Pet 2:7. They love his presence, long for his appearance, mourn after him, rejoice in him and delight in his love. Espoused souls challenge a propriety in Christ. Cant 6:3 *my beloved is mine*. Joh 20:28 *My Lord and my God*. Phil 3:8 *Christ Jesus my Lord*. Lam 3:24 *The Lord is my portion saith my soul*. It's the property of faith to own a propriety in Christ. Faith saith all that Christ is and all that Christ hath, that he is to me and that he hath for me, Gal 2:20. Whole Christ is mine, my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption, 1 Cor 1:30, and my *all in all*, Col 3:11, and this propriety of relation does exceedingly engage the Spouse's affection to love Christ, to admire Christ and to style Christ her *beloved*.

Yea pleasant. This is another epithet of love and an addition of praise which the Spouse gives unto her beloved Lord Jesus Christ. The word signifieth pleasant, available, delightful, beautiful. And so is Christ. He is altogether lovely, Cant 5:16, most desirable, none like Christ, none so amiable a Christ, Cant 5:10.

8. Meditation

The Saints take delight and pleasure in her covenant union and marriage communion with Jesus Christ their spiritual Husband. Psa 94:19 *In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul*.

The Saints do delight themselves in the Lord, the messenger of the covenant, Mal 3:2, and ought to do so. Psa 37:4 *Thy delight is his commandments*. Psa 119:35, 47. O how pleasant is Christ for delights? Look what pleasure men and women find in earthly things and creature contentments, and what delight they take in the empty, fading vanities, honors, riches and glories of this world. The like and far greater pleasure and delight do the poor Saints in their measure take in Christ and the things of Christ. Psa 119:14 *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches*.

No friend like Christ, no father like Christ, no husband like Christ to a gracious soul. *My beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand*, Cant 5:10. What love is like Christ's 1 Joh 3:1. What worldly riches are to be compared with the exceeding unsearchable riches of Christ? Eph 3:8. What are earthly dignities unto the glorious liberties & dignities of the Sons of God? How are the hearts of believers ravished with the loves of Christ? How exceedingly are the saints delighted with the beholding of the glory of God in the face of Christ? They care now who frown, so Christ smile. So they do but live in the light of his countenance and have the communications of his Spirit and grace in his holy ordinances and in other dispensations of God towards them.

Our bed is green. By *bed* you are to understand:

1. The ordinances of God wherein Christ and his Saints enjoy mutual marriage-communion together. *Our bed*, that is to say, our marriage-communion together which is mutually enjoyed in the holy ordinances of God wherein Christ and his Spouse, his Churches, his Saints do sup together, Rev 3:20. In which respects the Church of God is called his house, 1 Tim 3:15. And the ordinances of God being the means of grace wherein Christ and his Saints have spiritual communion together they are fitly resembled by a *bed*, for souls are converted in Zion by those means of grace. Psa 87:2, 5, 6 *And of Zion it shall be said this and that man was born in her*.

2. By *bed* you may understand also the hearts of believers espoused to Jesus Christ. The Churches of God are his garden and the Saints are his beds of spices. Cant 6:2 ***My beloved is gone down into the garden to the bed of spices to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies.*** These beds of spices are the breasts of his Saints where Christ lieth all night, Cant 1:13, called Solomon's bed, watched and guarded with the weapons of our spiritual warfare because of the fear of the night. Cant 3:7, 8 ***A bed of love,*** Ezek 23:17.

This adjunct, *green*, signifieth the flourishing and fruitful condition of the Churches and Saints who are like a green Olive tree in the House of God. Psa 52:8 & 92:12-14 ***The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree. Those that be planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall be fat and flourishing.***

9. Meditation

The conversing with Jesus Christ in his holy ordinances maketh a spring of graces, comforts, experiences and all other spiritual fruits in the hearts of believers, Eph 4:15. 2 Thes 3:3 ***Your faith groweth exceedingly.*** And Col 2:19 ***increaseth with the increase of God.***

The spiritual dews, showers and shinings of Christ upon the beds of spices, the hearts of his Saints in their spiritual communion with him in his holy ordinances maketh them grow as the Lilly and as the Vine. Hos 14:5-8 ***I will be as the dew unto Israel and Ephraim shall say, I am like a green fig tree.***

All the Saints' greenness and fruitfulness springs from their union and communion with Jesus Christ. He giveth more grace, Jam 4:6. Thus Zion cometh to have many converts, Psa 84:2, 5, 6, called ***the precious sons of Zion*** and ***the comely daughters of Jerusalem begotten by the word of truth,*** Jam 2:18 and ***born again of the incorruptible seed of the Spirit,*** 1 Pet 1:23. And every son and daughter of Zion does hereby grow in grace and are made fruitful in faith, love, patience, meekness, humility, zeal and self-denial. In both which respects the Spouse sings ***Our bed is green.*** Zion is not like a desolate widow or like a barren woman, but like a married woman whose maker is her husband, by whom she hath many children and much spiritual fruit, Isa 54:1, 2, 5, 13.

Verse 17. The beams of our house are cedar and our rafters of firre

In this verse is commended the House wherein Christ and his Spouse cohabited and enjoyed that marriage communion together which she sang of, saying, ***our bed is green.*** Which house is described by some spiritual materials thereof, to wit, the ***beams*** which are ***cedar*** and the ***rafters*** which are of ***firre***. This house (in the letter of this scripture) was the Temple in Jerusalem which Josiah King of Judah repaired and wherein he and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, the Priests and the Levites and all the people great and small made a covenant before the Lord to serve the Lord their God, 2 Chron 34:8, 10, 29, 31, 32, 33.

The beams of our house are cedar. By ***house*** you are to understand the house of God which is the ***Church of the living God,*** 1 Tim 3:14, 15, to wit, the Temple at Jerusalem called the House of the Lord, Dan 5:3, and all the Synagogues of the Jews, called the Houses of God, Psa 83:12. Also, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn written

in heaven, called ion Heb 12:22, 23. And those particular assemblies of believers gathered in the order of the Gospel called the Churches of Saints, 1 Cor 14:33. The text is *the beams of our houses*, that is to say, the Churches of God (in the prophetic mystery of this scripture) gathered by the Apostles in Gospel order which were the Houses of God called here *our house* (by a synechdote) the singular number put forth for the plural, *our house* for *our houses*.

1. Meditation

Every true constituted visible Church is the House of God. 1 Tim 3:14, 15 *That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God which is the Church of the living God.*

The Church of God is metaphorically called an house and may fitly be compared unto an house in these resemblances, viz.

1. The foundation;
 2. The materials, of stones and timber; and,
 3. The framing, joining and building together of those materials upon the foundation which maketh them an house. *But this is a greater mystery, for I speak of Christ and his Church*, Eph 5:32, which is a spiritual House, 1 Pet 2:4, 5, 6.
1. The only true foundation of this spiritual House is the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor 3:10, 11, which is laid by the Ministers of God (who are the wise master builders) in the bottom of the hearts of believers as the chief Cornerstone, Eph 2:19, 20.
 2. The spiritual materials of this spiritual House are believers sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints, 1 Cor 1:2, who are living stones, 1 Pet 2:5, and trees of righteousness, Isa 61:3, living trees bringing forth new fruit, Ezek 47:1, 12, hewed and squared by the able Ministers of the New Testament, 1 Cor 3:9, 10, and therefore called the Churches of Saints, 1 Cor 14:33.
 3. The mystical form of this spiritual House is the framing, fitting, joining, compacting and building together of these living and spiritual materials (viz. believers) upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ (who himself is called the Chief Corner Stone) by the Spirit of faith, Eph 2:19-22 & 4:12-16, and one to another by the Spirit of love, Col 2:2, 19, which is the work of the ministry of Christ who are laborers together with God and workers together with him, 1 Cor 3:5, 6, 9-11; 2 Cor 6:1; Eph 2:19-22 & 4:11-16.

This House is here commended by two adjuncts added as the most needful and useful parts of this spiritual building, to wit, *beams* and *rafters*, which are put in their proper places either in the Constitution of the Church or in the Reformation thereof. The *beams* of the House are the main timber thereof which supporteth and beareth up the roof. These were of *cedar*, 1 King 6:36. By these *cedar beams* you may understand the Ministers or Elders of the Churches of God who seem to be pillars, Gal 2:9, holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, 1 Tim 3:1, 9, being strong in grace to bear up them that are weak, Rom 15:1, strengthening the weak hands and feeble hearts of the poor, doubting, tempted and afflicted members of the Church of God, Heb 12:12, 13.

And the rafters of firre or galleries of firre. Those fir trees are believers, eminent in spiritual gifts, graces, experiences, with whom Christ delighteth to walk and talk in his holy ordinances (as Kings and great persons do in their galleries with their wives, friends

and favorites). Cant 7:5 *The King is held in the galleries*, delighted with the Saints' spiritual beauty and inward glory, Psa 45:10, 11, which Christ greatly desireth, Cant 7:10.

2. Meditation

Able ministers who are found in the faith and experienced believers who are eminent in spiritual gifts and graces are needful both for use and ornament in the Churches of Christ.

1. The able Ministers of the New Covenant were useful in the Constitution of the Churches, 1 Cor 3:5-11. So they were in the edification, Titus 1:5, and reformation, 1 Cor 11:17, 20, 23, 25, of Churches. And Christ gave the ministry of the Gospel for both these purposes, Eph 4:11-13. And he gave some Apostles and some Prophets and some Evangelists for the gathering of the Saints one by one and planting them together. *And he gave some Pastors and Teachers for the edifying of the body of Christ, &c.* And in this respect there were Elders ordained in every Church, Acts 14:23, which were as pillars or beams of cedar in the Temple. The churches of Christ can no more stand and continue found in the faith without able and faithful ministers than the Temple could have stood without pillars and beams of cedar.
2. Experienced believers eminent for spiritual gifts and graces are an ornament to the Churches of Christ like the green fir trees, Hos 14:8, which do beautify the sanctuary and make it glorious, Isa 60:13, with whom the Lord Jesus Christ, The King of Saints and of Zion doth sweetly converse in his holy ordinances as in his spiritual galleries and showeth them glory, riches and excellencies of himself and of his Father's house.

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