

John Gill's Insights on the Plants of the Song of Solomon

Song 1:12 "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard (*Nardostachys jatamansi* (Wall) P.D.C) sendeth forth the smell thereof."

CHRIST having given very large commendations of his church, and promised a great deal of grace and glory to her; she in this and the two following verses, declares what advantages she received by him, how lovely his person, and how delightful his company were to her. These words may be understood either,

First, Of the time of Christ's not being manifested in the flesh, after the promise of it, and of the exercise of the faith, hope, love, desire, expectation, etc. of the Old Testament-saints, respecting his coming in the flesh: and then the sense is this, Whilst he, who is constituted king of saints, is appointed to be the mediator between God and man, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world, is With God, as 'the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father,' and not yet manifested in the flesh; 'my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof,' that is, my grace is in exercise; my soul is breathing with earnest desires after him; I long for his coming, and am in earnest expectation of it; I live in the hope of enjoying this valuable blessing; I firmly believe that he will come according to the divine promise, though his stay is long, and therefore will patiently wait the appointed time. Christ did exist from eternity, as the Son of God; was set up as the head and mediator of God's elect, and was appointed and constituted king over God's 'holy hill of Zion.' He bore this character throughout all the Old-Testament-dispensation; and being promised to be the Messiah and Savior of sinners, from the time of the first declaration and publication of it, the Old-Testament-saints lived in the faith, hope, and earnest expectation of his coming in the flesh. Or else,

Secondly, They may be understood of the time of Christ's being in the temple, or in Jerusalem, or in the land of Judea; during which time the gospel was preached, and the sweet odor of it diffused throughout all the parts thereof. Christ was promised to come into the world as the church's King; 'behold thy King cometh,' etc. Zechariah 9:9, and as such he did come; the wise men of the East sought him under the character of 'the King of the Jews:' He was accused of making himself King, and for it was put to death: Hence this superscription was wrote on the cross, 'This is the King of the Jews;' though most were ignorant of the nature of his office and kingdom, which were 'not of this world.' Now whilst this great King was here on earth, the savor of the gospel was spread abroad; it was preached by Christ himself, in the temple, in the synagogues of the Jews, and in several parts of the land; for he was 'not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:' He sent out his disciples to preach it, but limited them to Judea's land, and forbad them to 'go in the way of the Gentiles,' or enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans. So that the sweet odor was then confined within that land; though after his resurrection he enlarged the commission of his disciples, and bid them go and preach the gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem; which they accordingly did, and their ministry was owned for the conversion of many. but afterwards being rejected by the Jews, they turned to the Gentiles; for it was proper and necessary, that the word should be first preached to them, that 'out of Zion might go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' Or,

Thirdly, These words may be understood of Christ's being now in heaven, whither, after his resurrection, he ascended, where he now is, and he will continue till his second coming, 'whom the heaven must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things;' it is from thence that saints expect him: Now these words, 'while the King sitteth at his table,' very well suit with Christ's exalted state in heaven; his kingly office and power appear more manifest, he is now declared to be 'both Lord and Christ;' his posture there is, 'sitting at the right hand of God,' where he is 'in his circuit' as the words may be read; it being the usual custom anciently among the Jews, to sit at table in a circular form, 1 Samuel 16:11. Christ being in heaven, is 'in his circuit,' encompassed about with angels and glorified saints; thus in Revelation 5:6-11, 12, a large number of angels and saints are said to be 'round about the throne,' (and Christ, the lamb, in the *midst* of them) singing his praises, and feasting with him on those joys which will never end.

Now, whilst Christ is thus solacing himself with saints above, at such a distance from his church below, he is not unmindful of her, but gives such large communications of his grace, as cause her 'spikenard' to 'send forth the smell thereof:' Which may be meant, either,

1st, Of the graces of the church being in exercise on Christ: Christ, though now in heaven, and so invisible to the bodily eye, yet is the object of faith, love, hope, and joy; 'whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter 1:8. The distance of place no way hinders either the communications of grace to us from Christ, or the exercise of our grace on him; but while he is there, he is giving it forth to us, and we are exercising it upon him; it is the manifestation of Christ's love and grace to us that makes our *spikenard* send forth its smell. Or else,

2dly, The prayers of the saints may be intended by it; which are odorous, and of a sweet-smelling savor to God, being perfumed with Christ's mediation, and offered up with his 'much incense;' and therefore says David, Psalm 141:2; 'let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense.' R. Aben Ezra thinks, that by the smell of the spikenard, is meant the smell of the incense, which was burnt under the law. Now while Christ is in heaven, the saints put their prayers into his hands, who takes notice of them, and is always ready, with his *golden censer*, to offer them up to his Father on the *golden altar*, in which he smells a sweet savor; and therefore the prayers of the saints are called *odors*, Revelation 5:8. See also Revelation 8:3, 4. Or rather,

3dly, This may be expressive of the gospel, and the sweet 'savor of the knowledge' of Christ, which by it is made 'manifest in every place,' wherever it comes, 2 Corinthians 2:14. Now the gospel may be compared to *spikenard*,

1. Spikenard is but a small, low plant or shrub; the gospel is mean and contemptible in the eyes of the world; it is accounted foolishness by them, and the preachers of it are abject and despicable persons in their esteem. Yet,

2. It is very excellent; it is by Pliny accounted the chief and principal ingredient in ointments; and therefore, John 12:3, the ointment of spikenard, which Mary took and anointed the feet of Christ with, is said to be 'very precious and costly:' The gospel is valuable and excellent, both in its nature and effects; it is a rich and an enriching gospel; and therefore called 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,' an exceeding valuable treasure, that is put in earthen vessels; it is a revelation and declaration of the riches of grace,

which Christ bestows upon sinners here, and of those riches of glory which saints shall be made partakers of hereafter.

3. It is of an exceeding sweet smell, so is the gospel; there is such an efficacy in the odor of it, that it enlivens dead sinners, and therefore is said to be the ‘savor of life unto life,’ and will revive the spirits of fainting believers: though it is reported of spikenard, that by its being carried over sea it grows mouldy and rots, whereby it loses its sweet smell, and stinks exceedingly; so the gospel, to those that perish, is not only of an ill smell, and abhorred by them, but is ‘the savor of death unto death.’ Many of the Jewish writers ^{f117} understand the smell of the spikenard here as an ill one.

4. Spikenard is of a hot nature ^{f118} and digestive of cold humours; it is hot in the first, and dry in the second degree: The gospel being powerfully applied by the Spirit of God, warms the hearts of God’s children, makes them burn within, and drives away luke-warmness, deadness and dulness, occasioned by indwelling sin. **5.** It is of a very comforting and strengthening ^{f119} nature to the stomach, it exhilarates the spirits; so are the doctrines and promises of the gospel to the souls of believers; these strengthen and nourish, comfort and refresh them; they, like Jeremiah, find the word and eat it, and it is ‘the joy and rejoicing of their hearts.’ For these reasons the gospel may be compared to spikenard; which some of the Jewish ^{f120} writers think is musk, others a kind of spice somewhat like saffron; but it is best to understand it of nard, of which there are many sorts; the best of which is that which grows up in spikes, and therefore is called spikenard, which is what is here intended. Again,

Fourthly, These words may be understood of Christ’s feasting with his saints here below, during which time their grace is in exercise; there is a mutual feasting between Christ and believers, he sups with them, and they with him; Christ has furnished a table for his people in this wilderness, with plenty, and variety of suitable food; and though he is a King, constituted by his Father, and acknowledged by his church, yet he sits at this table, with poor, mean, and worthless creatures, and welcomes them to those sweet provisions, saying, ‘Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.’ Moreover, Christ’s presence with his people, and his grace manifested to them, have a mighty influence to draw forth their graces into exercise, even as the rising sun opens the flowers, and exhales the odor thereof, and agreeable breezes spread it abroad. Thus when the graces of believers are in exercise under the influences of Christ, and the enjoyment of his presence, they are exceeding odorous, both to Christ and others; their *spikenard* may then be said to ‘send forth the sweet smell thereof:’ On this table, which is sometimes called ‘the table of the Lord,’ are set the body and blood of Christ, whose ‘flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed;’ on which believers, being encouraged by Christ’s presence, and assisted by his Spirit, feed plentifully; and he sits there and delights himself by viewing the graces of his own Spirit in exercise: thus at this table they are both mutually feasted and delighted. Yet there seems to be an emphasis on the phrase *his table*, as if it was a table peculiar to himself; and it was usual with great personages, and at grand entertainments, for the master of the feast and each of his guests to have separate tables, though together in the same room; this was formerly a custom with the Jews though now disused, ^{f121} and with the ancient Greeks, ^{f122} and with the old Germans ^{f123} also, and it seems with the Romans, ^{f124} but this did not hinder their mutual pleasure.

The conjecture of a certain Expositor, ^{f125} that Christ himself is intended by the *spikenard*, is not to be

slighted, he being called a ‘bundle of myrrh,’ and a ‘cluster of camphire,’ in the following verses: It was usual in feasts to anoint the head and hair as well as feet of persons invited thereunto; and ointment of spikenard was often used, ^{f126} as is manifest from ^{<411403>}Mark 14:3, ^{<431203>}John 12:3; to this custom the Psalmist alludes, Psalm 23:5. At royal banquets in Syria, as this here was one, it was usual to go round the guests and sprinkle them with Babylonian ointment. ^{f127} Now the church was at table with Christ as a guest, and was entertained with the most delicious fare; here was nothing wanting to render the entertainment delightful and pleasant; Christ himself, as he is both the master and the feast, so he is the ointment of spikenard to his guests: and it is as if she should say,

“I am now at a sweet and heavenly repast with my beloved, he sits at the table, and I with him; and as he is my food, so he is my spikenard; he is my ‘all in all;’ as long as he is here I need no flowers to delight me, no spikenard, myrrh, cypress, or unguents made of these to refresh me, for he is all this, and much more unto me.”

Christ’s person and grace, his sacrifice, blood and righteousness, are, like spikenard, of an exceeding sweet smell; his person is ‘altogether lovely; the savor of his graces or ointments’ attract the love of his people; his ‘sacrifice is of a sweet-smelling savor to God,’ and to all believers; his garments, or robe of righteousness, ‘smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,’ and in them believers are acceptable and well-pleasing to God.

Song 1:13 “A bundle of *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl., No.144) is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.”

THE church in these words continues the account of that comfort, delight and satisfaction which she had in Christ, expressing the greatest love and strongest affection for him: and therefore she compares him to the very best herbs and spices, and declares that if her *spikenard*, or the graces of the spirit in her sent forth an agreeable smell to him, whilst he was at his table, much more grateful and odorous was he, being as ‘a bundle of myrrh’ unto her,

I. Here is a title or character which she gives him; ‘my well beloved.’

II. What Christ is unto her; ‘a bundle of myrrh.’

III. The entertainment she is resolved to give him; ‘he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts,’

II. She declares that Christ her ‘well beloved, was a bundle of myrrh unto her.’ By ‘a bundle of myrrh,’ we are not, I think, to understand the twigs or branches of the myrrh-tree bound up in faggots, which the Arabians used to make fires with, the fumes whereof were very noxious and pernicious, as the historian ^{f130} tells us, and unless they burnt the gum, called *storax*, would produce incurable diseases; but either the little sprigs or flowers thereof bound up together, and put in the bosom as a pleasant nosegay to smell to, may be meant; for Christ is exceeding sweet and delightful to the believer, being ‘the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the vallies:’ or else the gum *stacte*, which springs from the myrrh-tree, and so the Septuagint read it, ‘a bundle of stacte;’ or liquid myrrh, which sweats from the tree of its own accord, without incision, and is accounted the best: and then by *a bundle* of it is meant a *bag*, ^{f131} or bottle of it, the same

word which is used is translated *a bag*, in <370106>Haggai 1:6; <181417>Job 14:17, and is an allusion to persons who carry bags of perfumes, and sweet powders, or smelling-bottles in their bosoms, for the reviving of their spirits; now what these are to such persons, that and much more is Christ to his church. R.. David Kinchi ^{f132} relates out of Midrash Chazith, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, is there compared to myrrh; but Christ, who was the object of Abraham's faith and joy, may be much better and more aptly compared thereunto ^{f133} which I shall now consider. And,

1st, Christ may be compared to myrrh, if we regard the nature and properties of it; it being,

1. An excellent spice, and one of the most precious and principal spices; it is reckoned among the chief spices, chapter <220414>4:14, and as such Moses is ordered to use it in the anointing oil, <023023>Exodus 30:23. Christ is 'the chiefest among ten thousands,' and exceeding precious to every believer, in his person, office and grace; there is none among the angels in heaven, or saints on earth, so desirable to them as he is; nor none who deserves to have the preeminence in, and over all things, as he does; seeing he is 'the image of the invisible God, and the first-born of every creature.'

2. It is very odorous, it is called 'sweet-smelling myrrh,' chapter <220505>5:5, and the church is said to be perfumed with it, chapter <220306>3:6. Christ, in his person, sacrifice, and righteousness, is of a sweet-smelling savor, both to God and believers, as has been shewn on verse 12. Believers smell a sweet smell in all his offices, characters and relations; he is in all these as a bundle of myrrh, exceeding delightful to them.

3. Yet it is somewhat bitter in taste, it is *gustu leniter amara*, as Pliny ^{f134} observes; which may be expressive,

(1.) Of the sufferings of Christ; which, though they were grateful, and of a sweet-smelling savor to God, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him; here was not only *voluntas Dei*, the will of God, but here was also *voluptas Dei*, the pleasure of God; yet they were bitter to Christ, witness his agonies in the garden, his sorrows on the cross, and the spittings, buffetings, scourgings, and revilings of his enemies; his head being crowned with thorns, and his hands and feet pierced with nails; being forsaken by his God, and by his friends, could not be grateful and pleasant to him: but though these were so bitter to Christ, yet, like myrrh, how sweet and odorous is a crucified Christ to believers! they desire to know none but Christ, and him crucified; the bitter cup, which he drank, is the ground of their joy and triumph; his death and sufferings are the foundation of their comfort, and which only can secure them against the fears of hell and wrath; it is this which embitters sin unto them; sin never appears more odious than in the glass of Christ's sufferings; and they never mourn for it in a better or truer sense, than when they 'look upon him whom they have pierced;' repentance is a tear that drops from faith's eye, and is never more evangelic than when faith views a sin-bearing and sin-atonement Savior; now from the sufferings of Christ, or from a crucified Christ, distil and drop down the sweet-smelling myrrh of spiritual blessings, as justification, sanctification, adoption, pardon of sin, peace, reconciliation, and a right to eternal glory; all which come to us through the blood, sufferings, and death of a crucified Jesus.

(2) The myrrh, being bitter in taste, though sweet in smell, may shew, that the cross goes along with Christ; for as Luther says, *Christianus est crucianus*, a Christian is a cross-bearer; it is required of every one that will follow Christ, that he take up the cross; for he that would wear the crown, must bear the

cross; and he who would have the sweet, must have the bitter; indeed, the Christian generally has his share of afflictions, crosses and trials in this life. The passover-lamb was eaten with bitter herbs, to shew, that he that 'will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution;' yet so sweet is Christ, this bundle of myrrh, to believers, and communion with him, under all afflictions, so delightful, that they would not be without him, though they might be freed from them; this tree of life sweetens these bitter waters of Marah; they have peace in him, when in the world they have tribulation: they are contented with, and rejoice in their portion, and are willing to have the bitter, so they may have but the sweet; for these bitter afflictions and tribulations which they endure for Christ's sake, distil and drop down some precious gums of faith, patience, experience, and hope; see Romans 5:3, 4, 5.

2dly, Christ may be compared to myrrh, for the use that has been made of it.

- 1.** It being very valuable, and highly esteemed of, was used in gifts and presents to great persons; thus we find it in the present that Jacob made to his son unknown, then governor of Egypt, <014311>Genesis 43:11, and it was part of that which the wise men of the East brought to Christ at his incarnation, <400211>Matthew 2:11. Christ is the great gift of God's grace to sinners, and an *unspeakable* one he is, which does not go alone, for 'with him he freely gives all things:' When God gave Christ, he gave a manifest proof of his greatness and goodness; he gave like himself, and what was stutable to us sinners; a favor which we neither deserved, desired, nor expected. O boundless grace! amazing love!
- 2.** It was used, and was a principal ingredient in the anointing oil; see <023023>Exodus 30:23. and may signify that 'oil of gladness which Christ is anointed with above his fellows,' which being poured upon his head, in its fullness, ran down to all his members, like the oil on Aaron's head, which ran clown to the skirts of his garments; for it is from him that we receive that 'anointing which teacheth all things.'
- 3.** The *stacte*, which is the gum that drops from the myrrh-tree, was used in the sweet incense; see <023034>Exodus 30:34. and may represent the intercession of Christ, who stands at the golden altar, with a golden censor in his hand, to offer up the prayers of all his people, which he perfumes with his much incense; which is exceeding grateful and odorous, like sweet-smelling myrrh unto the saints.
- 4.** It was used to render persons comely and acceptable in the eyes of others; thus Esther, and the rest of the maidens, were purified with oil of myrrh, for their admission into the presence of king Ahasuerus, <170212>Esther 2:12, it is in Christ the beloved, that saints only are accepted with God, being cloathed with those garments of his, which 'smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia:' Thus they have liberty of access into God's presence now, and shall have a ready admittance into his kingdom and glory hereafter.
- 5.** It was used in the embalming of dead bodies, being useful to keep them from putrefaction and corruption; for this purpose Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes to preserve the body of Jesus, <431939>John 19:39, 40, an interest in Christ, this 'bundle of myrrh,' and an application of him to our souls, will secure us from going down into the 'pit of corruption,' and will eternally save us from perishing; nothing safer and better them to have this in our bosoms, without which sinners, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' will rot and putrify.
- 6.** It is very useful in healing ^{f135}wounds and ulcers. Christ is the great physician that heals all the diseases of his people, freely, perfectly, and infallibly, which he does in an uncommon and unusual way; he performs his cures by his blood and stripes; his blood is a *panacea*, a sovereign medicine for all diseases,

and 'by his stripes we are healed,' <235305>Isaiah 53:5.

3dly, Christ may be compared to 'a bundle of myrrh.'

1. To denote the abundance of the spiritual odors of divine grace in him, he is 'full of grace and truth,' as a man and mediator; 'for it hath pleased the Father, that all fullness should dwell in him;' which is communicated to believers, as they stand in need of it; who sometimes receive such large measures of it, that they can say, 'the grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant' in them; Christ is 'a bundle of myrrh' unto them; they have large views of his love, and sweet communications of his grace.

2. To shew the security of this grace in Christ; our life is sure in Christ's hands, being bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God, 'with all the mercies and blessings of it, both for time and eternity; therefore they are called 'the sure mercies, of David, being hid with Christ in God, so that they can never be taken away from us.

3. To shew the inseparableness of Christ and his grace; Christ and the blessings of his grace never go separate; where God gives his Son, he gives all things with him; and where a soul enjoys Christ, he possesses all things; peace, pardon, righteousness, and life are all in Christ; and the believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in him.

Now. Christ is not so to all persons, only to them that 'believe he is precious,' and to none but them; Christ is a 'bundle of myrrh' to none but his church; 'my beloved, is unto me, etc.; which shews not only the strength of her affection to Christ, the value that she had for him, and the delight she took in him; but also a particular application of him by faith, to her own soul; which is also expressed in the following verse, 'my beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire, etc.'

III. In these words we have also the entertainment which she resolves to give him; 'he shall lie all night betwixt my' breasts:'. Wherein is to be considered,

1st, The place she appoints him, 'betwixt her breasts.'

2dly, How long we would have him lie there, 'all night.', And,

3dly, For what ends and purposes.

3dly, The ends and purposes for which she was desirous that he should lie all night betwixt her breasts, were,

1. For ornament; sweet flowers in the bosom are ornamental and are placed there often for that purpose. Christ 'the rose of Sharon and the lily of the vallies,' being carried in the hand of faith, or in the bosom of love, exceedingly adorns the believer.

2. For delight, pleasure, and refreshment; nosegays are carried in the bosom, to delight the eye and refresh the spirits. Nothing more delightful to the eye of faith than Christ; and nothing more savory and of a sweeter smell to a believer, than his person, blood, and righteousness; the most delightful and sweet-smelling flowers fail short of expressing Christ's beauty and savor.

3. That she might always have him in her eye, mind, and memory; persons out of sight are too apt to be forgotten, even our dearest friends and best enjoyments: The church had, no doubt, some experience of this, and therefore to remedy it, she would have Christ, this bundle of myrrh, always in her bosom, and in her sight, to contemplate upon and wonder at; as the Psalmist did, who says, <191608>Psalm 16:8. 'I have set

the Lord always before me.’

Song 1:14 “My beloved is unto me as a cluster of *camphire* (*Lawsonia inermis* L) in the vineyards of En-gedi.”

THE church having had such sweet communion with Christ at his table, verse 12, which excited and drew forth her grace into exercise, enters into a commendation of him, verse 13, and finding so much sweetness in him, she scarcely knew what was excellent enough to compare him to, that thereby she might express his excellency, in himself, his usefulness to her, and that delight and pleasure which she took in him; having declared that he was ‘a bundle of myrrh’ to her, which she desired might always have a place in her bosom, she does, in these words, compare him to ‘a cluster of camphire.’

I. She gives him the same title or character as before; ‘my beloved.’

II. Says that he was, to her, ‘as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.’

II. She compares him to ‘a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.’ it is somewhat puzzling and perplexing to interpreters, to know what this *copher*, which is translated *camphire*, was.

First, It is, by the Septuagint, rendered Cyprus, by which is meant either the island so called, of which we read, ^{<441119>}Acts 11:19, 20 and 27:4, and then we must understand, by ‘a cluster of Cyprus,’ a cluster of the grapes of those vines which grew in Cyprus, which were the best and largest vines, as ^{f137}Pliny observes; and these being said to be in the vineyards of Engedi, mean either those vines that were brought from Cyprus, perhaps, in Solomon’s time, and planted in the vineyards of Engedi; or else, some of the best vines in the land of Canaan, which were much like to those in Cyprus: The land of Canaan was very fruitful of vines, and some of the best sort, which bore very large dusters; such an one was that which was carried by two men upon a staff, who were sent by Moses to spy the land, ^{<041323>}Numbers 13:23, 24, in memory of which the place from whence it was taken was called *Eshcol*, the same word that in this text is rendered *a cluster*; and it is highly probable, that those vines, which grew in the vineyards of Engedi, were the best of all: R. Solomon Jarchi relates, out of the Agadah, ^{f138}that these vineyards brought forth fruit four or five times a year, and R. Alshech says seven times. Now Christ may be compared to a cluster of grapes, which grew in these vineyards; he compares himself to a vine, ^{<431501>}John 15:1, and therefore may be very well compared to a cluster of grapes that grew upon the vine. And that,

1st, For the number of berries that there are in a cluster of them.

1. In Christ is a cluster of divine and human perfections; ‘in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily; every divine perfection is to be found in him; eternity, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc. are as it were in a cluster in him: and as all divine, so all human perfections are in him; for he is perfectly man, as well as perfectly God; he is ‘God manifest in the flesh;’ he was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, which is the greatest imperfection of human nature.

2. In Christ is a cluster of all spiritual graces; he is ‘full of grace and truth;’ he is full of grace to communicate to others, as Mediator and has all grace habitually in his human nature, God having not given ‘the Spirit by measure’ to him; for he is ‘anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;’ a

cluster of the graces of the Spirit, which are in the human nature of Christ, may be seen in <231101>Isaiah 11:1-3. The Jews used to call such men who had all excellencies and virtues in them, *twlwķça esbcoloth*, clusters; hence they have a saying ^{f139} that “after the death of Jose Ben Joezer, a man of Tzereda, and Jose Ben Jochanan, a man of Jerusalem, the clusters ceased, according to <330701>Micah 7:1” and say they ^{f140} “what is *lwķça esjcol*, a cluster! why say they, “it is *wb lkhç çya ish shehaccol bo*, a man that has all things in him,” that is, that has all virtues, a perfect knowledge of the law, etc. Now Christ is such a cluster that has all moral and spiritual perfections in him; all virtues and every grace are clustered together in him.

3. In Christ is a cluster of all spiritual blessings; all the blessings of the everlasting covenant are in his hands, and at his dispose; and saints are ‘blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him; he is the believer’s ‘wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption;’ there is not a mercy we want, but, is in him; nor a blessing we enjoy, but what we have received from him; he is the believer’s ‘all in all.’

4. In Christ is a cluster of ‘exceeding great and precious promises,’ all suited to the various cases of God’s children, and to advance his glory; for ‘in him are all the promises, yea, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us;’ and these look like ‘a cluster’ of grapes growing in the vineyards of Engedi.’

2dly, Christ may be compared to a cluster of grapes for the abundance of juice that is in them,

1. The cluster is squeezed and pressed, that the juice may be obtained; so Christ was ‘wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, under the severest strokes of justice, and pressure of his Father’s wrath; for ‘it pleased the Lord to bruise him,’ and all this for our good, that our sins might be expiated, our souls comforted, and persons accepted with God.

2. The juice squeezed out of this cluster may denote the blood of Christ and the efficacy of it; which being ‘shed for the remission of sin,’ perfectly procured it; it ‘cleanseth from all sin,’ and purgeth ‘the conscience from dead works,’ and has an influence in our justification, and in every other blessing of grace.

3. As the wine, which is the blood of the grape, is of a chearing and refreshing nature, so is a crucified Christ to a poor sinner; that there are salvation, righteousness, peace, and pardon through his blood, for the chief of sinners, is a reviving cordial to those that see themselves so, and the best and most acceptable news that they can hear of; this is more chearing and refreshing than the choicest wine. Or else,

By *Cyprus* is meant the Cyprus-tree, ^{f141} which grew upon the banks of the Nile, and at Ascalon in Judea, and very probably in the vineyards of Engedi, here mentioned, as it did also in the island of Cyprus, from whence, perhaps, it had its name. The word Copher is used in the Misnah ^{f142} and translated Cyprus; and Maimon and Bartenora ^{f143} say, it is the same which in Arabic is called *anhla*, the Alhenna, and refer to this place; and observe, that there are some that say it is the spice called the clove. Of the Alhenna Dr Shaw ^{f144} says, “this beautiful and odoriferous plant, if it is not annually cut and kept low, grows ten or twelve feet high, putting out its little flowers in clusters, which yield a most grateful smell, like camphire.” There seems to have been a likeness between the Cyprus-tree and the vine, especially in their flowering; and it is said to bear a flowery fruit like a grape in flower; and hence as vines when they flower are said to Cyprize, as in the Greek version of chapter <220215>2:15, so a bunch of Cyprus-flowers in likeness

to the vine, is called here a cluster; ^{f145} and with propriety is the flower of the Cyprus referred to, since it induces sleep; ^{f146} see verse 13. And,

1. The ^{f147} seed of the Cyprus-tree is much like a coriander seed, which the manna also resembled, ^{<041107>}Numbers 11:7, which was typical of Christ, who is called ‘the hidden manna,’ ^{<660217>}Revelation 2:17, being exceeding sweet, delightful, pleasant, and nourishing to believers.

2. The ^{f148} flower of this Cyprus-tree which may be chiefly designed, is of a white color, and a sweet smell; and may denote the purity of Christ’s nature, and the innocence and holiness of his life, who in both appeared to be ‘holy, harmless and undefiled;’ as also the sweet fragrantcy of his person, blood, sacrifice and righteousness.

3. The ^{f149} leaves thereof are good for the healing of ulcers, etc. ‘So the leaves of the tree of life,’ which is Jesus Christ, are said to be ‘for the healing of the nations;’ that is, for the healing of their spiritual maladies and diseases.

4. An excellent ^{f150} oil was made out of it; and of this with other things was made an ointment, which by Pliny, is called *the royal ointment*.

Christ is by the holy Spirit anointed above measure with the ‘oil of gladness,’ and is possessed of those good ointments which are exceeding savory; and from him do saints receive that ‘anointing, which teacheth all things.’

Secondly, Some ^{f151} think that the Cyprus or Cypirus, of which Pliny writes, lib. 21. c. 18 is here meant, which is a kind of rush or sword-grass, is of a sweet smell, and has bulbous roots, to which it is thought the allusion is here made. And,

1. The smell of it, as Pliny, in the place before cited, writes, is much like that of spikenard; and for the same reasons that Christ may be compared to the spikenard, in verse 12, may he be compared to the cyperus here.

2. The smell of it, as the same naturalist observes, makes men *vegetiores et firmiores*, more lively and strong, active and robust: in Christ is all a believer’s strength, and from him they receive fresh supplies of it; and the more they exercise faith on him, the stronger they are; so that though they are poor weak creatures in themselves, yet they ‘can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth them.’

3. The root of it, as is observed by the same author, is good against the bitings of serpents, especially scorpions. Christ, who is ‘the root of Jesse,’ was typified by the brazen serpent, which Moses, by a divine command, erected upon a pole, that every Israelite that was bitten by the fiery serpents, might look to it and have a cure, Christ was lifted up on the cross, and now is in the gospel, that whosoever looks unto him may live and not perish; see ^{<430314>}John 3:14, 15 he is a sovereign and infallible remedy against the bitings of those fiery serpents, within, our own sins and corruptions, and of that old serpent without, the Devil.

Thirdly, Others have thought that a cluster of dates, the fruit of the palm- tree, is here intended, which is the opinion of R. Aben Ezra and other Jewish writers; and indeed Engedi, as is manifest from Pliny, ^{f152} was famous for those sort of trees, as was Jericho, which is therefore called *the city of the palm-trees*,

<053403>Deuteronomy 34:3, and it is very probable that Engedi was called Hazzazon-tamar, as it is <142002>2 Chronicles 20:2, for the same reason: also the ^{f153}fruit of this tree grows in clusters, and is very sweet and luscious, and may be expressive of Christ, and the fruits of divine grace, which souls receive in clusters from him, and are exceeding sweet to their taste.

Fourthly, Others think, and particularly Sanctius, that the balsam-tree is here intended, which only ^{f154}grew in the land of Judea: this place Engedi, ^{f155}was remarkably famous both for that and palm-trees; so Origen observes, ^{f156}that Engaddi abounded not so much with vines, as with balsams; the *vine-dressers* in <245216>Jeremiah 52:16 are interpreted by R. Joseph, ^{f157}of *the gatherers of balsam*, from Engedi to Ramatha; and places where those trees grew might with propriety be called vineyards, since the balsam-trees were like to vines, ^{f158}and were cultivated after the manner of vines. ^{f159}From this tree dropped the precious balsam, which was of a sweet smell, and of an healing nature; to which Christ may be very well compared, who is the great and only physician of souls, whose blood is a balsam for every sore, and has virtue to cure every disease.

Fifthly, The word *Copher* is by our translators rendered *camphire*, and so it is by ‘Pagnine, David de Ponsis,’ and others; which ^{f160}is of a sweet smell, is a very good remedy against the pains and aches of the head, a reviver of the spirits, and a refresher of the brain; and, if intended here, may be expressive of that sweet consolation and divine refreshment which believers enjoy, resulting from views of acceptance in Christ’s person, pardon through his blood, and justification by his righteousness. Though what we call *camphire*, seems not to be known to the ancients, nor does it grow in clusters; but is the tear or gum, or something of a resinous nature, which drops from an Indian tree.

Sixthly, There is one thing more to be remarked, and that is, that the Hebrew word **rp̄k** *copher* signifies ‘an atonement or propitiation;’ and so may very well be applied to Christ, who is ‘the propitiation for our sins,’ and has made full atonement for them by ‘the blood of his cross.’ Bishop Patrick ^{f161}observes, that the ancient Hebrew doctors, by dividing the first word **lk̄çā** ‘eshcol a cluster,’ found out the mystery of the Messiah in these words, and considered them as if they were read as, **rp̄wk lk̄ çya ish col copher** ‘my beloved is unto me the man that propitiates or expiates all things,’ that is all sins and transgressions. In the Talmud ^{f162}it is explained, “He whose all things are, has atoned for my iniquity.” Both the Targum and R. Sol. Jarchi carry it in the sense of atonement, though not as made by the Messiah: but it is certain that the great atonement for sin was to be, and is completely made by the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah; in which appeared a cluster of all the divine perfections, shining in equal glory; here grace and mercy, justice and holiness, truth and faithfulness, sweetly joined and harmonised together; whereby also a cluster of divine blessings was procured and eternally secured to all his redeemed ones, such as peace, pardon, justification, etc. all which are sweet and comfortable, and fill them with unspeakable joy and pleasure.

Song 1:17 “The beams of our house are *cedar* (*Cedrus libani* Loud, No. 101), and our rafters of fir.”

THESE are either the words of Christ, inviting the church into their house, which was so firmly and

delightfully built; or else the words of the church, continuing the praise of Christ, and all that were about him, or belonging unto him; or rather, they are the words of the bride and bridegroom, and the virgins her companions, all joining together in a chorus, to set forth the glory and excellency of the church. in which may be considered,

- I.** What is meant by this house, which they seem to have a common interest in, and therefore call it ‘our house.’
- II.** What those beams are which are said to be cedar.
- III.** What those rafters are which are said to be of fir.

II. The beams of this house are said to be of cedar. By cedar beams we are not to understand angels, who encamp about, protect and bear up the saints, and are ministring spirits to them, which is the opinion of some; ^{f175} but rather, the ministers of the gospel ^{f176} who may be called pillars in Christ’s house, as James, Cephas, and John were; who by their exemplary lives, savory doctrines, and undaunted courage, add much strength and glory to the church of Christ; as by rafters afterwards may be meant weaker believers, who have all their proper places, work, and usefulness in the house of God: or else, by cedar beams may be meant in general, the saints and; people of God, which are all beams and pillars in this house, and serve to support it; for being ‘fitly framed, together, they grow up unto an holy temple in the Lord;’ and being joined and cemented to each other in faith and love, they worship the Lord ‘with one shoulder, or with one consent;’ and these are compared to cedars in scripture; see ^{<199212>}Psalm 92:12, ^{<042405>}Numbers 24:5, 6, and may be very well compared unto them,

1. For the height and tallness of them; the cedar-tree is a very tall tree, as may be learnt from ^{<121923>}2 Kings 19:23, ^{<300209>}Amos 2:9. The saints, though they are mean, abject, poor, and low by nature, even beggars on the dunghill, yet by divine grace they are raised on high, set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of glory; they are higher than others in their gifts and graces, faith, knowledge and experience, as well as in their privileges and attainments; they are growing up higher still in their head Christ Jesus, and are reaching forwards and upwards in their affections and desires, in hope of enjoying ‘the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’

2. For their straightness and uprightness; for which reason perhaps the righteous are said to grow, not only like the palm-tree, but also like the cedar in Lebanon: the saints are upright, both in heart and conversation; they both speak and walk uprightly.

3. For its durableness; Pliny ^{f177} ascribes even eternity unto it; it is used for immortality; ^{f178} it will not rot, nor admit any worm into it: the saints will endure for ever; for though they have much corruption in them, yet they themselves shall never corrupt; they have that grace in them which will keep them from putrefaction, and which will never decay itself; for it is incorruptible, immortal, and never-dying seed.

4. For the sweet odor which it sends forth; ^{f179} it is of an excellent smell; so are the persons of the saints to God the Father, being clothed with the garments of salvation, and robe of Christ’s righteousness, which ‘smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia;’ so are the graces which are wrought in them by the Spirit to Christ himself; see chapter ^{<220410>}4:10, and so are all their sacrifices of a sweet-smelling savor, being offered up in Christ’s name, and perfumed with the sweet incense of his mediation.

5. The cedar-tree is well rooted, ^{f180} always green, and the older the more fruitful: believers are rooted in Christ Jesus, so as all the winds and storms of sin and temptation cannot tear them up; they are always green, and their leaf doth not wither, because they are ‘planted by rivers of water;’ where, being refreshed with continued supplies of divine grace, they bring forth fruit in old age, because the Lord, he is upright, he is their rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

III. The rafters of this house are said to be of fir. By rafters may be meant the ordinances of the gospel, which are administered in the church, and are for the comfort and edification of it. The Hebrew word here, translated rafters, is in ^{<013038>}Genesis 30:38-41 and ^{<020216>}Exodus 2:16 rendered gutters and troughs of water, where sheep used to be watered; and some of the Jewish writers ^{f181} would have it understood in this sense here. R. Aben Ezra observes, that if it is taken in this sense, then the word rendered fir, should signify marble stone, and be read thus, ‘our canals are of marble stone.’ ^{f182} Now these canals or gutters of water are called **μϣϣר rehatim** ^{f183} from the Chaldee word **ϣר rehat**, which signifies *to run*, because waters run in them. The grace of the Spirit is frequently, both in the Old and New Testament, represented by water; which, for its purity and purifying nature, is called *clean water*; for its quickening virtue and efficacy, water of life and living water; and for its plenty and abundance, ‘rivers of water:’ this grace is commonly conveyed and communicated to us in the use of ordinances; these are the canals or conduit-pipes in which this water runs, and is brought unto us; the first conveyance of it is usually this way; faith, conversion, and every grace that attends it, come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and as this, so other ordinances are the means of increasing faith, joy and comfort, and of conveying fresh supplies of grace and strength. Christ’s fulness is the fountain from whence all grace springs; and his ordinances are the golden pipes, through which the golden oil and grace of divine love run and empty themselves into our souls. Also the same word is translated *galleries*, in chapter ^{<220705>}7:5, ‘the king is held in the galleries.’ R. David Kimchi says, ^{f184} that they were buildings in high houses, in which they walked from house to house, or from one part of the house to the other; they were such as our balconies: and they may be called by this name, because they run along the sides of houses: agreeable to this, Junius and Tremellius translate it, *ambulachra nostra, our walking-places*. Now the ordinances are the galleries, or walking-places, where Christ and believers walk and converse together; here he grants them fellowship with himself, tells them all his mind, and discloses the secrets of his heart unto them: in these galleries they behold ‘the king in his beauty;’ here he shews them his covenant-love and grace, and from hence they take a prospect of the good ‘land that is very far off.’ But the word may be very well translated *rafters*, which are joined together, and run in each other; and so the Targum renders it; and in this sense is the word used both in the Misnah ^{f185} and in the Midrash. ^{f186} Now as rafters are for the strength and support of buildings, so are the ordinances to the church of Christ; by them oftentimes saints are supported and refreshed; and, whilst they are waiting on Christ in them, they renew their strength, they mount up with wings as eagles, they run and are not weary, they walk and faint not, as it is promised to them in ^{<234031>}Isaiah 40:31.

Now these rafters are said to be of fir. The word is only used in this place, and is so rendered by Arias Montanus, Pagnine, and others, and is so understood by most of the Jewish writers; ^{f187} the word being by the change of a single letter, to wit, **ϣ** into **t**, which is used in the Chaldee and Syriac languages, the same

with that which is commonly used for the fir; and this, Pliny says, ^{f188} is the best and strongest wood for roofing or faltering': now these rafters, the ordinances of the gospel, may be said to be of this, because,

1. The fir-tree is *hilaris aspeceu* ^{f189} of a pleasant, chearful, and delightful look; the ordinances of the gospel are exceeding delightful to believers, when they have the presence of Christ with them, and the communications of his love unto them; then are those tabernacles amiable and lovely; wisdom's ways are then ways of pleasantness; their souls are filled with joy and pleasure; nothing so desirable to them as these, neither does any thing give them such satisfaction and contentment; and therefore with the disciples they think it is good for them to be here, and would always abide under such a roof as this, whose rafters are of fir.

2. It is a very shady, tree, *folio pinnato densa, ut umbres non transmittat;* ^{f190} it is so thick with leaves, that it will not let through showers of rain: the ordinances of Christ are a delightful shade, under which saints oftentimes sit with pleasure, have much spiritual consolation and refreshment; in which, being protected from the enemies of their souls, they serve the Lord with liberty and enlargement of heart.

3. It is always green, ^{f191} and never casts its leaf, and therefore is called the 'green fir-tree,' in ^{<281408>}Hosea 14:8. Ordinances are those green pastures, into which the great Shepherd leads his sheep, and in which he causes them to lie down; which being blessed and owned by the Spirit of grace unto believers, make them fat and flourishing, fruitful in every good work, even in old age; so that their leaf does not wither in the winter season.

Others think that the cypress-tree is here intended, and so read the words, and our rafters or galleries of cypress; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Tugurine versions, David de Petals, and others. Now these rafters may be said to be of this wood, because the cypress-wood ^{f192} is very lasting and durable; it admits of no worms, it will not rot, nor is it sensible of old age; which may be expressive of the durableness and continuance of gospel.ordinances, until the second coming of Christ; for as long as Christ has an house on earth, these cypress-rafters will last, it will never need new roofing; as long as there is a church, there will be those ordinances, Which are now in force, and will continue so to the end of time, without any change or alteration in them. This wood is also of a very pleasant smell; ^{f193} which may signify the delight and pleasure which believers take in ordinances, and how grateful they are to them.

Others think that the brutine-tree is meant; so Ainsworth, Brightman, Junius, Cocceis, and Michaelis; and it may be that which Pliny ^{f194} calls *bruta*, which some take to be the tree of Paradise; and its name is near in sound to the Hebrew word *brotim* here used, the singular of which is *brot*; which, Pliny says, is much like the cypress, and of a smell like cedar; and being applied to the ordinances of the gospel, may signify, as before, the durableness and delightfulness of them; and now who but would desire to dwell in such an house, and under such a roof as this? What encouragement is here, and what an inducement should this be, to souls to come into the house of the Lord, and wait upon him there, the beams of whose house are cedar, and the rafters of fir?

Song 2:1 “I am the *rose* (1. *Tulipa Montana* Lindl. 2. *Tulipa sharonensis* Dinsm.) of Sharon, and the *lily* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L) of the valleys.”

HERE begins a new colloquy between Christ and his church, in which they alternately set forth the praises and excellencies of each other, discover the strength of their mutual affection, and express the delight and pleasure they take in each other’s company: but who begins this colloquy is not so easily determined. What is here said, may be applied either to Christ or to the church; and therefore I shall consider the words in both senses.

First, The words may be considered, as the words of the church, expressing the excellency of her grace, loveliness, and beauty, which she had received from Christ; and at the same time intimating her being exposed in the open field and low rallies to many dangers and enemies; and therefore tacitly desires his protection over her, which he seems to promise in verse 2. That these are the words of the church, seems to be the general opinion of the Jewish doctors, ^{f195} and is also embraced by some Christian interpreters.

^{f196} And,

1st, The church may be compared to ‘the rose,’

1. For beauty; it is called the beautiful flower ^{f197} its color is beautiful and delightful: the figure is exceeding just; nothing is more common in poems of this kind, than to set forth the beauty of women by the rose; such as Hero, ^{f198} Aspasia, ^{f199} and others; some have had the name of Rhoda from hence; and Helena for her beauty was called *Ποδοχρωα* The church may be fitly compared to it; no ‘rose of Sharon’ can be more beautiful in color, and delightful to the eye, than the church is in the eyes of Christ; as she is clothed with his pure and spotless righteousness, adorned with the graces of his Spirit, and standing at his right-hand in cloth of gold, bespangled with the sparkling gems of divine grace; her beauty is desirable to him, she being in his eye “the fairest among women.’

2. For its sweet odor; ^{f201} the church and all believers are as the fragrant and sweet-smelling rose; their persons are so as considered in Christ; and all their graces, especially when in exercise; and all their duties and services, when performed in faith, and perfumed with Christ’s mediation; see chapter 4:10, ^{<500418>}Philippians 4:18, ^{<660508>}Revelation 5:8, and 8:3, 4.

3. For its delight in sunny places; ^{f202} it thrives and flourishes the best there, and has the most fragrant smell: Christ is ‘the sun of righteousness,’ under whose warming, comforting and refreshing beams, believers delight to be, and under which their souls grow, thrive, blossom exceedingly, and bring forth much fruit.

4. For its blossoming and flourishing, ‘the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;’ the church may be said to do so, when there is a large increase of members, and these much in the exercise of grace, and ‘fruitful in every good work;’ then may the church be said to be as the blossoming rose.

2dly, She may be compared to the ‘lily of the valleys:’ some women have their name from the lily, as Susanna; and so Sysigambis is the name of the mother of Darius ^{f203} which signifies the *white lily* ^{f204} to which for beauty women are sometimes compared; and with propriety enough may the church be called a

lily. ^{f205} She is compared to the ‘lily among thorns’ in the next verse, and saints are frequently compared to lilies in this Song. And,

1. She may be likened to a lily for the glory, beauty and sweet odor of it. Christ says, ^{<400629>}Matthew 6:29, of the lilies of the field, that ‘Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;’ and for the same reasons that she is compared to the beautiful and sweet smelling rose, is she likewise to the lily; which Pliny says, *rosae nobilitate proximum est*, ‘is next in nobleness and excellency to the rose.’

2. For its whiteness; there are various sorts of lilies, and they are of different colors; some are of red and purple colors, others are white; and it seems to be the white lily which is intended here, for this seems best to express her beauty; for the red rose and the white lily make her look somewhat like her beloved, ‘white and ruddy,’ a perfect beauty; and of the white lily, Pliny ^{f207} says, *candor ejus eximius*, that ‘its whiteness is singularly excellent; the church, and all believers in Christ, are very aptly resembled by the white lily, who are clothed with ‘fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints,’ wrought out by Christ, imputed by God the Father, and laid hold on by faith; this is so exceeding white, that being arrayed with it, they are all fair, and ‘there is no spot in them.’

3. For its fruitfulness; Pliny ^{f208} says, *nihil est foecundius, us radice quinquagenos saepe emittente bulbos*: ‘nothing is more fruitful, for oftentimes one root sends forth fifty bulbs:’ and as fruitful are believers when the Sun of righteousness shines upon them, and Christ is as the dew unto them; for then ‘they grow as the lily, and cast forth their roots as Lebanon; their branches spread, and their beauty is as the olive tree.’ The church brings forth many souls to Christ; and these bring forth much fruit, to the glory both of him and his father.

4. For its height, for which it is commended: the lily grows very high; Pliny says, *nec ulli florum excelsitar major, interdiu cubitorum trium*; ‘no flower exceeds it in height; for in the day-time,’ (that is, when it erects itself,) ‘it is three cubits high.’ Believers are trees of righteousness; and plants of Christ’s Father’s planting, which do not run along the ground, and cleave to earthly things, but lift up their heads heavenwards, and grow up on high in their desires and affections, having their hearts above, where their treasure is: believers are like the flowers of the lily, open towards heaven, but shut towards the earth.

5. For the weakness of its body, and largeness of its head: Pliny says of the lily, *languido semper collo et non sufficiente capitis oneri*; that it has ‘a weak neck, or body, which is not sufficient to bear the weight of the head.’ Christ is the head of the body, the church, and far greater than that; he is not supported by it, but he supports it: the church’s strength lies in her head, as Samson’s did in his locks; she is weak in herself, but strong in Christ her head, and therefore says, ‘surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.’

6. The church may be compared, not only to a lily, but to ‘a lily of the vallies:’ there is a lily which is called *lilium convallium*, ‘the lily of the vallies:’ but this seems not so much to intend the distinguishing name of some particular lily, as it does the place where it grows. And,

1. Vallies are low places; and, when the church is called ‘the lily of the rallies,’ it may be expressive of the low estate and condition which she is sometimes in: believers are Christ’s myrtle-trees, and these are sometimes in the bottom, in a low condition; but he grants his presence with them, and the discoveries of his love to them; they are his doves, and they are often ‘like

doves of the vallies, mourning every one for their iniquity, being humbled and, pressed down in their souls under a sense of sin and unworthiness; they are not only humble in themselves, and low in their own eyes, but are often in the deeps of affliction, sorrow, and distress, and out of these depths cry unto the Lord; see <19D001>Psalm 130:1.

2. Lilies that grow in the vallies are exposed to danger; they are liable to be plucked up by every one that passes by, to be trodden upon, and eaten by the beasts that feed there, and also to be washed away, and destroyed by hasty showers of rain, that run from the hills and mountains down into the vallies with force and violence; so the church of Christ here on earth, in her low estate, is exposed to the rage of her adversaries, to be trodden under the feet, and torn in pieces by the teeth of those bulls of Bashan, that beset her around, and to be carried away by the flood of persecution, which ‘Satan the old serpent casts out of his mouth after her.’ Now it is a glorious instance of God’s mighty grace and power in protecting and defending his church, that this lily grows and abides in the vallies, notwithstanding all this danger.

3. Lilies of the vallies have more moisture, verdure, and greenness in them, than those upon the hills and mountains; because the sun has not that power over them, as R. Sol. Jarchi observes, to scorch and dry them up, and therefore are much more beautiful and excellent: so believers, being planted by ‘rivers of water,’ are green, flourishing, and fruitful; whilst others look like ‘the heath in the desert,’ dried and parched up. Christ is to the saints as ‘rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;’ by the one he refreshes them, and makes them fruitful; and by being the other he shades from that which would scorch them, and make them barren and unfruitful: and thus is the church the ‘lily of the vallies,’ as well as ‘the rose of Sharon.’ And the Targum here renders it, ‘the rose in the plain of the garden of Eden;’ and some interpreters think the rose is meant; and we sometimes read of roses in vallies [f211](#) and certain it is there were roses in the vale of Sharon. But,

Secondly, The more commonly received opinion is, that these words are the words of Christ, owning all the glory and praises the church had given him in the former chapter, and setting forth more largely the beauties and excellencies of his person, the more to affect, enamor, and ravish her soul, and make her seek and long for him: and indeed it seems best to understand them of Christ, for self-commendation does not so well agree with the church as with him. What Solomon says, <202702>Proverbs 27:2, is worth regarding, ‘let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips:’ though it is lawful for the saints to speak of their glory, beauty, and excellency, as considered in Christ, in order to magnify the riches of his grace, for the instruction and encouragement of others, and in vindication of themselves against the calumnies of the world, and to obviate their mistakes concerning them, as in chapter <220105>1:5, she says, ‘I am black but comely;’ but her chief province and design in this Song appears to be, to set forth his praises, and not her own; and indeed the majesty and agreeableness of the stile with Christ’s language in the New Testament, such as, ‘I am the door, I am the good shepherd, I am the vine, I am the way, the truth, and the life,’ etc. as well as the connection of the words with the following verse, as one well observes, [f212](#) manifestly bespeak them to be the words of Christ, who may very well be called,

1st, ‘The rose of Sharon.’ Christ fitly compares himself to a rose, which, as Bishop Patrick observes, is still one of the goodliest things to which a great prince can be likened in those Eastern countries; and gives an instance of it in the great Mogul complimenting one of our kings, as being like a rose in a garden: in the Misnah, ^{¶213} mention is made of the king’s lily, or the king’s rose, being the king of flowers, and fit for a King, and an emblem of one; so the men of the great congregation of Ezra are compared to roses, in the Targum of ^{<220702>}Song of Solomon 7:2 and the ancestors of Melissus the Theban, after many calamities, are compared to the flourishing rose, for the height of honor and power they arrived unto. ^{¶214} Nor is this simile unfitly used by the bridegroom of himself, since it is sometimes given to men by their lovers;’ ^{¶215} and is very properly used in a Song of love, as this is; seeing the rose, as Philostratus calls it, is *ερωτοϖ φυτον*, *the plant of love*; and Anacreon calls it *το ροδον των ερωτων*, *the rose of loves*: it was sacred to love; the graces are represented, one of them as having a rose, another a myrtle-branch; ^{¶216} and a crown of roses was consecrated to the muses; ^{¶217} all this because of the beauty and loveliness of the plant. And to it Christ may be compared,

- 1.** Because of its red color; which may be expressive of the truth of his humanity, and signify that he is really and truly man. having ‘taken part of the same flesh and blood,’ that his people are partakers of; as also of his bloody sufferings in the same nature, on the account of which he is said to be ‘red in his apparel:’ likewise both these together, the red rose and the white lily, make up that character which is given him, chapter ^{<220510>}5:10 that he is ‘white and ruddy,’ a compleat beauty, like the charming lily and blushing rose, ‘fairer than the children of men.’
- 2.** He may be compared to the rose for its sweet smell, as for the same reason he is in the former chapter to spikenard, myrrh, and camphire; his person, sacrifice, grace and righteousness, have a delightful odor in them; no rose smells so sweet, as Christ does to believers; this Sharon-rose refreshes them, quickens their spiritual senses, and ravishes and delights their souls.
- 3.** The rose is of a cooling nature, ^{¶218} and therefore useful in burning fevers, inflammations, etc. Christ, by the effusion of his blood, by the oblation of himself, and by his dying in the room and stead of sinners, has appeased and removed his Father’s fierce and burning wrath from them; and it is only an application of this Sharon-rose, the person, blood and righteousness of Christ, which can cool and comfort the conscience of a sinner set on fire, and terrified by the law of God; the discoveries of his love and grace can only remove those dreadful terrors, and fire of divine wrath, which is kindled by a ‘fiery law,’ and cure those inflammations raised thereby.
- 4.** He is called ‘the Rose of Sharon,’ for the excellency of it; the roses which grew there perhaps were the best of any. Sharon is the name of a fruitful plain or country, where herds and flocks were kept, as appears from ^{<132729>}1 Chronicles 27:29, ^{<233502>}Isaiah 35:2, and ^{<236510>}65:10; this plain or country lay between Caesarea and Joppa, beginning at Lydda; hence they are joined together; ^{<440935>}Acts 9:35, and reaching to the Mediterranean sea: hence the Jews in their writings say ^{¶219} from Lydda to the sea in the vale; and this was so very fruitful, that the Targumist on this place renders it, ‘by the garden of Eden:’ and Sharon is described in the Jewish map ^{¶220} as fat and fertile, having in it very desirable fields, fruitful vines, and abounding with flowers and roses. There are various sorts of roses in different places, some better than others; those of the first class with the Greeks ^{¶221} were those of Olenum, and next those of Megara Nisea,

and then those of Phaselis, and then of others; with the Romans, the best were those of Praeneste and Campania, and then others: ^{f222} but of the roses in Judea, the rose of Sharon seems to have been the best, and therefore to that the comparison is made; there was a garden of roses in Jerusalem ^{f223} but not to them, but to those in Sharon is the allusion. The word for a rose is only used in this place and in ^{<233501>}Isaiah 35:1 and is so called, either from the collection and compression of leaves in it, or from the shadow of it; for the word seems to be compounded of one that signifies to *hide* and *cover*, and another that signifies a *shadow*; so Gussetius ^{f224} and so may be rendered, ‘the covering shadow:’ but why a rose should be so called is not easy to say; unless it can be thought to have the figure of an umbrella, or that the rose of Sharon was so large as to be remarkable for its shadow, like that Montfaucon ^{f225} saw in a garden at Ravenna, under the shadow of the branches of which more than forty men could stand. Christ is sometimes compared to trees for their shadow, which is pleasant and reviving, as in verse 3. ^{<281407>}Hosea 14:7, but he here seems to be compared to the rose of Sharon on another account, even the excellency and fragrancy of it; for, Pliny says ^{f226} that the rose does not delight in fat soils, rich clays, or well-watered grounds, but thrives the best in poor lean ground; and that those are of the sweetest smell which grow in dry places, for *ruderatum agrum amat*, ‘it loves rubbish earth.’ Now such dry and rubbish earth was that which was about the city of Sharon; for we read of such a place as inhabited, ^{<440935>}Acts 9:35 as the Talmudic doctors assert; who also tell us ^{f227} that those who built a brick house in Sharon, had no benefit of the law, mentioned in ^{<052003>}Deuteronomy 20:3 because the earth thereabout was not fit to make bricks of, nor would houses made of them continue long.

Hence they also say ^{f228} that the high priest, on the day of atonement, prayed particularly for the Sharonites, that their houses might not become their graves. Now these being the best and sweetest roses which grew in this soil, and Christ being compared to one of them, denotes the excellency and preferableness of Christ to all others.

Some think that some other plant or flower is here intended; the Targum renders it, ‘the narcissus;’ of which some are white, having white leaves surrounding a yellow flower ^{f230} and some of a purple color ^{f231} and which Pliny calls purple lilies: he says there are two sorts of them, one that has a purple flower, and the other is of the grass kind; some, he says have a white flower and a purple cup. The heathens used to call the narcissus the ancient crown of their superior deities ^{f235} and it was reckoned a beautiful flower, and of a sweet smell and for beauty Christ may be compared unto it: its white color may denote the purity of Christ; and the purple, his royalty, or rather his purple blood and sufferings of death. The Septuagint translate the words thus, ‘I am the flower of the field;’ as do also the Vulgate Latin and Pagnine. Now Christ may be called so,

1. Κατ ἐφξοχην, by way of eminency, as being the chiefest and most excellent flower in the field; there is no such flower in the heavenly paradise as he is; among all the holy angels and glorified saints, there are none to be compared with him; and in his garden here below, no such flower grows as this; he is ‘the flower,’ the choicest, the best, and the most excellent in the whole field or garden.

2. The flower of the field is liable to be plucked up or trodden under feet by beasts; Christ was exposed to the rage and fury of his enemies, those ‘strong bulls of Bashan’ of which he complains, Psalm 22:13, 14. This sweet flower was laid hold on by ‘wicked hands,’ and cropped; and still his precious person, blood

and righteousness, are slighted, contemned, and ‘trodden under foot’ by Christless and unconverted sinners.

3. This may be expressive of the meanness of Christ in the esteem of the world; a field-flower is little regarded; Christ is as ‘a root out of a dry ground,’ and therefore they say, ‘he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him: hence he is despised and rejected of men,’ they not knowing the real worth and value of this precious flower; see [-235302>Isaiah 53:2, 3.](#)

4. The flower of the field is not of man’s planting, nor is it raised by his care and industry: Christ was conceived in the womb of a virgin, and born of her without the help of man; as the flower of the field, he had no father but his Father in heaven, and no mother but the virgin on earth; and so was Melchisedek’s antitype, ‘without father as man, and without mother as God.’

5. The flower of the field is open to all; whoever will may come to Christ for life and salvation; there is liberty of access to all sorts of sinners, to come to him and partake of his sweetness and benefits; he is not a flower in an inclosed garden, that cannot be come at, but stands in the open field; every sinner that labors under a sense of sin, and is heavy laden with the weight and burden of it, may come to him, and not fear a rejection from him; he is not ‘a fountain sealed, but opened to the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.’

2dly, Christ may be very well compared to ‘the lily of the vallies,’

1. For its whiteness; the lily, as has been already observed, is exceeding white, which may intend the purity and holiness of Christ, who both in nature and life is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; he is the lamb without blemish and without spot,’ without the blemish of original or spot of actual sin; for he never knew it in his nature, nor did he ever commit it in his life, either in thought, word, or deed: or else the whiteness of the lily may signify his eternity; for so his head and his hairs are described by John, [-660114>Revelation 1:14](#) to be ‘white like wool, as white as snow;’ which represents him as the ancient of days, and as existing from everlasting to everlasting.

2. For its tallness; the lily grows up very high, as has been taken notice of Christ, as mediator, is ‘the rock that is higher than we are; from whence the waters of divine grace flow, to the refreshment of our souls, when overwhelmed ‘he is higher than the kings of the earth; nay, he is higher than the heavens,’ and all the angels there; for he is ‘set far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,’ [-490121>Ephesians 1:21.](#)

3. For its fruitfulness; the lily is very fruitful, as has been before observed. Christ is ‘filled with all the fruits of righteousness,’ and is possessed of all the blessings of grace; he is like a tree richly laden with fruit, and therefore is compared to an apple tree, in verse 3. all the church’s fruit and fruitfulness come from him; he is the green fir-tree, from whom all her ‘fruit is found.’

4. He may be compared to the lily for its excellency and glory; it being the next flower to the rose, and which is preferred by Christ to the glory of Solomon. Christ is the brightness of his father’s glory; is now, in our nature, ‘crowned with glory and honor;’ and will shortly appear in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels.

5. He may be said to be the lily of the vallies, because of his wonderful humility and condescension, in assuming our nature, suffering in our stead, and in humbling himself unto the death of the cross for us; his whole life was one continued series of humility, as was his death an undeniable instance of it: Christ here on earth did not appear as the lofty cedar, but as the lowly lily, and that not of the mountains, but of the vallies; and it is with humble souls he delights to dwell; for though he is the high and lofty one, in his divine nature, yet he condescends to dwell with such who are of an humble and contrite spirit.

Song 2:2 “As the *lily* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L) among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

THOUGH it may not be so evident whose are the former words, whether Christ’s or the church’s, yet these manifestly appear to be his: and if we take the preceding verse as the words of the church, then we may consider this as the words of Christ, either owning and confirming what she had said of herself in it; as that she was indeed the most beautiful of all the roses and lilies which grew in fields and vallies, and that all others were but like thorns and briars when compared to her; and also, at the same time that he owns and commends her beauty, puts her in mind of her present state and condition in this life, as being attended with afflictions, sorrows, and sufferings: or else the words may be regarded as the answer ^{r237} of Christ to her complaint in the former verse, where she says, that she was indeed the blushing rose and charming lily, but then she was as the rose and lily in the open fields and vallies, liable to be plucked up by every one that passed by, and to be devoured or trodden under feet by the beasts of the field; to this Christ replies here, by owning it all to be true, and promising that he will keep and preserve her safe in the midst of her enemies, ‘as the lily among thorns;’ nay, that her very enemies should be her protection, these thorns should be as an hedge about her. But if we take the former verse: o be the words of Christ, which seems most agreeable, then we are to consider these as his also; who, having in the former verse set forth his own beauties and excellencies, which was proper to be done in the first place, does in this set forth his church’s, in which may be observed,

- I. What he compares her to; ‘a lily among thorns.’
- II. The title which he gives her, ‘my love;’ which discovers his regard unto her, and affection for her.
- III. Her excellency and preferableness to all others in his esteem.

I. The church is here compared by Christ to ‘a lily among thorns.’ The Targum renders it, *the rose*; and so it is in Zohar; ^{r238} and that this is intended, some strenuously contend for, which, and not the lily, they say, grows among thorns: Ainsworth would have what we call the *woodbind* or *honey-suckle* here meant, which grows in hedges; and indeed this is sometimes called *lilium inter spinas*, ‘the lily among thorns’ ^{r239} to which the church may be compared, because of its sweet smell; the flower of it gives an exceeding sweet smell; and makes those fields where it grows in abundance very delightful: believers in their persons, grace, and conversation, are like the ‘smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed;’ being clothed with the sweet-smelling garments of Christ’s righteousness, and anointed with the savory ointments of the

Spirit's grace. Also the woodbind or honey-suckle cannot bear up itself, but has its depeadance on others; it does not grow up erect, but for its support wraps itself about the body, branches and twigs of other trees, *convolvens se adminiculis quibuscunque*, as Pliny ^{f240} observes; therefore we call it *woodbind*, from its *binding* about other trees; and for the same reason it is in Greek called *periclymenon*, which is also used by Latin writers: believers are weak, and cannot support themselves, and therefore by faith lean on Christ, who is their beloved; and are upheld by him with the right-hand of his righteousness; they cleave close unto him, and depend upon him for all grace here, and for glory hereafter. But the word will very well bear to be translated *a lily*, being the same that is so in the former verse; where it has been shewn in what sense the church may be compared to one; and therefore I shall only observe,

1. That Christ and the church bear the same names; Is he a lily? so is she; the church being married to Christ, and they too becoming one flesh, have one and the same name; hence the church is called *Christ*, ^{<461212>}1 Corinthians 12:12, so the same name, *Jehovah, our righteousness*, which Christ is called by, ^{<242306>}Jeremiah 23:6, is given to her in chapter ^{<243316>}33:16. Again, Christ is called *Israel*, ^{<234903>}Isaiah 49:3, which is the name of his church and people; for being espoused together, and having partook of each other's natures, they also bear each other's names.

2. That there is a very great likeness and near resemblance between Christ and his church; for when he says, she is 'as the lily,' he means, she is as himself, who is 'the lily of the vallies,' verse 1. and therefore, as one well observes ^{f241} he does not say she is the lily, but as or like the lily; for as he is; so are we, that is, believers, in this world. Christ and the church are both lilies in God's eye, and are loved by him with the same love: believers bear the image of Christ, wear his righteousness, have the same spirit, though in measure, and are exposed to the same hatred, malice, and persecution of the world, being wounded with those thorns even as he was: and they shall be much more like him in another world; for they shall then be like him, and see him as he is; they shall then have everlasting and transforming views of him, which will change them into the same image, from glory to glory; for as they will then have more communion with him, so they will have a greater conformity to him, who is 'the first-born among many brethren.'

3. That all the church's beauty and loveliness come from Christ: it is because he is the lily, that she looks like one; her beauty is not natural to her, but is derived from him, who is her head and husband; she is indeed a perfect beauty, but then it arises from that comeliness Which he has put upon her.

Moreover she is not only said to be as the lily, but 'as the lily among thorns.' By thorns may be meant,

1. Wicked and ungodly men, sons of Belial, which are 'as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands,' 2 Samuel 23:6, these, like thorns and briars, are the curse of the earth; are worthless and unfruitful in themselves, and hurtful and grieving to the saints: David, Isaiah, and others have complained of them; righteous Lot was pricked with these thorns; his soul was vexed and grieved from day to day with their unlawful deeds: also like thorns, their end is to be burned, and that by the fierceness and fury of God's wrath, who says, in Isaiah 27:4 'Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together;' which he will do at the last day, when he will bind up those thorns in bundles, and cast them into 'the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;' where 'the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up, shall they be burnt in the fire;' the terror of which sometimes surprises the sinners in Zion, who therefore say, 'who among us shall dwell

with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Isaiah 33:12-14.

2. By thorns may be meant the reproaches, revilings, and persecutions of wicked men, whereby they afflict and disturb the saints; the Targum explains these thorns, of the wicked edicts and decrees of princes, by which the congregation of Israel was oppressed in captivity: the prophet Ezekiel is encouraged by the Lord faithfully to deliver his message to the people of Israel, the briars and thorns were with him, and though he had his dwelling among scorpions, that is, though he was reproached, reviled, and persecuted by them for it. Christ's lily in all ages has more or less been attended with, and has grown up, among such thorns as these; for every, one that will live godly in Christ Jesus. shall suffer persecution of one kind or another; and yet they abide like 'the lily among thorns,' in their faith, purity, and holiness; so that neither the frowns nor flatteries of the world can prevail upon them to desert the Redeemer's interest, forsake the gospel, nor turn aside from the true worship of God; to which agrees R. Sol. Jarchi's gloss on the text, which is this: 'As the lily among thorns, which prick it, yet stands continually in its beauty and redness; so is my love among the daughters, who intice her to follow after them, and go a whoring after other gods, but yet continues in her religion.'

3. By thorns may be meant heretics and heretical doctrines, which pierce, prick, and grieve the children of God: now these false teachers, these wolves in sheeps clothing, may be known by their fruits, which are none at all, that are good for any thing; for, 'do men gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles!' there is no fruit of faith, sound doctrine, or a gospel- conversation to be found upon them; but are like unfruitful thorns, whom God suffers to grow up in his churches, that those which are filled with the fruits of righteousness might be made manifest; and in all ages, more or less, Christ's lily, the church, has grown up among, and been pricked by, and pestered with such thorns as these.

4. The corruptions of our nature may be called so: these Canaanites remaining in the land, dwelling in our hearts, are pricks in our eyes, and thorns in our sides; these grieve and disturb us, and they make us groan with the anguish our souls are filled with by them. Perhaps the breaking forth of some corruption is intended by the thorn in the flesh, and messenger of Satan, that the apostle speaks of, ^{<471207>}2 Corinthians 12:7, though the temptations of Satan may also be called by these names, which often give the saints a great deal of uneasiness, and throw them into much heaviness; and it may be that both the corruption of nature, and the temptations of Satan, which the apostle might labor under, are intended; and the thorn in the flesh may be expressive of the breaking out of some corruption; and the messenger of Satan may intend his temptations, by which it was stirred up and encouraged: though I rather think that both phrases are only expressive of the corruption of nature, which was wont to be called by the Jews, *the messenger of hell*; a phrase much like this used by the apostle. So in Mi-rash Hanneelam ^{r242} we read that R. Hona, in his sermons, used to advise persons thus, 'O ye children of men, take care of the messenger of hell: but who is this? The evil imagination, (by which the Jews always intend the vitiosity of nature) is the messenger of hell. Now this being a phrase that was well known, the apostle adds it by way of opposition to the thorn in the flesh, as explanative of it, Moreover, world]y cares are compared to thorns which choke the word; they are pernicious .to saints, and make them barren and unfruitful, as well as grieve and disturb them, ^{<401322>}Matthew 13:22, but tho' Christ's lilies here on earth grow up among, and are annoyed by those thorns of sin and corruption; yet when they are transplanted into Christ's garden above, 'there

shall be no more a pricking briar, nor a grieving thorn,' to give them the least disturbance.

II. Whilst Christ is comparing his church to a 'lily among thorns,' he gives her a loving and affectionate title, *my love*, which has been already explained in chapter <220109>1:9 and his mentioning it here shews, that even in her present state and condition she was a beauty in his eye; and that her being among thorns, was so far from detracting from it, that it rather served as a foil to set it off the more; as also, that she was still the object of his love, though in the midst of wicked and ungodly men, men of unclean lips and lives, haters of peace, religion, and godliness; though she was reviled, reproached, and persecuted. by them, yet she was loved, valued, and esteemed by him; nay, though she was attended with many infirmities, sins, and corruptions, that were grieving to her, and dishonoring to him, yet neither these, nor any thing else, should ever separate her from his love: she was Christ's love and lily still, tho' among thorns. The lily is often made use of in this love-song, to set forth the beauty of the church and of the saints in the eye of Christ; and his great love. to them, and delight in them, and very justly

III. He sets forth her excellency and preferableness to all the daughters. By whom we are to understand the nations and men of the world; for it is usual in the Hebrew tongue to call the inhabitants of countries the daughters thereof; thus we read of the daughters of Tyre, Edom, Babylon, etc. none of which are to be compared with the church; these are like thorns to Christ's lily: or else carnal, hypocritical, and formal professors may be intended, whom she calls in chapter <220106>1:6 *mother's children*; who made an external profession of religions but wanted that real and internal beauty which she was possessed of, and differed only in name from the rest of the sons and daughters of fallen Adam; but she, being distinguished by divine grace from them all, was preferable to them,

- 1.** In beauty; these looked like thorns, she like a lily; they were black and uncomely, she the perfection of beauty, and the fairest among women.
- 2.** In harmlessness; though there are thorns about, yet none upon the lily: ungodly persons are not only uncomely in themselves, but like thorns, pricking and hurtful to others; but as for the saints, they are 'blameless and harmless, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,' like lilies among thorns.
- 3.** In fruitfulness: no fruit grows on thorns, but on Christ's lilies grow all sorts of precious fruit; they are laden with them.
- 4.** In their last end Christ's lilies will be gathered by himself and his angels, and be put in his garden above; but the wicked, which are Satan's tares and thorns, shall be bundled together, and cast into everlasting burnings; the one being highly valued and prized by Christ. the other hated and rejected by him; for as much as the lily exceeds the thorns which grow about it, so much does the church of Christ excel the men of the world among; whom it is here on earth; and as there is a difference now between them, though growing up together, so there will be one, and that far greater and more visible when separated; the one will be everlastingly glorified, the other everlastingly punished.

Song 2:3 “As the *apple tree* (*Prunus armeniaca* L, No. 124) among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

CHRIST having commended the church in the former verse, and declared that she was as preferable to all others, as the lily was to the thorns; she in this verse returns the commendation to him, and asserts that he as much excelled all the sons, as the fruitful apple-tree did the wild and barren trees of the wood; ^{f244} and at the same time gives an account of that sweet experience she had of his excellency, preciousness, and usefulness to her. Now in the words may be observed,

- I. A comparison which she makes of him to an apple-tree; in which she sets forth his excellency and preferableness to all others.
- II. She instances in two particular things; in which, by good experience, she found him to be so to her own soul.

First, The shadow of this apple-tree was delightful to her; ‘I sat down under his shadow with great delight.’

Secondly, The fruit thereof was exceeding sweet to her; ‘his fruit was sweet to my taste.’

I. She compares him to an apple-tree, and that no doubt of the best sort. The Targum renders it, a *pome-citron*, or *citron-apple, tree*: which,

1. Is a very large tree; ^{f245} and so may be fitly used to express the greatness and excellency of Christ, who is possessed of all divine perfections, and is ‘over all, God blessed for ever.’ He is a Savior, and a great One; who has, as an instance of his great love, condescension and power, wrought out a great salvation for great sinners. He is an high priest, and he is a great one, both in the glory of his person, and in the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice and intercession. He is the king of saints, and as such is higher than the kings of the earth: He is equal with God, therefore greater than angels, and more excellent than all the sons of men.

2. It is a very fruitful tree; it is sometimes so full of fruit, that it is even pressed down with the weight thereof ^{f246} and is, as Pliny says ^{f247} *omnibus boris pomifera*, ‘always bearing fruit:’ it has at one and the same time ¹⁶⁹

flowers, ripe and unripe fruit; whilst some are putting forth, others are dropping off; so Christ abounds with the fruits of divine grace; he is not the barren fig-tree, but the green fir-tree, from whom our fruit is found, and that at all times; for he is that ‘tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations,’ ^{<662202>} Revelation 22:2. Here may believers come at all times, and pluck and eat; for here is not any deficiency of fruit, it is always growing, always plucking, and yet never lessened.

3. The fruit of this tree ^{f248} is of a bitter taste, but of an exceeding sweet smell, as are also the leaves; which being put among garments, not only give them a delightful odor, but also drive away noxious creatures from them; for the same reason is Christ compared to myrrh in chapter ^{<220113>} 1:13; for tho’ his sacrifice, death and sufferings, are sweet and savory, both to his Father and to his people, yet they were

bitter unto him, who not only tasted of, but drank up the whole cup of his Father's wrath: and though the blessings which spring from hence are of a sweet smell, exceeding grateful and delightful to believers, yet are they enjoyed in this life with a variety of crosses, afflictions, and: tribulations; this passover-lamb is eaten with bitter herbs.

4. It is an excellent remedy against poison. ^{r249} Sin is that poison of asps which has infected all human nature, and spread itself over all the powers and faculties of the souls of men, as well as over all the members of their bodies: now Christ is the sovereign antidote against it; this fruit of the citron-apple-tree is the most pro, per remedy for it; his righteousness justifies, his blood cleanses, and his grace will eternally clear his people from their sins.

5. It is very good for shortness of breath, and to remove a stinking one; ^{r250} hence the Parthian nobles used to boil the kernels of it in their food for that purpose: it is the presence of Christ, and communion with him, that only can cure our panting souls when we are wearied, and almost out of breath in seeking him; and it is the sweet incense of his mediation that perfumes our prayers, which are the breath of our souls, and which otherwise would be so far from being grateful to God, that it would be strange unto him. And thus may Christ be compared to a citron-apple-tree; though perhaps the common apple-tree is here intended, which the Talmud ^{r251} interprets of the Israelites, but R. Aben Ezra understands it of the shecinah, as do the Targum and R. Sol. Jarchi of the holy and blessed God, and Lord of the world; as also does R. Chaya, in the book Zohar: ^{r252} who says, that the congregation of Israel set forth the praises of the holy and blessed God by an apple, because of its colors, smell and taste; so the Cabalistic doctors interpret it of *tiphereth*, or the bridegroom,, because of the same. ^{r253} Christ is this shecinah, the holy and blessed God, and Lord of the world, who may be compared to an apple-tree,

(1.) Because it is a very fruitful tree. There are various sorts of fruit which it bears; Christ is full of fruit; he is Joseph's antitype, who is called 'a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the mall:' all the fruits of righteousness grow on him, every grace is in him; he is that 'tree of life which bears twelve manner of fruits;' there are justifying and pardoning grace, sanctifying and adopting grace in him; all that a believer can want here, and all that can make him happy hereafter: and as fruitful boughs bend downwards, being laden with fruit, and may be easily reached, so Christ, being full of grace and truth, gives to sinners the utmost liberty of access to him for grace from him; for though as God, he is 'the high and lofty one,' yet as man and mediator, he is meek and lowly, and condescends to take notice of, and admits into familiarity, poor, mean, and abject creatures; he gives them a gracious allowance to approach near unto him; that apple-tree, whose fruitful boughs of divine grace hang so low, that the hand of faith may easily reach them, where the poor sinner is heartily welcome to pluck and eat at pleasure.

(2.) It is of a very beautiful aspect when laden with fruit, and especially as growing among the trees of the forest. Some have thought that the fruit of this tree is what was forbidden our first parents; which being so 'pleasant to the eyes,' was a temptation to the woman to eat thereof; therefore is in Latin called *malum*, *evil*, because sin entered into the world hereby: though others think it was another sort of fruit. The Jewish writers differ much about it; some say it was the fig-tree, so R. Sol. Jarchi, and some others in R. Aben Ezra on ^{<010306>}Genesis 3:6 which they gather from Adam

and Eve's immediate sewing of fig-leaves together, as soon as they had sinned, to cover themselves with: others, that it was the pome-citron, or citron-apple tree, so Baal Hatturim in [Genesis 1:29](#) but the same author on [Numbers 5:3](#), seems to intimate as if it was the grape, the fruit of the vine; which is also the opinion of the Jews in Zohar [f254](#) who think that it is particularly the black grape: though others have thought it to be the apple, as the author of the old Nizzachon [f255](#) which was either his own and the opinion of some other Jews, or else he took it from the common notion of Christians. But whether it was the apple-tree or no, which was so pleasant and desirable to the eyes of the woman, yet it is certain that this is very pleasant and delightful to the sight, when laden with fruit. Christ as mediator is a beautiful sight to believers, as he stands in all his endearing characters and relations; as he may be viewed undertaking their cause, assuming their nature, suffering, bleeding, and dying in their stead, rising again for their justification, ascending into heavens and entering there with their names and persons upon his hearts and there ever living to make intercession for them: Christ, as possessed of all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, being the surety, mediator, and messenger of it., is exceeding delightful to the eye of faith; 'his glory is as the glory of the only begotten of the Fathers' when he appears to souls full of grace and truth.

(3.) The fruit which grows upon the apple-tree, as it is of various sorts, and of a beautiful aspect to the eye, so it is of a cooling and comforting nature. Christ has cooled, turned away, and appeased the fierceness of his father's fiery wrath, by his death and blood; and does by his mighty grace sweetly cool and refresh the heart of a poor sinner, inflamed by a fiery law, and commands serenity and peace in its conscience, filled with wrath and terror; and when his people are ready to faint and sink, he comforts them with his apples, the sweet discoveries of his love and grace, of which the church having had some experience, and desiring some renewed instances thereof, says, in verse 5 'comfort me with apples;' where I shall more largely take notice of this, as well as of their pleasant and delightful smell.

(4.) The apple-tree has been accounted an hieroglyphic of love; [f256](#) under it lovers used to meet, with the fruit thereof they entertained each other, under its delightful shade they sat; to which perhaps an allusion is not only made in this verse, but also in chapter [8:5](#). 'I raised thee up under the apple-tree.' Christ and his church are throughout this song introduced as lovers, and the subject of their whole conversation is love: He who if the apple-tree is the church's beloved, whom she loves and prefers before all others; it is his love her soul is ravished with; his fruit she feeds upon; his shade that she with so much content and pleasure sits under, where she is delighted with his love and grace, and sensibly feels her soul all enamored with him, Some other things might have been taken notice of, particularly the fruit and shadow of this tree, which are both mentioned in the text; but these will be considered under another head.

Now Christ, whom the church here compares to an apple-tree, is by her preferred to all others; and she signifies, that as much as the apple-tree excels the wild and unfruitful trees of the wood, so much does Christ excel all the sons: by whom may be meant either the angels, so the Targum, who are by creation the sons of God; but not in so high and eminent a sense as Christ is: he has a more excellent name and

nature than they; as God, he is their Lord and Creator, and the object of their highest worship and adoration; and as Mediator, they are obliged unto him, being upheld and secured by his grace in that state wherein they are; and though in his human nature he was made a little lower than they, yet now in the very same nature he is exalted above them; for ‘to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit at my right-hand.’ Or else by them may be meant the saints, who are the sons of God by adopting grace: Christ, the eternal son of God has the preeminence in, and over these; he is their Creator and Redeemer, their lord and king, their head and husband, their everlasting father and glorious mediator, to whom they are infinitely obliged for all the needful supplies of grace here, and for all the glory they expect hereafter. Or else by them may be meant the men of the world, the sons of Adam; and these Christ infinitely excels, as much as the apple-tree does the trees of the wood; for he is ‘fairer than the children of men;’ there is none like him in all the armies of heaven, nor any to be compared with him among all the inhabitants of the earth; if both worlds were to be searched with the utmost scrutiny, not one single individual person could be found comparable to him: and perhaps, particularly by these may be meant the great princes and monarchs of the world, who are sometimes in scripture compared to large and lofty trees; see <263103>Ezekiel 31:3, 5, 6, 8, <270420>Daniel 4:20-22. But Christ is far preferable to these in beauty, glory and majesty; he is ‘higher than the kings of the earth, they receive their crowns and kingdoms from him;’ they are at his command, and under his dominion; he sets them up, and puts them down at pleasure; these must all submit to his awful judgment, even as the poorest peasant; and will be equally as fearful of ‘the great day of his wrath,’ which when come, they will call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of this omnipotent Judge. Moreover, with respect to the saints, the fruits of Christ’s grace are to them far preferable to the kingdoms, crowns, and sceptres of the greatest monarchs, nay, reproach, for Christ’s sake, is more highly esteemed of by them, and accounted greater riches than all the treasures of this world. Though it seems as well to be understood in general of all wicked, Christless, and unconverted sinners, who are like to the trees of the wood, wild, barren, and unfruitful; and what fruit they do bring forth, is sour, wild, and unprofitable; and though like the trees of the wood, they may run up a great height, yet they shall be cut down and thrown into everlasting burnings: for, ‘the ax is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire,’ <400310>Matthew 3:10. Thus the church, by this comparison, sets forth the excellency and preferableness of Christ to all others. But,

II. She instances in two excellent properties of this apple-tree, of which she had had some comfortable experience.

First, The shade of it was delightful to her; ‘I sat down under his shadow with great delight.’

Secondly, The fruit of it was sweet unto her; ‘his fruit was sweet to my taste.’

First, The shade of this apple-tree was very delightful to her; ‘I sat down under his shadow with great delight:’ in which may be inquired, 1st, What is meant by the shadow under which she sat. 2dly, What her sitting there intends or supposes. 3dly, What she desired to sit there for. 4thly, From whence that pleasure and delight arose, which she was filled with.

1st, It will be proper to inquire what is meant by the shadow of Christ, under which she sat. Some [f257](#) have thought that the ceremonial law, with its festivals, is here intended, which was a shadow of good things to

come, of which Christ was the sum and substance; under this shadow the Old Testament saints sat during the legal dispensation: where their souls were much delighted and sweetly refreshed by viewing Christ, represented in the types and sacrifices of that law. The Targum understands it of the shadow of God's shechinah, or divine majesty, under which the congregation of Israel desired to sit, when God gave the law on mount Sinai: but that dispensation was not so desirable; the law which was then given, was a fiery one; and the words which were then spoke were such, that they that heard them, intreated that they should not be spoken to them any more: therefore it may be better understood of the gospel and the ordinances of it, than either of the moral or ceremonial law; under this refreshing shadow saints delight to sit; here they enjoy sweet communion and fellowship with Christ; the sound of the gospel is joyful to them; the truths and doctrines of it are nourishing; the ordinances of it are comfortable and delightful; these tabernacles are amiable and lovely; and all wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness; and therefore it is no wonder that souls desire to sit under this shadow, and when they do, it is with delight.

Moreover, some ^{r258} think that an allusion is here made to the nuptial ceremony of spreading the skirt; used by the Jews at the time of marriage; of which, see ^{<080309>}Ruth 3:9 and to which an allusion is made in ^{<261608>}Ezekiel 16:8 or to that veil; which being borne up with four rods or staves, was carried over the heads of the new-married couple, at the time that the bridegroom brought home the bride into his own house, where the whole solemnity was finished; this nuptial ceremony perhaps may give the best light to Luke 1:35 'the Holy' Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee:' so that this phrase of sitting under Christ's shadow, may be expressive of the church's being married to Christ, and of that delightful communion which she enjoys with him as her husband, when brought home to his own house; of which we have an account an the next verse, where she is entertained after a noble manner; and has as much of his love manifested to her, as she is capable of bearing, nay so much, that she is overcome with it. But! rather think that the metaphor is continued from the former part of the verse; and that the allusion is made to the shadow of an apple-tree, such an one as Christ was; whose shadow arises from his person, blood and righteousness; which shadow is,

1. A protecting one from heat; such as Jonah's gourd was to him, or as the pillar of cloud was to the Israelites in the wilderness, or as a great rock to a weary traveler in a hot country. Christ and his righteousness are a shadow, which protect souls from the heat of his Father's wrath; he, by making atonement for sin, and satisfaction to divine justice, hath delivered his own people from the wrath to come, and will eternally screen them from it; for though showers of divine. wrath will fall on Christless sinners, yet those that are under this shadow of Christ's righteousness, shall not have one drop of it fall on them; for being justified by his blood, they shall be saved from wrath through him; also it is this, laid hold on by faith, which screens from the curses of a fiery law, and from the heat of that wrath which it sometimes works in the conscience; which is only rightly removed by the sprinklings of that blood which speaks peace and pardon, and by the application of that righteousness which justifies from all sin, and produces a peace which passeth all understanding: likewise Christ is the shadow which protects and shelters from the fiery darts of Satan; he is as a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones, those fiends of hell, is as a storm against the wall; his blood and righteousness keep off Satan's fiery darts, preserve from his suggestions, and protect from the violence of his temptations; and the soul is still

more secured by the prevalent mediation, and intercession of Christ in heaven, which is founded upon his blood and righteousness; so that what faith makes use of on earth to oppose to Satan's temptations, Christ does in heaven to secure his people from his false charges and accusations: to this might also be added, that he is the shadow which protects from the heat of persecution, under which he causes his flock to rest at noon; when this sun smites them with the greatest violence, he is then their shade on their right hand, so that the sun shall not smite them by day; and this is their comfort and support under all their fiery trials, that they have such a shadow to have recourse to.

2. It is also a refreshing one; for if it is a shadow from the heat of God's wrath, the terrors of the law, the temptations of Satan, and the persecutions of the world, it must needs be so; what can be more refreshing to a weary traveler, that is almost scorched, and ready to faint with heat, than a cooling and delightful shade? So refreshing is Christ to poor sinners, who is as 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;' nay, is a large spreading apple-tree, that at once furnishes them with an agreeable shelter and suitable provisions.

3. It is a fructifying one; the shadows of some trees, as Pliny ^{r259} informs us, are very hurtful and noxious to some plants that grow under them, and others are very nourishing and fructifying: Christ's shadow is such an one; for 'they that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon,' ^{<281408>}Hosea 14:8 and indeed all the fruitfulness of those who are the Lord's planting comes from Christ; for, unless they abide in and under him, they can bring forth no fruit. The shadows of some trees are injurious to men that lie under them; ^{r260} not so Christ's shadow; but there are others ^{r261} very delightful and wholesome, to which he may be compared.

2dly, It may also be inquired what her sitting under this shadow is expressive of, or does suppose. And,
176

1. It shews the sense she had of herself, and present condition, and the need she stood in of Christ as a shadow; she was not only scorched with the sun of persecution, with afflictions, temptations, etc. but she was likewise sensible thereof, and therefore betook herself to a proper shade.

2. It manifestly appears from her sitting under this shadow, that she looked upon Christ to be a suitable one for her in such cases; and that as the idolaters in ^{<280413>}Hosea 4:13. sacrificed on mountains, and burnt incense under oaks, poplars and elms, 'because the shadow thereof was good;' so the church here sat under this shadow of Christ's, because she looked upon it to be a good one, and preferable to all others.

3. It is expressive of her faith and confidence in Christ: the vain confidence of the Israelites in an arm of flesh, is called their 'trust in the shadow of Egypt,' ^{<233002>}Isaiah 30:2, 3. and the holy confidence and faith of God's children in him, is frequently called a 'trusting in the shadow of his wings;' see Psalm. 36:7 and 57:1 which seems to be the same with sitting under it here: the church did not sit idle under Christ, but her faith was in exercise upon him; and she was rejoicing alone in him, having 'no confidence in the flesh.'

4. It seems to intimate that security, peace, quietness, and satisfaction of soul, she enjoyed; here she sat as under her own vine and fig-tree, and none to make her afraid; where, being safe and secure from all her enemies, she solaced herself under this delightful shade, enjoying much peace of conscience, and

satisfaction of mind; for she did not sit here with any manner of uneasiness, but with the utmost delight and pleasure.

5. It denotes her continuance here; faith takes up its dwelling in Christ; it will not move from hence, and is desirous of always enjoying sensible communion with him; 'he that dwelleth in the secret of the most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty,' ^{<199101>}Psalm 91:1. But,

3dly, What was it she desired to sit here for? For thus may the words be rendered, 'I desired, and I sat down'; ^{f262} that is, I desired to sit down, and I did sit down, I had what I wished for; and what was that? no doubt, protection from heat, rest and refreshment for her weary and fainting soul; that she might be comforted with those apples which grew on this tree, and be revived by tasting of and feeding upon the sweet fruit thereof, as well as be comforted with its delightful shade. **4thly,** She sat here with delight; and indeed it could not be otherwise when its shade was so agreeable, and the fruit so sweet: this pleasure and delight of hers arose from the enjoyment of Christ's presence, 'in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore;' from the discoveries of his love to her soul, which is better than life, and all the comforts of it; and were had in the exercise of faith upon him, in the actings of which grace the soul is filled with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

Secondly, The fruit of this apple-tree was sweet unto her taste: by this fruit are either meant the fruit of his doings, what his hands have wrought out, and his blood has procured for sinners, even all the blessings of grace, such as peace and reconciliation, justification, sanctification, pardon of sin, adoption, nearness of access to God, etc. or else, the fruit of his lips; such as his word and gospel, preached by himself, which is sweet to a believer's taste, and is preferred to his necessary food; his promises, which are exceeding great and precious, and are highly valued by believers, for his mouth is most sweet, from whence they proceed; and his ordinances and corn, mands, in which they enjoy sweet communion with him, and have the discoveries of his love to their souls; and therefore 'are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey or the honey-comb.'

These are called his fruits; they are his in a covenant-way; all the blessings of grace, which make up the everlasting covenant, are in Christ's hands, and at his dispose, being placed there for that purpose by God the Father; and they are also his, being procured by him; for though they are all the gifts of free grace, yet are they all obtained by Christ, and come to us through his blood: likewise they may be said to be his, because in his possession; every grace in its fullness is in him, he is full of grace and truth, and is communicated to us from him, for from him all our fruit is found; remission of sin, justifying righteousness, adopting grace, etc. come to us through and by him; and we are indulged with the gospel-promises and ordinances, as instances of his grace to us.

Now these are all sweet to the taste of a believer, though not to a natural man who hath a vitiated taste, and calls evil good, and good evil; puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; he savors the things of the flesh; sin is his food, from whence he receives an imaginary pleasure; and therefore disrelishes all spiritual things, looks upon them as poor and insipid, and finds no more taste in them than in the white of an egg; which arises from the predominancy of sin, that hinders from tasting any sweetness in divine things, and will do so whilst their taste remains in them; and their scent is not changed: but as for a spiritual man he savors the things of the Spirit, and disrelishes others; sin is rendered odious, bitter, and

unpleasant to him; it is in some measure expelled, so that he can taste that the Lord is gracious; and therefore every thing he says or does is sweet unto him; for as his taste can discern perverse things, so it can relish spiritual ones; such as the fruit before-mentioned is, which grows upon and drops from the apple-tree, Christ Jesus: this delightful shade and excellent fruit, which believers find in Christ, render him very acceptable to them, and preferable to all others. Now when souls at any time have some experience of Christ's love and grace, in such a way and manner, it is very proper to speak of it, for the glory of Christ, and the encouragement of other souls, as the church does here; which she also continues to do in the following verse, where she meets with a larger display of it.

Song 2:5 “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with *apples* (*Prunus armeniaca* L, No. 124): for I am sick of love.”

THE church being brought into Christ's banqueting-house, or house of wine, and having there such large discoveries of his love, she falls into a deliquium or fainting fit, not being able to bear up under the present enjoyment; and therefore calls to her friends and acquaintance that were about her, to give her their assistance in her present circumstances. In these words may be considered,

I. The church's case and condition in which she was; 'sick of love.'

II. What relief she asks for.

1st, To be 'stayed with flagons,'

2dly, To be 'comforted with apples.'

III. Who the persons are to whom she makes application.

II. To consider what it is she calls for to relieve her at this time.

Ist, Her request is, that some person or other would stay her with flagons. The word translated *flagons* is differently rendered by interpreters; some render it flowers, as Jerom and the Vulgate Latin; and so she may be considered as having reference to sweet flowers bound up in nosegays, the odor of which is very refreshing and reviving; or, 'make me to lie down in flowers,' so Symmachus; according to Plato ^{r271} love delights to be in odoriferous places; where there are sweet-smelling flowers, there is its habitation, and there it abides. Now the church being in love, says, stay me, revive, or support me with flowers; perhaps chiefly regarding Christ, who is the only strength and support of believers, who only can keep them both from failing and fainting; for having heard him speak of himself under the names of those delightful flowers, the rose and lily, in verse 1. she is desirous that she might be stayed by, and supported with them': the Septuagint render the words thus, 'strengthen me with ointments;' ^{r272} by which may be meant the graces of Christ, which are called so in chapter ^{<220103>}1:3 ointments were used at feasts, and are of a chearing, reviving, and strengthening nature; and may very well express the grace of Christ, by which souls are cheared, revived, established, strengthened and settled: our translators have rendered it flagons, and that very well; for according to the best Jewish writers ^{r273} it signifies vessels in which either wine or fine flower are put; and perhaps may be comprehensive of all the entertainments of a banquet, which are proper to satisfy, delight, and exhilarate; and wine being a principal one, may chiefly intend flagons of

that; see <131603>1 Chronicles 16:3, <280301>Hosea 3:10; flagons are, by a metonymy, put for wine contained in them, as the cup is, <422220>Luke 22:20, for the church was desirous of those that were full and not empty; such as were full of the wine of Christ's love, which is as reviving, cheating, and refreshing as the best wine; and which greatly strengthens and supports the animal spirits.

¶274 In what sense Christ's love may be compared to wine, and is preferable to it, has been shewn on chapter <220102>1:2, and by flagons of it may be meant the doctrines of grace, in which Christ's love is displayed; or the ordinances of the gospel, by which it is communicated to the saints; and may also intimate, that though the love and grace of Christ are given forth in measure to them, yet that they are large measures, which believers are desirous of receiving; those who have most grace, would have still more; and those who have the greatest sense of Christ's love, would have a larger experience of it, and are not content without it; they are like 'the two daughters of the horse-leech, crying, give, give:' and it may be also, that the church may have in view the glories and joys of another world; where she should have her fill of love, drink freely and plentifully of this wine new with Christ in his Father's kingdom, and continue in the uninterrupted enjoyment of his presence. Now it ought to be observed, that she is desirous of more of that which had brought her into this condition: Christ's love had wounded her, and that only could heal her; what had brought her into this sick and fainting condition, could only bring her out of it; this wounds and heals, kills and makes alive, and is the only reviving cordial.

2dly, She desires that she might be 'comforted with apples;' as in the former request, she had a regard to the banqueting-house, where she now was; so in this to the apple-tree, whose delicious fruit she had lately tasted, Apples are of a cooling and comforting nature, ¶275 and are good against a syncope and palpitation of the heart, and the smell of them is very reviving: Solinus ¶276 tells us of a certain people who eat no food, but *odore vivunt pomorum sylvestrium*, live by the smell of apples that grow in woods; and that when they go long journies, carry them with them, *ut olfactu alantur*, that by the smell of them they may be nourished and sustained. The words may be rendered, 'strew me with apples'; ¶277 strew them about me, and strew them under me: the apple was an emblem of love, as before observed; to send or throw an apple to another, was a sign of love ¶278 and must be still more so, to strew them about in quantities. By these apples may be meant, either the blessings of grace procured by the blood of Christ, which remove the fierceness of divine wrath, and being powerfully applied by the Spirit of God, do abundantly comfort and refresh the soul: or else the doctrines of the gospel, when fitly spoken, and fitly applied, are like 'apples of gold in pictures of silver;' how comfortable and reviving are the doctrines of justification, pardon, perseverance! etc. the church had found them so by good experience, and therefore desires them. The Targum, by flagons, understands the words of the law; and by apples, the interpretations of them; which, it says, are sweet to the taste as the apples of the garden of Eden: but it is much better to understand the, n, as we have done, of the doctrines of the gospel, which have often been experienced to have relieved persons in a fainting condition, such as the church was now in; and who knowing the virtue and efficacy thereof, calls for them. And,

Song 2:13 “The *fig tree* (1. *Ficus carica* L. 1a. *F. carica* var. *silvestris* Nees, No. 110) putteth forth her green figs, and the *vines* with the tender *grape* (*Vitis vinifera* L. No. 111) give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

To the three former evidences of the spring, here are added two more.

- I. ‘The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs.’
- II. ‘The vines with the tender grape give a good smell.’ As also,
- III. The former call is repeated, ‘Arise my love, my fair one, and come away.’

I. As a fourth evidence of the winter being over, and the spring being come, Christ tells his church, that the fig tree was putting forth her green figs; which is a full confirmation of its being come, nay, of its being pretty well advanced; for Christ, in [Matthew 24:32](#). makes it a sign of the summer’s being at hand, when the fig-tree shoots out its tender branches, and puts forth its leaves: Theopompus [f331](#) speaks of figs in the middle of the spring; and Plutarch, of the vernal leaves of the fig-tree [f332](#) R. Aben Ezra thinks, that the word translated, ‘putteth forth,’ signifies the sweetening of the figs, and so points out the time when the green or unripe figs begin to grow sweet and eatable: so that as the flowery fields would be [221](#) delightful to her eye, and the chirping birds affect her ear; there were also figs ripening apace to please her taste; as the vines with the tender grape in the following instance, would give a refreshing odor to her smell; all which would be very entertaining to her, and one would think enough to invite her to arise and go with him. By the fig-tree, both the Targum and R. Aben Ezra understand the congregation of Israel; who they say, is here compared unto it; as indeed Israel is to the first ripe fruit of this tree, [280910](#) Hosea 9:10 and the godly among the captive Jews are, in [242402](#) Jeremiah 24:2-5. and therefore by. it may be meant the saints, putting forth their grace in exercise on Christ; who may be compared to fig-trees for the following reasons.

1. The fig-tree is a tree full of large leaves, so large, that our first parents, after their fall, by sewing them together, made themselves aprons to cover their nakedness; which may be an emblem of a profession of religion, and of a conversation agreeable to it; which, though they ought to be found in us, yet are not sufficient to cover us; for we must also have Christ’s righteousness put upon us, and his grace wrought in us, otherwise we shall be like the fig-tree, to which Christ came, [402119](#) Matthew 21:19 ‘and found nothing thereon but leaves only,’ And therefore, as the saints are like fig- trees that have the large ever-green and flourishing leaves of a Christian profession and gospel-conversation upon them; so,

2. They may be compared to them for their fruitfulness: the fig-tree is a tree that bears fruit as well as leaves, and that which is very wholesome, pleasant, and delightful; and if the Egyptian fig-tree is meant, that is said [f333](#) to bear fruit seven times a year, and as soon as you gather one fig, immediately there is another: it is true, there are barren fig-trees, that have no fruit upon them; such an one is mentioned in Luke 13:6, 7, as there are also barren professors; but such are not the saints, who are filled and laden with the fruits of righteousness, and graces of the spirit, which they receive from Christ Jesus, from whom all their fruit is found: now as this is to be found from none but him, so neither is it found in any but in them; for, ‘do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?’ it is impossible; this fruit appears upon no other

tree but the fig-tree, and therefore by their fruits ye may know them.

3. It is a tree that puts forth its fruit before its leaves which shews us, that though we ought to have the leaves of profession upon us yet the fruit of grace ought to precede it; and therefore when persons take upon them a profession of religion, and submit to the ordinances of Christ, care should be taken that they, as John says, ^{<400307>}Matthew 3:7, both have and bring forth fruits meet for repentance: there must be faith in the heart, as well as a confession of it in the mouth; and the one ought to go before the other; and both these make souls to appear honorable believers and professors; and such Christ's fig-trees are.

4. It may not be amiss to observe, that the Egyptian fig-tree, which is no other than the sycamore, into which Zaccheus climbed to see Christ, ^{<421904>}Luke 19:4 may be here intended, seeing that there was great plenty of them in Judea, as is manifest from ^{<111027>}1 Kings 10:27 though it is true, another word is used here, than what is there. Now of this tree, Pliny says ^{f335} that when it is cut down and cast into the water, it sinks, being dry; but when it is thorough wet, it will swim: so saints, when they first enter the waters of affliction, like Peter, they sink; but when they have been more used to them, they lift up their heads above the waters of tribulation; and as good soldiers, with courage and magnanimity of mind, endure hardness; and do not sink in their spirits under the weight of reproaches, persecutions, and afflictions, laid upon them, being supported and borne up by Christ and his grace,

5. The same author ^{f336} says, that this kind of fig-tree will not ripen any other way than by scratching it with iron hooks: men do not begin to grow in grace, or become fruitful in good works, until their hearts are pricked with the goads and nails of God's word, or till the fallow ground of their hearts is thrown up by the Spirit of God; nor will they grow afterwards to any purpose, unless Christ's Father, who is the husbandman, takes his pruning-knife in his hand, and uses it: and indeed some saints never grow better than when they are attended with tribulations and afflictions, like the people of Israel, in Egypt, or like Christ's lilies among thorns.

Moreover the green figs, which the fig-tree is said to put forth may intend,

(1.) The beginnings of grace in the soul, which are like the young, green and unripe figs: that the fig, tree first puts forth; such as stirrings of affection to Christ, desires after a saving knowledge of him, and interest in him, pantings and breathings after the ordinances of Christ, and love to his people: all which appear very soon in the soul, and discover the work of grace begun, though as yet it is but very imperfect. For,

(2.) These green and unripe figs shew the imperfection of grace in the saints; grace in the best is very imperfect in this state of life, much more must it be when it is first put forth; the work of grace in us, though it will be performed, yet at present is but a begun one, and not a finished one: saints are not arrived to the perfection they shall; they are but like green figs, and especially young converts.

(3.) These beginnings of grace in the soul, being compared to green figs, shew, that grace is liable to be lost, and would be so, was it not for the almighty power which preserves it and increases it; for of all fruit, none is more easily shaken off by the wind and lost, than green and unripe figs are; see ^{<340312>}Nahum 3:12. it is no less than a miracle of grace, that those first impressions are not wholly erased by the impetuous force of corruptions within; or that these precious blossoms are not

intirely blown off by the blustering winds of Satan's temptations; or that our naughty hearts do not of themselves, as the fig- tree, cast off this unripe fruit: this is all owing to mighty, powerful, and efficacious grace.

(4.) It may also be observed, that grace, though imperfect, is taken notice of by Christ; yea, in the very infancy of it, as soon as ever it begins to appear, even when in its bud and blossom: so far is he from despising the day of small things; where there is but little grace and little strength, as in the church of Philadelphia, he observes it, and does not crush it, but increases it; for 'a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoaking flax shall he not quench,' <234203>Isaiah 42:3.

(5.) It may be remarked from hence, that grace being in exercise in others, though weak, should be an argument and motive to excite and stir up ours; and indeed it is disgraceful and dishonorable to old professors, for young converts to be more active and lively in the exercise of grace than they. Christ seems to press this argument here upon the church.

Again, the putting forth these green figs, signifies the exercise of grace on Christ, which saints put forth unto him, not by virtue of a power of their own, hut by virtue of his grace, which enables them to do it; for the putting forth of these green figs, is owing to the warming and quickening influences of the Sun of righteousness: the beginning, increase, and perfection of grace, are all from Christ; the implantation of it in the soul, and the exercise of it, depend upon him. But,

II. As a fifth and last evidence of the spring's being come and which puts it beyond all doubt, is, the flourishing of the vines, 'the vines, with the tender grape, give a good smell.' Fig-trees and vines are frequently mentioned together in scripture, as in <19A533>Psalm 105:33. <330404>Micah 4:4 and in many other places; and one reason is, because they grew together; for fig-trees were planted in vineyards, as is manifest from <421306>Luke 13:6. nay, it is judged by naturalists, f337 to be very proper they should grow together: one sort of figs, the black fig, is called the sister of the vine. f338

By *vines* may be meant, the several distinct congregated churches of Christ, or else particular believers, see <198014>Psalm 80:14, 15. <230507>Isaiah 5:7 and 27:3 who may be called so,

1. Because of their fruitfulness: the vine is a fruit-bearing tree, it produces very fine and excellent fruit; especially the vines in the land of Canaan did, of which there is a famous instance in <041323>Numbers 13:23 saints being ingrafted in Christ Jesus, the true vine, and receiving life and nourishment from him, do, by abiding in him, bring forth much fruit, and such as is not to be found in others; not wild and sour grapes, such as Christ's Father takes no delight in, but such as he is pleased with, and glorified by.

2. Because of their dependence on Christ: the vine-tree does not grow up erect of itself; for if it is not fixed to a wall with nails f339 or supported by something else which it lays hold on, it creeps along the ground: saints do not grow up erect of themselves, but lean upon Christ, are supported by him, and so grow up in him.

3. For their tallness in Christ: vines being propped, will run up a great height; saints being ingrafted in, and upheld by Christ, who is himself higher than the heavens, grow up from shrubs to taller trees; from babes in Christ, to 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;' and, by virtue of grace and strength, received from him, arise from a low and mean state and condition unto a much higher one, until

at length they arrive unto the full possession of the ‘prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’

4. For their weakness and unusefulness in themselves; the vine is a weak tree, and, as has been observed, cannot bear up itself: saints, they are weak in themselves, though strong in Christ; they can do nothing of themselves; neither perform duties, subdue corruptions, nor withstand temptations; but they’ can do all things through Christ strengthening them.’ The wood of the vine is of very little worth or use, as appears from <261501>Ezekiel 15:2, 3 and is obvious enough to every one’s observation: saints are but poor, worthless, and unprofitable creatures of themselves; their best works and most excellent performances, are neither profitable to God, nor can they procure salvation to themselves; but are all as an unclean thing, and as filthy rags; they are unworthy of the least mercy they enjoy, and therefore it is a wonder of grace that God should in any respect be mindful of them.

5. For their durableness: though the wood of the vine is but weak and worthless, yet it is said to be very lasting and durable; Pliny ascribes eternity to it, and says of it f339a *nec est ligno ulli aternior natura, no wood is of a more eternal or durable nature than this is*: saints, however weak and worthless in themselves, yet shall continue and abide for ever in Christ; they are born of an incorruptible seed; they are built upon a rock, and secured by almighty power, so as they shall never perish, but shall for ever enjoy the incorruptible inheritance that is reserved for them.

Also these vines are said to have the tender grape upon them. The word translated *the tender grape*, is only used in this song, and that but in two other places besides this, viz. verse 15. of this chapter, and chapter <220712>7:12 but is used both in the Targum f340 and Misnah f341 in the same sense. Most of the Jewish writers f342 think, that by it is meant the small and tender grape, which appears as soon as ever the flower is fallen off, when the vines begin to knot, and one grape can be known, and may be distinguished from another; which sense our version expresses. But I am rather inclined to think that it means the flower itself; for in the Targum on <231805>Isaiah 18:5 this word *rdms smadar*, is used to express the Hebrew word *hxn nitzab*, which signifies a flower; and not only Pliny f343 and others, but the scriptures also testify, that vines do blossom and flower, as in the afore- mentioned place, <231805>Isaiah 18:5 and in <014010>Genesis 40:10 and the good smell which these vines are said to give, seems best to be understood of their time of flowering, than of any other time; for it is reported of some vines f344 and perhaps may be true of the vines which grew in Judea, seeing that the wine of Lebanon is commended for its agreeable odor, <281407>Hosea 14:7. I say, It is reported of some vines, that in the time of their flowering they send forth so sweet a smell, that not only the vineyards themselves, but the country round about is refreshed with the sweet savor thereof; so that walking or sitting among them is both wholesome and delightful; nay, that the smell of them is so great, that serpents and other venomous creatures are driven away by it. So then the words may be rendered thus, ‘the vines, being in flower, give a good smell.’ f345 How by these tender grapes, flowers, or blossoms of the vines, may be meant, either the graces of the Spirit in their first appearance, as before; or else, young converts, to which I rather incline, who are the fruit of Christ’s vine, the church; and though very weak and tender, yet are very dear unto, and are much regarded by Christ; and when there is a large appearance, of them, it is a great encouragement to the church, and promises a glorious vintage: so the Targum interprets it of young men and babes praising the Lord at the Red Sea, for their deliverance out of the hands of the Egyptians: and R. Sol. Jarchi says, it is explained of repenting sinners,

in an ancient book of theirs, called *Pesikta*; and so I find it is also in another book of theirs, called *Raya Mehimna*. ^{f346}

Moreover, these vines having their tender grapes upon them, or being in flower, are said to give a good smell; which must be understood of the fragrancy of the persons of believers, being clothed with the sweet-smelling garments of Christ's righteousness, and the delightful odor, of their graces being exercised on his person; as well as of their sweet savor, Which their pious and godly conversations send forth to all that know them, or are about them.

Song 2:15 "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the *vines* (*Vitis vinifera* L. No. 111): for our *vines* (*Vitis vinifera* L.) have tender *grapes* (*Vitis vinifera* L, No. 111)"

WHETHER these words are the words of Christ or of the church, is not so manifest. Some think that they are the words of the church, to whom the care of the vineyard was committed; which, though she had in some measure neglected, as appears from chapter ^{<220106>}1:6, yet now is heartily concerned for the flourishing of it; and therefore calls upon her attendants and companions to assist in destroying those noxious creatures the foxes, which did so much mischief to the vines that grew in it; though they rather seem to be. the words of Christ, who is the owner of the vineyard, and has an authoritative power over the officers of the church, and ministers of the gospel, to stir them up to be sedulous and careful in the discharge of their work; for the words seem to be directed, not to angels, nor to his bride, the church, nor to the civil magistrate, but to ministers, who are more particularly employed in the care of Christ's vineyard: and if we take them to be the words of Christ, it not only shews the power and authority of Christ over those he speaks to, and lays his commands on in so strict a manner; but also his love to, and care of his vines, the several churches, which his own right hand has planted: though perhaps they may be the words of them both jointly together; for the church, with Christ, and under him, has a right to stir up her officers to perform their work, and fulfill their ministry, which they have received of the Lord Jesus; the doing of which will redound to his glory, and her good; they both having an interest in the vines here mentioned; also the foxes, which they are ordered to take, were common enemies; both to Christ and his church; and therefore it is not said, 'take for me or thee, but take for us the foxes.' In these words may be observed,

I. A command that is laid upon the ministers of the gospel, to 'take the foxes, even the little foxes.'

II. Some arguments or motives proposed to stir them up to an observance of it.

I. The thing enjoined them is, to 'take the foxes.' By foxes we are to understand, either,

1st, The sins and corruptions of our nature, which may be compared unto them for the following reasons:

2dly, By these foxes may be meant false teachers or heretics; so the false prophets in Ezekiel's time were called by him, ^{<261303>}Ezekiel 13:3, 4. 'O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the desarts;' and so may false apostles and false teachers now, and that for the following reasons;

3dly, Here are motives and arguments proposed to induce a compliance to this command of Christ's.

1. The mischief Which these foxes do to the vines, is made use of as one, which spoil the vines: it has been observed by many ^{f372} that these kind of creatures do hurt to the vines; and that by destroying the fences, knawing the branches, biting the bark, making bare the roots of the vines, devouring the ripe grapes thereof, and infecting all with their noxious teeth and vicious breath: so heretics and false teachers break down the church's fence, by making schisms and divisions, make bare her roots, sap the very foundation of religion, by corrupting the word of God, and denying the great doctrines of the gospel; and hurt her fruit, by disturbing the peace of her members, unsettling some, and subverting others.
2. Another argument that is made use of to stir them up to diligence in taking the foxes, is, because the vines have tender grapes; by vines are meant the several distinct congregated churches of Christ; by the tender grapes or flowers thereof, we are to understand young converts, whom Christ is very tender of, and has a particular regard unto; see ^{<234011>}Isaiah 40:11 and 42:3 and these having but a small degree of faith, knowledge, and experience, like children, are more easily tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness of these foxes, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: now generally they make their onset upon these, as being more easily wrought upon, and by whom they can with more facility compass their end; and this being then the case, the ministers of Christ ought to be more sedulous and diligent in the discovering of those foxes, from whom so much mischief may be expected, and more bold, vigorous, and courageous in opposing and rejecting them; seeing the churches of Christ are like to sustain so considerable a loss by them, and in danger of having a promising vintage spoiled. It is true, the foxes love the ripe grapes and devour them, and not when they are, blossoming and knotting; which shews Christ's care of his vines, to be the greater, that he would have little foxes taken while the vines were blowing; for by such time, as the grapes were ripe, these little foxes would be great ones, and would be capable of doing more damage, and not so easy to be taken neither; so that the consideration also of there being less difficulty now, than there would be hereafter, might animate them to set about the work immediately.
3. Christ seems to intimate as if they had some interest in these vines; for which reason they ought to be the more heartily and vigorously concerned for the welfare of them; therefore they are called our vines: it is true, Christ has a sole right unto, and property in the vineyard; the vines are all of his planting, and the fruit of them belongs to him; yet those to whom the vineyard is let out, who are intrusted with the care of the vines, and who must give an account of them to the chief and principal owner, have also an interest therein; for though our great Solomon must have a thousand, whose the vineyard is; yet 'those that keep the fruit thereof must have two hundred,' Song of Solomon 8:11, 12, so that if they should be negligent in their work, and suffer the foxes to overrun the vineyard, and spoil the vines, they would not only incur the displeasure of the owner of them, but sustain a loss themselves, by coming short of the fruit which otherwise would be distributed to them. Now such arguments as these, which have interest and profit contained in them, usually have the greatest influence upon persons; Christ: knew this, and therefore uses such an one here.

Song 2:16 “My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the *lilies* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L.)”

CHRIST having given such evidences of his love, and instances of his care and kindness to the church in the preceding verses; she, in this, declares her faith in him, and signifies the obligations which she lay under to observe his commands. ‘My beloved is mine;’ he hath given himself to me, his heart is set upon me, and is always careful of me, and concerned for me; of which he has given the fullest proofs I could wish for: ‘and I am his;’ I give up myself to him, and am at his dispose, and think myself obliged to observe whatever he enjoins me; and to follow him whithersoever he calls me; especially seeing it is for my good; it makes both for my pleasure and profit, as well as for his glory; for ‘he feedeth among the lilies.’ I need not fear his leading me into danger, or any desolate places, but where lilies grow, where is all delight and pleasure; he will lead me into green pastures; where I may have food, and fullness of it. And,

Lastly, She tells us, that this beloved of hers was feeding among the lilies; ‘he feedeth among the lilies:’ which may be regarded either as an apostrophe to him, and may be read thus, ‘O thou that feedest among the lilies!’ thou, and thou only art mine, and I am thine: or else, these words may be descriptive of his person, and prevent a question that might be asked, viz. who her beloved was, that she thus claimed an interest in? To which she answers, My beloved is that yonder person you see feeding among the lilies; and at the same time also points out to us the place where he was, and what he was about: his employment was feeding, that is, either feeding himself; which Christ does, when he delights and recreates himself in his gardens, the churches, and among his lilies, the saints; observing how their faith grows, and how that and all other graces are exercised upon himself: Or else, feeding his flock, as R. Sol. Jarchi observes; for as he bears the character of a shepherd, so he performs the work of one; ‘he feeds his flock like a shepherd;’ see chapter 1:7. The place where he is here said to feed, is among the lilies; by which may be meant, either a good, quiet, and delightful pasture, as R. Sol. Jarchi glosses it; Christ leads and feeds his people in ‘green pastures, beside the still or quiet waters;’ and what can be more delightful than to lie down among, or to sit and feed where lilies grow? or else, by these lilies may be meant the scriptures of truth, the precious promises and comfortable doctrines of the gospel; and the ordinances thereof, with which Christ feeds his church: or rather, by them may be meant the saints, who are compared thereunto, in verse 2. of this chapter. Now it is among these that Christ feeds; and therefore do any want to know where Christ feeds, as the church did, in chapter 1:7? he feeds among his saints, where they are congregated in gospel order, where his lilies grow. It may be observed, it is not said, he feedeth on, or feeds his flock. with lilies, but among them; for it is remarked ^{f373} that sheep will not eat them: or the sense may be, Christ feeds himself, and feeds his people, and feeds among them, as if he was crowned with lilies, and anointed with the oil of them; as was the custom of the ancients at festivals ^{f374} thought to be here alluded to by some, who read the words, ‘that feeds;’ that is, feeds, sups in or with lilies, being crowned with them, and anointed with the oil of them. The lily is a summer flower ^{f375} the winter was now past, verse 11, and so agrees with the time when those words were spoken.

Song 3:6 “Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl., No. 145) and *frankincense* (1. *Atriplex dimorphostegia* Kar. & Kir. 2. *Atriplex halimus* L. 3. *Atriplex rosea* L. 4. *Atriplex tatarica* L.), with all *powders* (*Commiphora opobalsamum* (L) Engl.) of the merchant?”

SOME of the Jewish writers ^{f397} think, that these are the words of the nations of the earth, wondering at the coming of the Israelites out of the wilderness, before whom the Lord went in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, which appearance was very surprising to them. Though they are rather, as some ^{f398} think, the words of the Jews, wondering at John the Baptist and his ministry, of whom all men mused in their hearts whether he was the Christ or not and therefore the Jews dispatched messengers to him, to know the truth of it: his first appearance was in the wilderness of Judea, which fulfilled an ancient prophecy concerning him, ‘the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness;’ hither great numbers, like pillars of smoke, flocked to him, to attend upon his ministry and baptism: he was a burning and shining light in his day there was a great deal of zeal, warmth and fervency in his preaching; for which work he was extraordinarily fitted, being richly perfumed with those gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are comparable to myrrh, frankincense, and all powders of the merchant. Others ^{f399} take them to be the words of the Jewish church, wondering at the large number of converts appearing in the beauties of holiness, in the Gentile world, which before was like to a dry heath or a barren wilderness; see ^{<234921>}Isaiah 49:21 and ^{<236008>}60:8, though others ^{f400} think Christ himself is here introduced, admiring the beauty of his church, and the graces of his own spirit in her. But I am rather of opinion, that they are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, who, upon this happy meeting of Christ and his church, saw a greater glory and a more excellent beauty in her, than ever they had done before ‘and especially, it must not be supposed, that the angels ^{f401} are here speaking and admiring the church’s beauty, seeing these bear no part in this song; much less the church herself ^{f402} for this no way suits with that modesty and humility which always appear in her: but it very well agrees with the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom so solemn a charge is given in the former verse, which excited and stirred them up to take a fuller view of her; and the more they look., ed upon her, the more they wondered at her; and in expressing it, thus highly commend her, which they do,

- I. By describing her as ‘coming out of the wilderness.’
- II. By comparing her ascent from thence to ‘pillars of smoke.’
- III. By saying that she was ‘perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant.’

1st, She is said to be ‘perfumed with myrrh;’ which may be understood, either of Christ himself, who is as ‘a bundle of myrrh’ unto his people, exceeding grateful, to them; and which renders them acceptable to God, being held in the hand, or carried in the bosom of faith: or else, of his death, which, though like myrrh, exceeding bitter to himself, yet is of a sweet-smelling savor to his Father, and a delightful perfume to believers: or else, of his righteousness; which is that garment of Christ’s, which, whether considered as in himself, or as put upon his people, ‘smells

of myrrh, aloes, and cassia;’ and with which they being clothed, ‘their smell is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.’

2dly, She is said to be also ‘perfumed, with frankincense;’ by which may be meant the mediation and intercession of Christ, which is that much incense, with which Christ offers up the prayers of all saints to his Father; and with which their persons and their prayers being perfumed, they meet with acceptance with God, which otherwise would be a stink in his nostrils; see <660803>Revelation 8:3, 4. <19E102>Psalm 141:2.

3dly, She is said to be perfumed, or to be possessed with all powders of the merchant.’ Christ is this merchant-man; the graces of the Spirit are those powders which Christ, as mediator, is full of; all which are sweet and savory, rich and costly; ‘the merchandise of them is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.’ Some read this last part of the words thus ^{f405} ‘which is above or more excellent than all powders of the merchant, druggist or apothecary; ^{f406} for no spice in the merchant’s warehouse, no precious drug or aromatic powder in the apothecary’s shop, is to be compared with those graces of the Spirit, which Christ bestows upon his own people.

Song 3:9 “King Solomon made himself a chariot of the *wood of Lebanon*. (*Cedrus libani* Loud, No. 101)”

THE church having described Christ’s bed, proceeds to give some account of his chariot, which he had made for himself and spouse. The word here translated *chariot*, is to be found in no other part of the scripture, and is differently rendered. Some translate it a throne, which Solomon had prepared for himself; so Junius and Tremellius: others, a stately palace or bride chamber, which he had built on purpose for the more honorable reception of his bride; so David de Pomis, R. Sol. Jarchi, and Arias Montanus: others, a bed; which is so called from the fruitfulness thereof, which in chapter <220116>1:16. is said to be green; but then it must mean such a bed, in which the bride used to be carried, as R. David Kimchi ^{f421} observes. So that it seems to signify the nuptial bed, or an open chariot, or some such like thing, in which the bride was carried in pomp to the bridegroom’s house: and in this sense is the word used in the Misnah; ^{f422} where mention is made of a decree ‘that the bride should not go out into the city, *zwyrpab* beappirion, the word here used, ‘in the nuptial bed or open chariot;’ in which as R. Sol. Jarchi says, in his gloss upon the words, ‘they carried her from the house of her father to the house of her husband.’ And so the Septuagint here renders the word by *φορει~ov*, which signifies something in which persons or things are carried, and is very much like in sound to the Hebrew word; and some ^{f423} have thought that it is this very Greek word which is here made use of, which might not be unknown to the Hebrews; and *zwyrpa twnbl* is a usual phrase with the Rabbins, to express the celebration of marriage. ^{f424} It seems to be the nuptial chariot; in which according to Pausanias; ^{f425} three only were carried; the bride, who sat in the middle, the bridegroom on one hand, and the friend of the bridegroom on the other: something of this kind is the Palki or Palanquin of the Indians; in which the bride and bridegroom are carried on the day of marriage

on four mens shoulders. ^{f426} By this chariot, R. Sol. Jarchi and Alshech would have the tabernacle of the congregation understood; though the Targum and R. Aben Ezra understand it of the temple, which was made of the cedars of Lebanon: but by it rather is meant, either,

First, The human nature of Christ, in which, as in a chariot, Christ made himself visible and conspicuous to men, and gave a glorious display of his greatness and majesty; ‘for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;’ it was in this he descended from and ascended up to heaven; and by which saints have access to God, and a communication of grace from him; for our way of access to God, and of acceptance with him, as well as of conveyance of all covenant-grace and blessings from him, is ‘consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, Christ’s flesh.’ Concerning which chariot of Christ’s human nature, we may observe,

1. The author, king Solomon, Christ himself: and this serves to set forth the magnificence of it; for if at is the work of so great a person, it must needs be curiously wrought; and at the same time it shews his wonderful humility and condescension, in that one who was possessed of royal dignity, should be employed in such a work; and in nothing did he give a greater instance of it, than in the assumption of human nature, in his being found in; fashion as a mall: which work is purely ascribed to himself; it was *sine virili opere*, Without the help of man that Christ became man; his human nature is the ‘stone cut out of the mountain without hands,’ and the tabernacle which God pitched, and not man; and because of this, it is wondrous and surprising: when it was first prophesied of, it is ushered in with a ‘behold a virgin shall conceive, etc.’ and when the news was brought to the virgin herself, it was startling and astonishing to her, and made her say, ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’ but this being a work of God, with whom nothing is impossible, was effected by him: but though Christ assumed our nature, and became man without the help of man; yet not exclusive of the help and assistance of his Father, who prepared a body for him; nor of the Holy Ghost, who formed and sanctified it in the virgin’s womb.

2. The matter of it, and that is of the wood of Lebanon: Christ was conceived and born of the virgin Mary, who dwelt at Nazareth, a city of Galilee, at the foot of mount Lebanon; and the wood of that mountain, which was cedar, being of an incorruptible nature, may very well express the incorruption of Christ’s human nature; for though he died and was buried, yet he never saw corruption: moreover this being very excellent and valuable wood, may denote the excellency and glory of Christ’s human nature; whose countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; for though, by his sorrows and sufferings, his visage was more marred than any man, and his form than the sons of men; yet he was fairer than any of the Sons of Adam.

3. The end for which this chariot was made; it wan for himself: for though all the three persons had a hand in making it, yet none but the second person appeared in it; it was the Son only, and not the Father, nor the Spirit, who was made flesh, and dwelt among us; which was done for the shewing forth of his own glory, as well as for the sake of his body, the church. Or else,

Secondly, By this chariot, may be meant the church of Christ; ^{f427} where he shews himself openly to his people in his ordinances, and they behold his power and his glory in the sanctuary; here he rides in triumph over his enemies; from hence he sends forth the rod of his strength, and makes mighty conquests by his grace over the hearts of men; here his gospel is preached, his ordinances administered, his name

borne up, his cause and interest carried on, and his person alone exalted. Concerning which chariot we may also observe,

1. The author of it, Christ himself; it is he that builds this temple, and bears the glory; he is the rock, the foundation and corner-stone on which, and the chief architect by whom it is built; there are indeed many workmen and under-builders whom he employs herein, but he himself is the principal; his own hands have laid the foundation, and reared up the super, structure; it is he that has knit all together; and bears, supports, and maintains the whole fabric; and will bring in the head-stone, with the joyful acclamations of grace, grace unto it.

2. The matter of the wood of Lebanon: the temple which was built by Solomon, was an eminent figure of the church of Christ; now this was built of cedars fetched from Lebanon, which, though it was upon the borders of the land of Israel, yet was not in it i for Solomon sent to Hiram king; of Tyre for them, whose servants cut them down, hewed them, and made them fit for the building: Christ's true church is made up only of believers, such who are comparable to the cedars in Lebanon; who, though whilst in their state of nature are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and therefore are invited to come with Christ from Lebanon in chapter <220408>4:8 yet are cut down from off their old stock, and being hewn and fitly framed for the building by the grace and spirit of God, are laid in it, and so grow up unto an holy temple in the Lord: and this wood of Lebanon being lasting and durable, may denote the final perseverance of the saints, and the continuance of the church of Christ; which being built upon him, the rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; it is as immoveable as mount Zion, and as incorruptible as the cedars.

3. The end for which it is made, and that is, for himself: Christ has made all things for himself; and more especially his church he has made for his own use; it is his house to dwell in, his garden to walk in, his bed to rest in, and his chariot to ride in; he has also made it for his own glory, and indeed much arises from it; his manifestative glory is much increased by it; this people he has formed for himself, and they shall shew forth his praise. Or else,

Thirdly, By this chariot, may be meant the gospel, and the preaching of it; which may be also represented by the white horse, in <660602>Revelation 6:2 on which Christ rides and goes forth, conquering and to conquer; the ministers also of which may be compared to chariots, as Elijah, in <120212>2 Kings 2:12 is called 'the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof;' so Theodoret interprets it of the holy apostles. In this chariot Christ shews himself in all the glory of his love and grace; here, as in a glass, saints behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into it; in this he is carried up and down the world, and by it is conveyed to the souls of men; this is that vehicle in which he is brought home unto them, and in which he triumphs over all his enemies, and makes his ministers to do so likewise: so that this is a triumphal chariot which he has made, and in which he shews himself to the world. And,

1. He is the alone author, as well as the subject, sum and substance of it, and therefore it is called 'the gospel of Christ:' It is not the contrivance of human wisdom, the device of man's brain, nor the produce of carnal reason; it was neither projected, formed, nor delivered by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ; it is he that has given it to men, and given men a commission to preach it, and furnished them with all necessary qualifications for it.

2. The matter of it is said to be 'the wood of Lebanon;' which being incorruptible and durable, as has

been before observed, as well as of a sweet-smelling savor, may very well be applied to the gospel of Christ, which is preached by his faithful ministers; who are not as some, who corrupt the word of God; but in doctrine, and also in life, shews incorruptness, gravity, and sincerity, and deliver sound speech which cannot be condemned; which will abide and continue, notwithstanding all the efforts of men and devils; and is of an exceeding grateful smell to believers, to whom it is the savor of life unto life.

3. This he has made also for himself; that is, for his own glory: which end is answered, when the riches of his grace and love are displayed, his person and offices magnified and exalted, and he declared to be the only way of salvation to lost sinners; as also when sinners are converted, and saints are edified under the ministry of the word, and the success of all ministerial labors is ascribed unto him. Or else,

Fourthly, By this chariot, may be meant the covenant of grace; in which, as in a chariot, Christ shews his royal person, and the glorious sovereignty and freeness of his love: by this, as in a chariots many poor souls are borne up and supported under, and are comfortably carried through a great many trials and exercises in this life, and in Which they are brought triumphantly to glory: the same blood of the everlasting covenant, which fetched Christ out of his grave, brings souls out of the pit wherein is no water, and introduces them into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And,

1. Of this chariot, Christ, who is here meant by king Solomon, is the author: man is not in a capacity to make a covenant with God; he has nothing of his own, but what God, before all articles, agreements, conditions, grants, and promises, has a prior right unto; but Christ, as the representative of the elect, has made a covenant with his father on their account; his wisdom drew the plan and model of it, he then acting as the counsellor, or as the angel of the great council; ^{f428} his power effected it; being the mighty God, and his grace filled it as the mediator of it; he had so great a hand and concern in it, as that lie is called the surety, mediator, and messenger of it, nay, the covenant itself.

2. The matter of it, or of what it was made, is the wood of Lebanon: which may intend the durableness and inviolableness of the covenant of grace; for God will not break it, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips; it is as lasting as the wood, and as immoveable as the mountain of Lebanon itself; its promises are yea and amen, and its blessings are irreversible; it is of an everlasting nature in itself, and can never be disannulled by men or devils; and contains things in it both for time and eternity.

3. His end in making this is his own glory, as well as the good Of his people; he had both in view: the former is mentioned here, he made it for himself; the latter in the next verse, where it is also said to be for the daughters of Jerusalem. Christ's glory and his church's good are inseparable; his glory is great in their salvation which shews with what wisdom, and in what a beautiful and excellent order, the covenant of grace is made. It is interpreted of the everlasting covenant by some Jewish writers.

Song 4:3 “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a *pomegranate* (*Punica granatum* L, No. 132) within thy locks.”

IN these words Christ proceeds to give the fourth and fifth instances of the church's beauty; and says,

I. That her ‘lips are like a thread of scarlets’ etc.

II. That her 'temples are like a piece of a pomegranate.'

Her temples are next commended in these words, which is the fifth particular instanced in the church's beauty; 'thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.' R. Aben Ezra interprets these words of the priests, who had pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet, round about the hem of the *ephod* which they wore: but the Targum, on the place, understands by *the temples*, the king who was the head of the people of Israel, and was full of good works, as the pomegranate is of kernels; and by *the locks*, the governors and princes, who were next to him: but it seems more agreeable, that ecclesiastical officers are here intended, whom Christ has placed in his church, to take care of the discipline of his house, as well as to maintain and defend the gospel.

That there is, and ought to be such officers in churches, who have the presiding; ruling, governing power therein, not only the nature of societies requires, but the scripture also does abundantly confirm, more especially the following ones; 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, etc. Obey them that have the rule over you, etc. He that ruleth with diligence,' <540517> 1 Timothy 5:17; <581317> Hebrews 13:17; <451208> Romans 12:8. Their work is not only to preach the gospel, and feed the flock with wholesome food; but to admonish, warn and rebuke those who stand in need thereof; to lay on and take off censures, to open and shut the doors of the church, that is, in admission and excommunication of members. Now this power is originally in the church, and only derivatively in them; they are but the administrators of it, in the church's name: they have no despotical, arbitrary, and tyrannical power, lodged in their hands, to rule at pleasure; but are limited by the laws of Christ, which he has provided for the orderly government of his house, which they are to see put into execution. Now these may be called,

First, The church's *temples*.

1st, The *temples* are called, in the Hebrew tongue, by a word ^{f467} which signifies thinness and tenderness; because the temples have but little flesh upon them, and are covered only with a thin skin; which may teach us,

1. That those persons who are called to such a work and office in Christ's house, though it cannot otherwise be but they must have flesh as well as spirit in them, being men of like passions and affections with others; yet these more especially Ought not to live in and walk after the flesh; there should be a less appearance of carnality in them, and a greater discovery of

spiritual-mindedness, and of the life and power of godliness in their conversations; therefore the apostle is very particular in giving their characters, <540301> 1 Timothy 3:1-7; <560106> Titus 1:6-9.

2. It may also teach us, that there ought to be it great deal of tenderness in them, and used by them in the discharge of their work; for in so doing, they are like to be most successful: admonitions and reproofs for sin, mildly and tenderly given, are often kindly taken; they are like 'an excellent oil, which does not break the head,' but wins the heart: tender-heartedness is requisite in all Christians, but more especially in officers of churches, who are to deal as tenderly with persons, as surgeons do in dressing wounds, or in setting broken or dislocated bones; hence the apostle, in <480601> Galatians 6:1 uses a metaphor taken from them, 'you that are spiritual restore,' *καταρτιζετε*, joint in, or set in joint again, 'such an one in the spirit of meekness;' though it is true, in some cases sharpness is to be used; as when there is a gangrene in a member, which endangers the body, there must be a cutting off, an amputation of the member; so

persons, when all means have been tried for their recovery and restoration, and there is no reclaiming them from an error in doctrine or practice; they are not only to be rebuked sharply, but to be cut off from the body, the church.

2dly, The *temples* are called in Greek, [κρο>ταφοσ](#) from the evident beating of the pulse there: now as a person's constitution may be judged of by the beating of his pulse; so may the constitution of a church by her temples, the officers, in their administration of affairs: if church discipline is neglected, and Christ's laws are not put in execution against delinquents, the church is in a bad state and in an unhealthful and declining condition; and on the contrary, when officers are lively, zealous and diligent in their work, and all things are kept in a just order and decorum, the church is then in an healthful and flourishing condition.

3dly, The *temples* are placed between the eyes and the ears; and church officers being called so teaches us that they have need of both in managing the affairs of Christ's house. Christ indeed, being God omniscient, 'shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears;' but we have no other way of judging than by the sight of our eyes, and by the hearing of our ears, and therefore both are to be employed: the ears of the church-officers are to be open, without respect of persons, to rich and poor, high and low; they are to hear complaints and charges exhibited, if introduced in a regular manner, and then the evidence to support these complaints and charges; they must also hear the answers of the person or persons accused and complained of, and must not shut their eyes against clear light and plain evidence.

Secondly, These temples are said to be 'within the locks;' under locks of hair plaited and curled about them; expressive both of secrecy and beauty: which may teach us,

1. That admonitions, in case of private offenses, ought to be given privately, according to that golden rule given by our Lord, [<401815>Matthew 18:15-17](#). 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone;' let no one know it before thou hast told him, and let none be with thee when thou dost; 'if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother;' therefore for ever after never speak of it to others, nor upbraid him with it; 'but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them,' matters being thus prepared, 'tell it unto the church;' and then thou shalt have witnesses to support and make good thy allegations. This rule is so plain and easy, that one would think, none could mistake or go aside from it; and was it but closely adhered to, would prevent a great deal of scandal and reproach that is cast upon religion, as well as a great many disturbances, occasioned in churches by the neglect of it: and in so doing, the church's temples, in this branch of the administration of discipline, may be said to be within her locks; though it is true, in case of public offenses, admonitions and rebukes are to be given publicly, that 'others may fear,' [<540520>1 Timothy 5:20](#).

2. It may also teach us, that all the affairs and concerns of churches ought to be kept private, and not blazed about in the world; their debates and determinations ought not to be told to other churches, unless there is a necessity for it; much less told in Gath, and published in the 'streets of Askelon;' for every particular church should be as a 'garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,' [<220412>Song of Solomon 4:12](#).

3. The temples being within the locks, may denote the humility of church-officers in their work; they lie hid under the hair, the rest of believers; they do not rise up above them, though they are taller and higher than they are in gifts and grace, as well as by virtue of their office and station in the church; yet they are, in their own esteem, 'less than the least of all saints:' they do not assume to themselves a domination and lordly power 'over God's heritage;' they do not impose their sentiments upon churches for final determinations in cases; but humbly submit themselves, preferring the judgment of the church to their own private ones; they become 'all things to all, that they may save some.'

4. May be expressive of the beauty of church-discipline: that church appears very beautiful, like the 'temples within the locks,' where the gospel is faithfully preached, the ordinances purely administered, and the laws of Christ's house strictly regarded. Believers, who walk together in the order, as well as in the faith of the gospel, appear very beautiful, stately, and magnificent to spectators: they are 'like a company, of horses in Pharaoh's chariot;' or like a garden, with a variety of flowers, well weeded and taken care of; or an 'orchard of pomegranates,' well dressed and managed: on the contrary, a church, in which no regard is had to order and discipline, is like 'the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding,' which is all overrun 'with thorns and nettles,' its fence and 'stone-wall being broken down.'

Thirdly, These temples are said to be 'like a piece of a pomegranate; not of the tree, but of the fruit, the shell or rind being broken; so the Septuagint render it. ^{f469} The land of Canaan was a land of pomegranates; they grew there in great plenty, and therefore are frequently mentioned in this Song.

1st, The fruit, when the shell, or rind is broken, appears to be full of grains or kernels, and therefore is a *pomegranate*: and it is the nature of this fruit, that if it hangs long on the tree after it is fully ripe, it will burst and open of itself, ^{f470} and its kernels will become visible: one of the mansions of the Israelites is called by them Rimmon-parez, ^{<043319>} Numbers 33:19, the pomegranate of rupture, or the burstened pomegranate, where probably they found such. And the church's temples are said to be like to such a burstened and broken piece of a pomegranate, that is full of kernels, and visible; because those who are called to such work and office in the church, as has been mentioned, should be men 'full of the Holy Ghost,' as Stephen was; they should be as full of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as the pomegranate is of kernels, that they may be capable of discharging the work aright: Christ knows full well that they stand in need of such, and therefore, as he has 'received gifts for men,' so he 'gives them to men;' to qualify them for the work of the ministry, and for the well-ordering and governing of his churches; and yet, notwithstanding all that they receive, they are obliged to say, with the apostle, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' And as they should be men full of the Spirit, so likewise full of good works; and these visible to men, even as the kernels of a burstened pomegranate; ^{f471} their 'light should shine before men;' they should have a good report of them that are without, and be examples to those that are within; and when they are so, then may the church's *temples* be said to be 'like a piece of a pomegranate within her locks.' Also the pomegranate, when broken, appearing to be full of kernels, all set in a beautiful order, and joined to each other, may be expressive of that union, harmony, and consent of church-members, with their officers, in acts of discipline; censures are laid and taken off, members are received or rejected, not by some single person or persons, but by the joint consent and unanimous voice of the whole church.

2dly, As this fruit is full of kernels, so, when broken, there springs from it a reddish, purple, sweet and delightful juice . . . hence you read of the ‘juice of the pomegranate,’ chapter 8:2, which the church would cause Christ to drink of; and nothing is more delightful in Christ’s eye, odorous to his smell, and sweet to his taste, than this juice of the pomegranate is; namely, a pure administration of his ordinances, and a strict regard and close adherence to the laws of his house; nay, even to believers themselves, result from hence pleasure, delight and satisfaction.

3dly, The fruit of the pomegranate is very useful in medicine.

1. For repressing the heat of choler, and malignity of fevers. ^{f472} God’s children too often fall out by the way; there are frequently differences and divisions among them: many of them are of hot, fiery and choleric dispositions; do not know ‘what spirits they are of,’ and at every turn are, like the disciples, for calling ‘for fire from heaven’ upon those who have disobliged them. Now officers in churches are like a piece of a pomegranate; they allay and repress these heats, by wholesome advice and proper admonitions; they are instruments in making peace, and reconciling differing brethren; and either remove the causes of contention, or else, with the consent of the church, remove those who are the causes of these divisions and contentions.

2. For stopping the fluxes of the belly: ^{f473} the pomegranate is of an astringent nature, the kernels bind more than the juice, and the shell or rind more than either; the officers of churches are useful in putting a stop to loose and disorderly practices, by warning, admonishing, rebuking, or withdrawing from those who walk disorderly.

3. For comforting the stomach and bowels: ^{f474} so these officers comfort the children of God; for as they ‘warn the unruly, so they comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak,’ by directing them to the person, blood, righteousness, and fullness of Christ Jesus; by delivering the sweet doctrines) and opening the precious promises of the gospel.

Thus church-officers, in managing the affairs of Christ’s house, in conjunction with his church, may be called her temples, which are ‘like a piece of a pomegranate within her locks;’ or her veil ^{f475} as some render it; so Symmachus, covered with a veil, as her eyes were, verse 1. and here her cheeks; and so the Septuagint render the word in ^{<234702>}Isaiah 47:2; such veils, covering those parts, were worn by women in the eastern countries) expressive of their modesty; and what was latent, and much out of sight, seemed more beautiful. Likewise the temples, taken in a large signification, not only intend that part of the face, between the ears and eyes) and upwards, but include the cheeks also; and so the Septuagint ^{f476} translate the word here: the purple juice of the pomegranate well expresses the color of them, which is their beauty; hence we often read of purple cheeks as beautiful ^{f477} and of rosy ones blushing through shamefacedness and modesty: ^{f478} a pomegranate cut affords a very agreeable resemblance of a beautiful cheek; and in Talmudic language, as Jarchi observes the cheeks are called **yfad ynmwr** the pomegranates of the face. And these being compared to ‘a piece of pomegranate within her locks,’ may denote her modesty, shamefacedness, and beauty.

1. Her modesty: the cheeks are the seat thereof, and being within her locks, give the greater evidence of it. The church of Christ, or believers, are very humble and modest; they think the worst of themselves and the best of others, and so take the apostle’s advice, ^{<500803>}Philippians 2:3. ‘Let each esteem other better

than themselves:’ they are apt to think every saint has more grace and less sin and corruption in him than they have, and esteem themselves the least of saints and the chief of sinners; they frankly acknowledge that all they have, and all they are, is owing to the grace of God; that whatsoever they have, either of nature or grace, whether temporal or spiritual, they have received from him; and whatever they are, they say it is by the grace of God they are what they are; they do not envy the gifts and grace of God, which are bestowed on others, but could wish, with Moses, <041129>Numbers 11:29, that ‘all the Lord’s people were prophets;’ yet they could be glad of more themselves, and are not puffed up with what they have, and therefore are far from despising others who are inferior to them; they are willing to be instructed by, and receive admonition from the meanest saint: they are very sparing in speaking of themselves; like their dear Lord, their ‘voice is not heard in the street;’ and, when they do open their mouths, it is not in commendation of themselves and their own righteousness; but in lamenting the depravity and pollution of their nature; in acknowledging the imperfection of their obedience, and that when they have done all they can, they are but unprofitable servants.

2. Her shamefacedness and blushing; which is elegantly set forth by the broken piece of the shell or rind of the pomegranate, tintured with the red and purple juice thereof: a believer oftentimes blushes before God under a sense of sin, and especially when committed against love, grace and mercy; thus we read of Ezra, in <150906>Ezra 9:6. that he was ‘ashamed and blushed to lift up his face to God, because that grace had been shewed them from him; and he had left them a remnant to escape, and had given them a nail in his holy place, and had extended mercy to them in the sight of the kings of Persia;’ and yet, after all this, they had forsaken his commandment: it is this which cuts and grieves a believer’s heart, and fills his face with shame and confusion; and never more is he put to the blush, than when he views sin in the glass of pardoning grace and pacifying love, according to <261663>Ezekiel 16:63. ‘That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee;’ then are their checks like a piece of a pomegranate within their locks, or under a veil; they blush when no eye sees them, and for that which none ever saw or could charge them with: and whenever they are charged with or reproved for sin, they have not a brow of brass to outface the charge, but soon discover their consciousness of guilt by the blushing of their countenance. Moreover, whenever they cast their eyes upon their own righteousness, they are ashamed of it, it being nothing but filthy rags, and ‘as an unclean thing;’ and oftentimes, when they come into Christ’s’ presence, not having that holy boldness and confidence of faith in him, they hang their heads, and dare not so much as lift up their eyes to him; wherefore he says to them, as in chapter <220214>2:14. ‘Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely;’ and that in order to remove their fears, cheer their souls, and encourage their faith.

3. Her beauty: when a pomegranate is broken, there appears a reddish juice, like blood, as Pausanius ^{f479} remarks; interspread between the white kernels, which gives a lively idea of her beauty; she being, as she says of her beloved, ‘white-and ruddy,’ and so a perfection of beauty: her modest dress and blushing looks; her temples or cheeks being within her locks, or under a veil; and these like a piece of a pomegranate, made her extremely beautiful in Christ’s eye. Modest and humble souls he fixes his eye on, and delights to dwell with; to these he will give more grace, and will beautify them yet more with his

salvation.

Song 4:5 “Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the *lilies* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L.).”

THESE words contain the seventh and last particular instance of the church’s beauty; in which her breasts are compared to ‘two young roes,’ very elegantly expressing the beauty of them; they are compared to ‘two young roes’ for smallness, large breasts not being accounted handsome; to ‘young does that are twins,’ because they are of equal size and bigness, not one larger and higher than the other, for that would be a deformity; and to ‘two young roes that feed among the lilies.’ which are fat and plump, and so web expresses the fullness of them, they being not dry and empty breasts: such are sometimes called *sororiantes* ^{f484} as if they were sisters, being alike; and full and distended with milk, reach and join to, and as it were kiss each other as such; or, ‘two fawns, the twins of a doe:’ providence, as Plutarch ^{f485} observes, has given to women two breasts, that, should they have twins, both might have a fountain of nourishment, and though the hind, for the most part, brings but one roe at a time; yet the philosopher observes ^{f486} there are some that bring twins. Now by the church’s breasts, we may understand either, **First**, The ministers of the gospel.

1st, To two young does

2dly, They are compared, not only to two young roes, but two young roes that are twins; which is expressive of their equal authority, joint commission, and harmony of doctrine, as has been already observed on verse 2.

3dly, They are compared to two young does that ‘feed among the lilies; the lilies of the field,’ for such there were, ^{<400628>}Matthew 6:28, and we sometimes read of harts and hinds being among lilies ^{f488} Now the lilies, among which the ministers of the gospel feed, are either,

1. The scriptures, which they make their principal study, and the main subject of their contemplation; here their own souls are delighted, comforted and instructed, and so become useful in comforting and instructing others; from hence they gather food for themselves, and being nourished with the wholesome words of faith and sound doctrine, they are capable of feeding others also. Or,

2. The saints: in what respects the people of God may be compared to lilies, has been shewn on chapter ^{<220202>}2:2. among these the ministers of the gospel feed, and to these they break and impart the bread of life.

3. It may be observed, that it is where Christ himself feeds, as in chapter ^{<220216>}2:16. The ministers of the gospel feed where Christ feeds, and Christ feeds where they do: the great end of the gospel-ministry is, not only that saints may have communion one with another, but also with their head, Christ Jesus: Would any therefore enjoy communion with Christ? Are any desirous of knowing where Christ feeds? he feeds where his ministers do, and that is among the ilies, in the congregation of the saints; it may serve then as a direction to such, to sit under a gospel-ministry.

Song 4:6 “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl., No. 144), and to the hill of *frankincense* (1. *Atriplex dimorphostegia* Kar. & Kir. 2. *Atriplex halimus* L. 3. *Atriplex rosea* L. 4. *Atriplex tatarica* L.) .”

SOME ^{f492} think these are the words of the church; who, not being able to bear any longer to hear herself so highly commended, as in the preceding verses resolves to betake herself to some private place, where she might be out of the hearing of such praises and commendations: or else, being under great temptations and darkness of soul, resolves to go to the mountain of the Lord’s house, the church of Christ, and there in reading, meditation, prayer, and other exercises, wait for his presence, and the manifestations of himself unto her: or rather, being in distressed circumstances, she is resolved to go to Christ himself, ‘the rock that is higher than’ she; who, for the odor of his sacrifice, the fragrancy of his intercession, and sweet-smelling garment of his righteousness, may be called ‘the mountain of myrrh,’ and ‘hill of frankincense,’ as he is ‘a bundle of myrrh,’ in chapter ^{<220113>}1:13. But I am rather inclined to think, that they are the words of Christ; in which we are told,

First, The place where he resolves to go to, and abide; ‘the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense;’ which I apprehend intend one and the same place; though two places in Arabia were so called. ^{f493} The allusion may be to mountains and hills, where those odoriferous plants grew; such as were in or near Judea: it is said of Pompey the Great, that when he passed over Lebanon, after-mentioned, verse 8, he went through sweet-smelling groves, and woods of frankincense and balsam; ^{f494} and Lebanon is thought by some, ^{f495} to have its name from the frankincense that grew upon it; though rather, from the whiteness of the snow continually on it; and is, in the Targum of verse 8. called ‘the mountain of snow;’ see ^{<241814>}Jeremiah 18:14. *Secondly*, How long he proposes to continue here; ‘until the day break, and the shadows flee away.’

Now by ‘the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,’ most of the Jewish writers ^{f496} understand the temple, which was built on mount Moriah, ^{<140301>}2 Chronicles 3:1, the place where Abraham offered up his son Isaac; in which mountain as the Lord then, so frequently in after-ages, especially when the temple was built, appeared unto his people. Now the *temple* may be called ‘the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,’ either in allusion to Moriah, the name of the mountain on which it was built; which perhaps might have its name originally from the abundance of myrrh which grew upon it; or else, because in it was the holy anointing oil, one ingredient in which was ‘pure myrrh;’ and also the incense, which was made of ‘pure frankincense,’ together with other spices; which was likewise put upon their meat-offerings, which were there offered up unto the Lord: and this sense of the words is not altogether to be despised; for in the temple, the *shechinah* or divine majesty dwelt, until Christ came in the flesh, when the gospel-day broke, and the shadows of the ceremonial law vanished, fled and disappeared, as has been shewn in chapter ^{<220217>}2:17. Though I think rather, by ‘the mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,’ is intended the church of Christ; ^{f497} where he has taken up his residence, and resolves to dwell until his second coming; which may be compared to a hill or mountain,

1. For their height: hills and mountains are higher than any other parts of the earth; and so is the church of Christ than the rest of the world: saints are higher in Christ's esteem than all the world besides; and are exalted by his grace, and dignified with favors by him above all others; and however low and mean they may now appear in the eyes of the world, the time is coming when this 'mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills,' <230202>Isaiah 2:2.
2. For their immoveableness: hills and mountains cannot be removed; no more can the church or believers in Christ, <19D001>Psalm 130:1, for 'they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever:' they shall never be removed either from Christ's hands or Christ's heart; they shall never be removed from a state of justification to a state of condemnation; they are secured by electing love, and preserved in Christ Jesus; they are held fast by covenant-bands, and are built upon 'a sure foundation, upon a rock,' against which 'the gates of hell can never prevail.'
3. For being places where trees grow, as oaks, cedars, olives,' etc. and famous for these were Bashan, Hermon, Lebanon, the mount of olives,' etc. in the church of Christ are 'trees of righteousness,' which, being planted by Christ's father, flourish like palm-trees, and grow like cedars in Lebanon.
4. For being places of pasture for cattle; such were Bashan, Carmel, and Gilead: in the church of Christ there is pasture for all his sheep; there plenteous provisions of grace are made; 'a feast of fat things,' wine mingled, bread prepared, made a table sufficiently furnished for all Christ's friends and guests, in this his *holy mountain*, the church.
5. In hills and mountains worship used to be given, and sacrifices offered up to God, as may be collected from the discourse of Christ with the woman of Samaria, <430420>John 4:20, 21, as well as from other places of scripture: in the church of Christ the worship of God is maintained, the word of God is preached, his ordinances are administered, and the sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up to him in the name and through the mediation of Christ Jesus. And as it may be compared to a mountain and hill, so likewise to 'a mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,'

(1.) Because of the fragrantcy of those graces with which the church is perfumed: hence she is said, in chapter <220306>3:6. to be 'perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant;' and in this chapter, verse 10. the smell of them is said to exceed all spices; and that more especially when they are in exercise; so grateful, well-pleasing, and sweet-smelling are they then to Christ Jesus.

(2.) Because of sacrifices which are of 'a sweet-smelling savor, that are offered up here, as the sacrifices of prayer, which, in <660508>Revelation 5:8, are called *odors*; and are more especially so to God the Father, when they are offered up through Christ's mediation, being perfumed with his *much incense*: here are also the sacrifices of praise, which are of an exceeding grateful and delightful odor to God; for being offered up to him through Christ, these spiritual sacrifices become acceptable to him.

(3.) Because of that pleasure and delight which Christ takes in his people, and that sweet communion which they here enjoy with him; so that to them both it is 'a mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense;' where the one concludes, it is good to be, and the other resolves to stay 'till the day break,' etc. The saints are 'the excellent in the earth,' with whom Christ delights to

converse, and to whom his 'goodness extends;' he says, 'the lines are fallen to him in pleasant places, and that he has a goodly heritage assigned him by his Father; inasmuch as they are his to live and dwell with him for evermore: and to the saints, Christ's 'tabernacles are amiable' and lovely; they count 'a day spent in his courts, better than a thousand elsewhere;' because there they see him, and have fellowship with him whom their souls love. Now in this 'mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,' Christ, as he delights, so he resolves to dwell, 'until the day break,' etc.

Which is,

1st, Until the day of grace breaks in upon every elect soul, All that the Father hath loved with an everlasting love, and hath chosen in Christ before the world began, he put into his hands; who, upon the reception of them, laid himself under obligation to redeem them by his blood, and bring them safe to glory; and as he has already done the former, he is now doing the latter, through the ministry of the word; and therefore the preaching of the gospel, a standing ministry, and a church state, are continued on earth; in which he will stay, until every one of those other sheep are called by divine grace, whom he has laid himself under obligation to bring in: and now, when grace breaks in upon a poor sinner's heart, it is like the break of day unto him; light springs into his understanding, which before was darkened; he was darkness itself, is now made light in the Lord; and is no more reckoned among the children of the night, but among the children of the day; for now the shadows of ignorance and infidelity are fled away; the scales of darkness are fallen from his eyes, and in God's light he sees light: he now sees his lost and undone state without Christ, the corruption and depravity of his nature, and the plague of his own heart; he sees the impurity' and imperfection of his own righteousness, and the glory and fullness of Christ's; he sees Christ as a proper, suitable, able and willing Savior; he sees things he never saw before, and which will ever remain invisible to a carnal eye. Now until the day of grace has thus broke in upon every elect soul; and the shadows of blindness, ignorance, and infidelity, are thus fled and gone; Christ has taken up his residence, and will dwell in his church, which, to him, is a mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense.

Or else,

2dly, Until the day of glory breaks; that everlasting day, in which there will be no more night; when nil shadows of darkness, infidelity, doubts and fears, will flee away; when saints shall be attended no more with the long, tedious and dark nights of afflictions and sorrows, and shall stand in no need of shadowy ordinances; but shall enjoy Christ, the sum and substance of all, and dwell and be delighted with him perpetually, upon the everlasting mountains of spices, as has been shewn on chapter 2:17.

Song 4:10 "How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!"

CHRIST having declared in the preceding verse, how much his heart was delighted in, and ravished with the faith of his church; now proceeds to³⁶⁴

shew how well pleased he was with her love, and other graces of the Spirit, in these words; where.

I. The excellency of her love is set forth.

II. The sweet smell of her ointments is commended.

I. He gives some excellent characters of her love to him. Christ is the object of a believer's love; and he is well pleased with that love which they shew to him: the nature of this love, its spring and actings, have been shewn already, on chapter <220103>1:3, where it has been observed, that it is superlative and universal; a believer loves Christ above all, and all of Christ; it is, or at least ought to be, constant and ardent, and is always hearty and unfeigned; it springs and arises from views of Christ's loveliness, and sights of his suitableness and fullness, from a sense of his love, and a discovery of union and relation to him; and is heightened and increased by enjoying communion and fellowship with them; it manifests itself by a regard to his commands and ordinances, his truths, his people and his presence, and by parting with, and bearing all for him, as has there been more largely shewn, Now of such a love as this, he says,

2. He says, that it is 'better than wine:' he here asserts the same of her love, which she had of his, in chapter <220102>1:2. Christ and the church, in this Song, do frequently gather up each others words, striving, as it were, to outdo each other in their expressions of love; but Christ will in no wise come behind, and be outdone by his church and people; though it may well be wondered at, that Christ should have the same to say of our love, as we have of his; yet so it is: he here declares, it is 'better than wine,' that is, more grateful and pleasant, more refreshing and reviving; 'wine makes glad the heart of man,' <19A415>Psalm 104:15. but it cannot cheer, and make glad the heart of man, more than a sinner's love does the heart of Christ: wine was used in feasts, and counted a principal part thereof; therefore the 'house of feasting', was called the 'house of drinking,' that is, wine, <210702>Ecclesiastes 7:2. the feast which the rich Pharisee made for Christ, was not, as one <f529>well observes, thought so much of by him, nor half so entertaining to him, as the love which the poor woman shewed him: wine was used in the legal sacrifices; but the wine of legal sacrifices, or any external performance, is not so valued by Christ as a sinner's love is; and indeed no duties or performances whatever are acceptable to him, unless love be the inward principle from whence they flow, and by Which they are acted.

II. Her ointments are next commended, and the smell of them: in chapter <220103>1:3 we read of Christ's ointments, here of the church's; in both places one and the same thing is intended, namely, the graces of the Spirit; why these are called ointments, have been there shewn. These ointments, or graces of the Spirit, are first Christ's and then the church's: the head is first anointed with them, and then the members; he without measure, but they in measure; which being poured forth upon them, and they anointed with them, the smell of them is exceeding grateful to him: the smell of these ointments intends the actings and exercises of grace upon him; which are very delightful to him, and preferred by him to all spices, even to all that were used in the holy anointing oil, <023023>Exodus 30:23, 24, that was not so valuable as this 'anointing which teacheth all things;' nor the smell of that so much esteemed by Christ, as this is.

Song 4:11 "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

CHRIST having declared, in the two former verses, how much his heart was taken with the faith and love

of his church, and delighted with the smell of her ointments, here, with pleasure, takes notice of her mellifluous language, and sweet-smelling dress. Two things are here commended in her;

I. The sweetness of her speech.

II. The smell of her garments.

I. The sweetness of her speech: Christ's heart was not only ravished with her sparkling eye and dazzling chain, but also with her charming lips and graceful language; 'Thy lips, O my spouse! drop as the honey-comb,' etc. her lips dropped things for matter like the honey-comb; and these things in such a manner as the honey-comb does: so the speech of persons, flowing from the mouth and tongue, is said to be sweeter than the honey-comb; ^{f531} and lovers are said to be sweeter to one another than the sweet honey.

First, Things for matter like the honey-comb; 'Pleasant words,' says Solomon, ^{<201824>}Proverbs 18:24, 'are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.' Such pleasant words, which are as the honey-comb, drop from the church's, and from every believer's lips,

1. In prayer; so the Targum expounds these words of the priest's lips, dropping as the honey-comb, when they prayed in the holy court. The believer oftentimes drops things in prayer; which, as they are profitable to himself and others, for the effectual, fervent, ^{εφνεργουμη>νη}, the inwrought 'prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' ^{<590516>}James 5:16, so they are sweet, pleasant, delightful and acceptable to Christ: 'the prayer of the ³⁶⁷

upright is his delight;' the prayers of the meanest believer are as delightful music in his ears, as sweet-smelling odors in his nostrils, and like the honey or honey-comb to his taste.

2. In praises: Christ has done great things for his church and people in the redemption and salvation of them; and therefore praise becomes them; it is their duty: and as this work is oftentimes pleasant to their own souls; so in discharging it, they often drop things in the praise of Christ's person and grace, which are exceeding grateful and well-pleasing to him.

3. In confessing Christ's name, and owning his truths before men: this is a work exceeding necessary, and a duty highly incumbent on God's children; at every opportunity, and whenever they are called to it, they ought to do it; and as the omission of it is much resented by Christ, so the performance of it will be graciously rewarded, as appears from ^{<401032>}Matthew 10:32; thus Paul, both at Jerusalem and at Rome, and many other martyrs and confessors, have, in the behalf of Christ and his gospel, dropped words like the honey-comb.

4. In the ministry of the word: the church's lips are the ministers of the gospel, so Theodoret; whose business is to deliver, not so much 'the senses of the law,' which is Jarchi's note on the words, as the doctrines of the gospel; these lips drop 'the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and not words which eat like a canker, but words, which, like the honey-comb, are 'health to the bones.'

5. In common conversation: the lips of the saints do frequently therein drop words pleasant and delightful; which tend to the edification of those with whom they converse, and 'minister grace to the hearers;' and so are like the honey-comb, both pleasant and profitable.

Secondly, Her lips dropped these things in such a manner as the honey-comb does;

1. Freely, and without pressing or squeezing: a soul that has received the ‘grace of God in truth, cannot but speak of the things which he has heard and seen; being full of matter, his belly is as wine which hath no vent, and is ready to burst, like new bottles;’ therefore he must speak, that he ‘may be refreshed;’ there needs no other constraint to be laid on him, than what he feels in his own breast.
2. Gradually: the honey-comb does not pour out. all at once, but by degrees; a man of grace, like the virtuous woman in [-203126>](#)Proverbs 31:26 opens his mouth with wisdom, and not like the fool who pours out his foolishness, and utters all his mind at once; but delivers his words with moderation and discretion, and observes proper seasons and opportunities to speak his mind: now a word fitly, prudently, and seasonably spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver;’ for as we are to walk, so we are to ‘talk in wisdom,’ both to those ‘that are without,’ and to those that are within.
3. Constantly: the honey-comb, though it drops gradually, yet it keeps constantly dropping; so a believer’s speech should ‘be always with grace;’ he should be always praying or praising, or dropping something which may tend to the magnifying of God’s grace, and the good and edification of souls.

These words in general shew the choiceness of a believer’s discourse; that it is not any thing that is the subject of it; no common and ordinary things which he is speaking of, but what are choice and excellent; as the honey which drops from the honey-comb is esteemed the best, being what we call life-honey; as also, how much Christ’s heart was taken with it, and his affections drawn by it; it had a mighty influence upon him, and strongly engaged his heart towards her; see [-200503>](#)Proverbs 5:3. Now the reason why her lips dropped after this manner, was, because ‘honey and milk were under her tongue;’ and. therefore they could not well drop otherwise. The ancients had a sort of food of this mixture, called by the Greeks *meligala* [f533](#) and sometimes *candylos* [f534](#) which was the same composition: according to Galen [f535](#) it was not safe to take milk, particularly goats milk, without honey; Jove is said [f536](#) to be nursed with such a mixture: and this being very grateful to the taste, the speech of the church for pleasantness is compared to it: so Pindar [f537](#) compares his hymn or ode to honey mixed with milk, as being sweet and grateful; and in Plautus [f538](#) it is said, ‘Your words are honey and milk:’ and it may be farther observed, that such a mixture of milk and honey, with poppies in it, was given to the new- married bride, when brought home to her husband; [f539](#) which was now the case of the church. By ‘milk and honey,’ may be intended the aboundings and overflowings of grace in a believer’s heart, which thereby is made like Canaan’s land, ‘flowing with milk and honey;’ now out of the abundance of this grace, received into the heart, the mouth speaks: or else, by them may be meant the doctrines of the gospel; which may very well be compared thereunto, words sweeter than honey and milk.

1st, To honey,

1. The gospel is gathered out of the choice flowers of the scriptures: the ministers of it, ‘who labor in the word and doctrine,’ are the bees, who come laden with the honey of the gospel, into the hive of the church, by which souls are delighted and refreshed.
2. It is like to honey for its sweetness: thus David could say, [-19B9103>](#)Psalm 119:103. by experience, ‘How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth:’ a gracious soul, who feeds on the gospel, and tastes the sweetness of it, finds it, as Ezekiel did his roll, ‘like honey for sweetness’ in his mouth; and so it is always thus grateful to a spiritual man, who has a proper gust and relish of it.

3. Like honey, it is of a nourishing nature: honey was not only the food of babes, but of grown persons, as appears from ^{<230715>}Isaiah 7:15, 22, the gospel has in it food both for ‘children and for strong man and that which is exceeding nourishing to both.

4. Like the honey which Jonathan eat of, it enlightens the eyes: when the Spirit of God introduces it into a sinner’s heart, it gives light there, as the psalmist says, ^{<19B9130>}Psalm 119:130.’ The entrance of thy words giveth light;’ it gives light into a man’s self, into his lost and miserable state by nature; it gives light into the impurity of his heart, and the imperfection of his obedience; it gives light into the person, grace and righteousness of Christ; and is an instrument, in the Spirit’s hands, ‘to guide his feet in the way of peace.’

5. It is like the honey the Israelites sucked out of the rock in the wilderness: the rock is Christ, from whence the honey of the gospel flows; he is the author, and he is the subject of it. Or,

6. It is like the honey Samson found in the carcase of the lion: Christ is the ‘lion of the tribe of Judah; in whose slain body and precious blood, the honey of gospel-grace is to be found by poor sinners, who feed upon it.

2dly, As the gospel may be compared to honey, so likewise to milk; it is called the ‘sincere milk of the word;’ which is not mixed and blended with human doctrines, but is free from such adulterations; and so is exceeding profitable, and no ways hurtful to the souls of men.

1. it may be compared to milk, because it is easy of digestion, and therefore proper food for new-born babes: hence the apostle fed the Corinthians with the milk of the word, and not with the strong meat thereof; because they were not as yet able to bear it, could not digest it; but the plainer and more easy truths of the gospel are like milk, easy of digestion to souls that are horn again; though even these to a natural man are hard sayings, which he cannot bear.

2. Like milk, it is very nourishing; Christ’s new-born babes grow hereby, being ‘nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine.

3. Milk is of a cooling nature, and useful in abating the violence of inflammations; ^{f541} so the gospel, being applied by the Spirit to a poor sinner, who has been under a work of the law, represses the violence of those inflammations raised in his conscience, by a fiery law’s working wrath there; which is wonderfully allayed by the milk of the gospel, and the application of the exceeding great and precious promises of it, which lead the soul to the person, blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

4. Milk is esteemed useful to persons in consumptions, and therefore a milky diet is usually recommended to them; sin is a wasting and consuming distemper, which is only cured by bringing the milk of the gospel; which, when powerfully applied by the Spirit of God, is ‘the savor of life unto life;’ and will not only recover a person that is far gone, and in the most declining condition, but also restore him from death itself.

Now when these are said to be under her tongue, it intends either,

(1.) That they were in her heart; so ^{<196617>}Psalm 66:17: ‘he was exalted with my tongue,’ or he was exalted under my tongue, that is, in my heart; it was in my heart to exalt him, I purposed and designed it: so here, ‘honey and milk are under thy tongue,’ that is, they are in thy heart; it is one thing to have a notion of the gospel in our heads, and another thing to have it in our hearts by a

comfortable experience.

(2.) It supposes that she tasted the sweetness of those truths; she rolled them as a sweet morsel under her tongue, as ^{<182012>}Job 20:12, resolving to have all the pleasure and satisfaction which might arise from thence.

(3.) That these were the constant subject of her meditation, ^{<191007>}Psalm 10:7, having tasted a sweetness in them, which drew her affections to them, her thoughts were always employed about them.

(4.) That she was always ready to speak of them at suitable times, and on proper occasions, having them under her tongue.

(5.) This shews the difference there is between a carnal, Christless sinner, and a true believer; the one has ‘the poison of asps under his lips,’ ^{<450313>}Romans 3:13, and the other ‘honey and milk under his tongue;’ the speech of the one is poisonous and infectious, and the language of the other sweet and edifying; so that as by their words they shall be justified, by their words also they may be known; their speech betrays them, and declares to what company they belong.

II. The second thing commended in her, is the smell of her garments; the ancients used to scent their garments; Calypso gave to Ulysses sweet-smelling garments; ^{f542} ‘and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon:’ in Lebanon grew many odoriferous trees, which did emit a fragrant smell to passers by, hence called ‘sweet-smelling Lebanon;’ ^{f543} so the graces of God’s people are said to smell as Lebanon, ^{<281406>}Hosea 14:6. By her garments here, may be meant,

1. The ‘garments of salvation, and the robe of Christ’s righteousness: Christ’s garments are said to ‘smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia; now these very garments are put upon the believer, so that it is no wonder his garments smell like Lebanon; in these believers appear before God, as Jacob did before his father, in the garments of his elder brother Esau, and are in his nostrils a sweet-smelling savor; for the smell of their raiment to him is like ‘the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed;’ he is exceeding well pleased with it, and with them in it; Christ smells a sweet odor, even in those garments which he himself has wrought out, and clothed his people with. Or else,

2. By them we may understand the outward conversation.garments of, the saints; which are wholesome and savory, and not like the conversation of the wicked, filthy, of an ill smell, nauseous and infectious: when works go along with words, and practice with profession; when with lips dropping like the honey-comb, the sweet-smelling garment of a gospel conversation is joined, how does it adorn a Christian, and render him lovely and acceptable, and causes his smelt, to be as that of Lebanon? Some Jewish writers ^{f544} refer these garments to the sacerdotal garments of the priests; which were certainly typical of those, which Christ, as our high-priest, wears, and with which he clothes his people.

Song 4:13-14 “ Thy plants are an orchard of *pomegranates* (*Punica granatum* L., No. 132), with pleasant *fruits* (Unidentified Plant References); *camphire* (*Lawsonia inermis* L.), with *spikenard* (*Rosa Phoenicia* Boiss), *Spikenard* (*Rosa Phoenicia* Boiss) and *saffron* (*Crocus sativus* L.); *calamus* and *cinnamon* (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum* Nees), with all trees of *frankincense* (1. *Atriplex dimorphostegia* Kar. & Kir. 2. *Atriplex halimus* L. 3. *Atriplex rosea* L. 4. *Atriplex tatarica* L.); *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl., No. 144) and *aloes*, with all the chief spices:”

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

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

I. Who are meant by the church’s plants. The Targum and Jarchi expound it of the young men in Israel; and it is nor. unusual in scripture to call children plants; see <19C803>Psalm 128:3 and <19E412>144:12, therefore, by her plants, may be intended the members of the church, her children, young converts, believers in Christ, who are ‘planted in the house of the Lord, and flourish in the courts of our God:’ these are not mere education plants, who spring up in churches, and join themselves to them, because their parents did; and espouse religion, because they were brought up in it: these are not mere outward profession-plants, who have a name to live, and are dead; have lamps, but no oil in their lamps; and have a form of godliness, fruit but deny the power thereof, such plants as these are fruitless ones; they are like the barren fig-tree, from which three years successively fruit was sought, but none found; if ever there was any appearance of fruit on them, it never came to any thing, but withered away; and whatsoever fruit they do bring forth, it is to themselves, and not to God; like Israel of whom it is said, <281001>Hosea 10:1 that he is ‘an empty vine, and brings forth fruit, to himself:’ and the reason of this is, because they have not the root of the matter in them; nor are they engrafted into, and rooted in Christ Jesus; and therefore are like the stony ground-hearers, who heard and received the word with joy, but it did not last long, because they had no root in themselves; and such being none of the Father’s planting, shall be plucked up, according to what Christ says, <401513>Matthew 15:13.

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

1. Are by divine grace transplanted from the wilderness of the world, they are Christ’s vines, which he brings out of Egypt; his fir and myrtle trees, which he causes to spring up instead of briars and thorns; these he either takes out of the wilderness, or else makes it a fruitful garden by planting them there; he calls them out of the world, and translates them into his own kingdom, whereby he enlarges his church,

and of a garden makes it an orchard.

2. Who have the grace of the Spirit planted in their hearts; who works in them every sort of grace, which he raises, cherishes, and at last brings to perfection.
3. Who are engrafted into Christ Jesus: by nature they belong to, and grow upon the wild olive: but are by grace broken off from that, and are engrafted into the true olive, Christ Jesus; they are planted into the likeness of his death, and into the likeness of his resurrection, and so receive the benefits of both; they abide in him, as the branch in the vine, and, receiving sap and nourishment from him, become fruitful souls.
4. They are such who have received the ingrafted word; it has been planted in them, and powerfully impressed upon them; they have received it in the love of it; it has effectually wrought in them, and brought forth fruit in them from the very day they heard and received it.
5. Such as these who are transplanted from the wilderness of the world, and are planted in Christ, and have had his word and grace planted in their souls, have a right to be planted ministerially in his church; and being planted there, will grow and flourish. Now such plants as these are choice and select ones; they are plants of renown, and pleasant ones to God and Christ; they are planted in a fruitful soil, and by rivers of water, therefore their leaf is always green; neither do they cease from yielding fruit; hence they shall never be plucked up; neither sin, nor Satan, nor the world can do it; and Christ Jesus never will; for they are his Father's planting, in whom he is, and will be glorified, and then is he so when they bring forth much fruit.

II. These plants are said to be an orchard, or like unto an orchard of pomegranates. The word for plants, is by the Cabalistic doctors ^{f10}, rendered waterings or rivulets; which, being derived, make her a garden of pomegranates, as full as an orchard is of them: and it may be rendered gardens ^{f11}; particular churches, which make an orchard, or are like one; even a paradise, .as the word is rendered by the Septuagint, and in other versions ^{f12}; it is generally thought to be a Persiac word; see ^{<160208>}Nehemiah 2:8. but Hillerus ^{f13} derives it from *drp* to separate; it being a garden separate and inclosed, as before one like Eden's garden, exceeding pleasant and delightful; and not like an orchard of any sort of trees, but of pomegranates; of which there were plenty in the land of Canaan; called 'a land of pomegranates,' ^{<050808>}Deuteronomy 8:8 many places in it had their names from thence, ^{<061532>}Joshua 15:32 and 19:13 and 21:24. And the church ^{f14}, with her plants, may be called so, in allusion to the garden of Eden, the earthly paradise of our first parents; where the 'Lord God made to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food;' in the midst of it stood the tree of life, and out of it went a river to water all the garden, and was on all accounts exceeding pleasant and delightful: in Christ's garden, the church, are planted all manner of trees of righteousness, which are both pleasant and profitable; God, stands the tree of life, in the midst of this paradise of Christ Jesus; but with this difference from the tree of life in Eden's garden; for Adam might not put forth his hand, and take of that; but of this, whosoever will, may pluck and eat, and happy is every one that does so: here runs a river of boundless love and grace, the streams whereof water and refresh all the plants herein; and upon all accounts is an Eden of pleasure, a paradise which Christ has made for his own pleasure and delight ^{f15}, and for that reason bears this name: but these plants are not only said to be an orchard, but an orchard or paradise of pomegranates, that is, in which pomegranates grew in great

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

- 1.** Because there are various sorts of them ^{f16}, which bear fruit differing from each other; which may denote the difference there is in saints, by reason of their gifts and graces; they have grace and gifts differing from each other; one has more grace and larger gifts than other's have; they are not all of an equal size and bigness; they have not all a like measure of the Spirit, and yet they are all pomegranates, trees of righteousness, of the right planting.
- 2.** Pomegranate-trees in some countries are very large; and so they were in the land of Canaan, as appears from ^{<091402>}1 Samuel 14:2 and perhaps may here denote such who excel others in gifts and grace; who are officers in churches, and are set over others in and by the Lord; as by the other trees, fruits and spices, after mentioned, may be intended lesser saints, who are of a lower form in the church of Christ.
- 3.** They are very fruitful trees: the fruit they bear, as it is full of a delightful juice, so of grains or kernels; which may denote the saints being full of grace, and all the fruits of righteousness and good works, as the Targum and Jarchi observe here.
- 4.** They grow up straight and upright, and so denote the saints uprightness, both in heart and life; they are men of upright hearts, and of upright conversations; are looking upwards to, and growing up into their head, Christ Jesus.
- 5.** They do not grow any where, in any soil; the wilderness, through which the Israelites traveled, could not furnish them with any, though the land of Canaan could when they came thither: these plants or trees of righteousness, do not grow any where; they are not to be found every where; they grow in Christ's garden; in his house they are planted, and in his courts they flourish.

III. Here are several other trees, fruits and spices, which are said to be in this garden or orchard; for it is added, with all pleasant fruits; that is, whatsoever is valuable, precious, and desirable, such as those after mentioned; as camphire with spikenard; both these have been observed in chapter ^{<220112>}1:12,14. but are here mentioned in the plural number, cypresses, or cyprusses with nards ^{f17}; the camphire, or cypress, on the account of its fruits or berries; and the spikenard, because there are various sorts of it, as *nardus Italica*, *nardus Celtica*, and *nardus Indica*, which last is the right spikenard; and it may be, because the leaves which grow out of the root, are like a bunch of ears of corn: saffron; it is no where else mentioned in scripture; we call it by this name from the Arabic, *zaffran*; it is called so on account of its yellow and golden color; its nature and usefulness are well known among us; according to Schindler ^{f18}, it seems to have been read *carcos*, the same with *crocus*, which has its name from *Corycus* ^{f19}, a mountain in Cilisia; so Pliny, lib, 21. c. 6. where it grew, and was the best; it is properly joined with spikenard, since itself is a spice, and is called *spica Cilissa* ^{f20}; it bears a blue flower, in the midst of which are three stylets, or little threads, of a fine red color, which are what is called saffron: *calamus and cinnamon*; both these were ingredients in the holy anointing oil, ^{<023023>}Exodus 30:23, both grow an India, and in Arabia ^{f21}, and in Ethiopia; *calamus* is the sweet cane, mentioned in ^{<234324>}Isaiah 43:24, it grows in India and Arabia; and is said to scent the air, where and while it is growing, with a fragrant smell; and cinnamon is the middlemost bark of a tree, that grows in Ceylon in the East Indies; it is mentioned in ^{<200717>}Proverbs 7:17, as the

harlot's perfume, and in [<661813>](#) Revelation 18:13, as part of the wares or merchandise of the whore of Babylon: some say [f22](#), what we call cinnamon is the cassia of the ancients; Herolotus [f23](#) fabulously relates, what, from the Phoenicians, is called cinnamon, are stalks or barks, which the Arabs say, are found in the nests of certain birds. 'With all trees of frankincense, myrrh;' frankincense chiefly grew in one of the Arabias, hence called thurisera; [f24](#) and is said to come out of Syria; [f25](#) it was used in the holy perfume, as was myrrh in the anointing oil, [<023023>](#) Exodus 30:23-34 which is a gum, from a shrub in Arabia, of a bitter taste, but fragrant; and with both these the church is said to be perfumed, chapter 3:6 and aloes; either the ling-aloes, so the Targum here, of which mention is made in [<042406>](#) Numbers 24:6. called *agallocbium*, an aromatic plant, which grows in India and Arabia, and is of a sweet odor, as Isidore [f26](#) says; or the herb aloes, which is of a bitter taste, but of a sweet smell, and with which garments were perfumed, [<194508>](#) Psalm 45:8; [<200717>](#) Proverbs 7:17 together with all chief spices, or precious ones; Solomon's gardens might be furnished with these from Arabia Felix, where all sorts of spices grew, hence called *aromatifera*, the spice country: [f27](#) and be they what they will, they are all to be found in Christ's garden, or what is answerable to them. Now by these may be meant, the several graces of the Spirit, which are to be found in all those who are plants or members in Christ's church; which are called by these names, and compared to these fruits, herbs, and spices,

- 1.** Because the graces of the Spirit are many, and therefore many herbs and spices are mentioned; see [<480522>](#) Galatians 5:22.
- 2.** They are various, of different sorts; for as it makes for the pleasantness of a garden or orchard to have many trees, plants, herbs, and flowers, so to have them of different sorts; for if there were never so many, and all of one sort, it would not be so delightful: the church of Christ, and believers in Christ, as they have many, so they have various graces; there are faith, hope, love, etc. faith is a grace differing from hope, and hope differs from faith, and love from them both.
- 3.** They are rare and excellent: the herbs and spices here mentioned, such as spikenard, saffron, camphire, cinnamon, etc. are not to be found everywhere; they do not grow in every garden; they are very rarely to be met with: the graces of the Spirit do not grow any where, in any heart; there are but few that have them; they are exceeding rare, valuable and precious.
- 4.** These herbs and spices are all of them of a sweet smell: and so are the graces of the Spirit to Christ; they are a sweet perfume to him; the smell of these ointments is preferred by him to all spices, in verse 10.
- 5.** Some of these herbs and plants cheer the heart, [f28](#) and revive the spirits, as saffron, cinnamon, and camphire: the Spirit of God, in his operations of grace, and in exciting and drawing forth grace into exercise, wonderfully cheers our hearts, revives our spirits, and keeps us from fainting and swooning fits: in the multitude of our thoughts within us, his comforts delight our souls.
- 6.** Some of them preserve from putrefaction, as myrrh and aloes; and therefore were used in embalming dead bodies, [<431939>](#) John 19:39 the grace of the Spirit is of such a nature; it is by this our dead souls are quickened, by this they are kept in life, and are preserved from putrifying and rotting in sin.
- 7.** Some of them are green in winter-time; as saffron and the aloe: [f29](#) grace is always alive, and ever green, even in winter-storms and tempests, though it does not always appear so to us; it is an immortal seed

which never dies.

8. Some of these grow up higher and taller than others; the calamus, ¹³⁰cinnamon, myrrh, and ethers, grow up taller than the spikenard and saffron: now these may intend the graces of faith, hope, and love, which rise upwards in their actings on the Lord Jesus Christ; and the latter, the graces of humility, meekness, lowliness of mind, etc.

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

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

Song 4:16 “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant *fruits* (Unidentified Plant References).”

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

- I.** A title or character she gives him; ‘my beloved.’
 - II.** A request or invitation she makes him; to ‘come into his garden.’
 - III.** Her end in it; to ‘eat his pleasant fruits.’
- III.** The end of her making this request or invitation, is, that he might ‘eat his pleasant fruits:’ in which may be considered,

- 1st,** What these fruits are.
- 2dly,** Whose they are.
- 3dly,** That they are pleasant ones. And,
- 4thly,** What is meant by eating them.

1st, What these fruits are. By fruits are meant, either the graces of the Spirit, which are called ‘the fruit of the spirit,’ ^{<480522>}Galatians 5:22, or else, the duties and services of God’s people, their good works, which are performed in the exercise of grace, believers are ‘trees of righteousness;’ and the fruits which they bear are called ‘fruits of righteousness;’ being by grace made good trees, they bring forth good fruit, and are said to be ‘fruitful in every good work;’ now these Christ is here invited to eat. The Targum expounds it of the offerings of the people, which God graciously accepted.

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

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

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

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

(1.) They are performed by virtue of union to him; and therefore the fruits of righteousness are said to be by Jesus Christ; and 'as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine,' no more can any bear fruit, or perform good works aright, except they are engrafted and abide in Christ: he is the root which bears the branches, and from whence they receive sap and nourishment, which causes them to abound with fruit; 'the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit,' says Solomon, <201212>Proverbs 12:12. now the righteous man's root is Christ.

(2.) They are done, 'not in their own strength, but in his;' for without him they can do nothing; it is he who works in them, both 'to will and to do of his good pleasure;' therefore they ascribe all their works, duties and services to him; and say, as the apostle did, when he had asserted that he had labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles, corrects himself thus, 'yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'

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

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

4thly, What is meant by earing them: and this intends Christ's acceptance of them, and delight in them,

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

Song 5:1 "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl. , No. 144) with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

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

- I.** Christ's reply to the church's request, in the latter end of the former chapter, where she desires and invites him to come into his garden.
 - II.** An account of Christ's carriage and behavior, or what he did when he came into his garden.
 - III.** A kind invitation given by Christ to his friends to feast with him.
- II.** Shall now proceed to take notice of his carriage and behavior there, or what he declares he did, or was doing; being there.

1st, He says, 'I have gathered my myrrh with my spice? Myrrh is one of the chief spices, was a principal ingredient in the holy anointing oil, and was used in other ointments. We read of the oil or ointment of myrrh, in [170212](#) Esther 2:12, with which Esther and the other maidens were purified, in order to be presented to king Ahasuerus: this, and other sorts of ointments, as spikenard, were used in feasts, and were poured upon the heads of those who were the guests, as appears from [411403](#) Mark 14:3, to which custom the Psalmist alludes, [192305](#) Psalm 23:5. Christ being about to make a feast, not only for himself, but for others, gathers myrrh, with other spices, to make an ointment of, to entertain and refresh his guests with. By *myrrh*, with the rest of spices, may be meant, either repentance and humiliation for sin, and mortification of it, according to some interpreters; [156](#) and indeed repentance and humiliation for sin, when evangelical, being the work of the blessed Spirit, springing from right principles, and *κατα Θεο<v*, according to God's mind; when it arises from an apprehension of sin, as committed against a God of love and grace; and when it springs from faith's viewing a crucified Christ; though, like myrrh, it is bitter to the soul, yet is odorous and well-pleasing to Christ; it is taken notice of by him, as Ephraim's bemoanings, repentance and humiliation, were by God; he has a bottle to put such tears as these in, which drop from faith's eye: and so mortification of sin, considered as the Spirit's grace, is regarded by him,

according to <450813>Romans 8:13. 'If ye, through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Or else, according to others ^{f57}, by myrrh with other spices, are intended the suffering saints and martyrs, who have undergone bitter afflictions and persecutions for Christ and his gospel; whom he values, esteems, takes notice of, and gathers into his Father's house; where he clothes them with white robes, puts palms in their hands, and everlasting hallelujahs in their mouths; see <660709>Revelation 7:9-14, or rather, the sufferings of Christ himself, and the fruits thereof; which, though bitter to him, yet are of a sweet-smelling savor to God the Father, and to all the saints; the fruits of which, appearing in the everlasting salvation of his people, are very delightful to him; for he now sees of the 'travail of his soul, and is satisfied;' he is now reaping with pleasure a glorious harvest of all his sweat, toil and labor. Though I rather choose to understand hereby in general the graces of the Spirit, which Christ delights in, and which go under the name of myrrh and other spices, in chapter <220413>4:13,14. Christ having got in his harvest, as the word signifies, and the Septuagint render it, provides a feast for himself and others; as was the custom of those times and nations, as it is now with us. And therefore,

2dly, He says, 'I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey.' Honey was the food, not only of infants, but of grown persons, as is manifest from <230722>Isaiah 7:22, but that he should eat the honeycomb with it, seems to have some difficulty in it. The Septuagint read it thus, I have eaten my bread with my honey ^{f58}, that is, either bread dipped in honey, or honey being put upon it, or else bread made with it; which sense is favored by those words in <261613>Ezekiel 16:13. 'Thou didst eat fine flower, and honey, and oil,' that is, bread made thereof: R. Sol. Jarchi says, it is the honey which grows in canes; he means, sugar, which, by Arrianus ^{f59}, is called *με>λι καλα>μινον*; and that for the exceeding love he had for it, he is said to eat it out of the cane; but it rather seems to be a piece of an honeycomb full of honey, just took out of the hive; such an one as the disciples gave Christ; and this was had in no small esteem among the Jews. The word for honeycomb signifies a wood or forest ^{f60}, and may design such honey as was found in woods; though here, it should seem, in a garden, of which there was plenty in Judea, <091425>1 Samuel 14:25, which of its own accord dropped from the comb, and ran down the tree from it, in which it was, and was reckoned the purest honey: and the other word for honey, may signify common honey, or honey made of the fruit of the palm-tree; which, the Jewish writers say, is the honey meant in <050808>Deuteronomy 8:8, ^{f61} and so the words may be rendered, 'I have eaten my wood-honey with my palm-honey;' for it cannot be thought that the honey and the comb were both eat together. And by the honey and honeycomb, may be meant the doctrines of the gospel, or the words of Christ's mouth, which are said to be sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb:' so that Christ delights, not only in the graces of the Spirit, but also in the doctrines of the gospel, and the preaching of them.

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

words of God's acceptance of the drink-offering of red and white wine, which the priests poured upon the altar: R. Aben Ezra gives it as the sense of some of their Rabbins, though he does not approve of it; that by milk, is meant the white which ascends upon the wine; I suppose he means the froth or head that is made by pouring it out. But to leave these empty conjectures, this seems in general to intend the plenty of provisions, and satisfaction therein, which Christ found in his church; by which may be meant the doctrines of the gospel. Gospel grace is represented hereby, in [235501](#) Isaiah 55:1. 'By wine and milk, without money and without price:' wine revives and cheats the spirits, makes a man to forget his poverty, and to remember his misery no more; so do the doctrines of the gospel, when they come with power to a poor sinner, sensible of his poverty and misery; they make him to forget it, and fill him with an unspeakable joy: milk nourishes and strengthens; and so do the doctrines of the gospel; therefore says the apostle, 'I have fed you with milk,' meaning the wholesome and nourishing words of faith. Now from all this I would observe,

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

Song 5:5 " I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl., No. 144), and my fingers with sweet smelling *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl. , No. 144), upon the handles of the lock."

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

- I. She 'rose to open to him'.
- II. Having rose to open to Christ, she puts her hand 'upon the handles of the lock,' to draw it back, and let him in; which, in order, is the third effect of Christ's 'putting in his hand by the hole of the door.' Now though this is not in so many words expressed in the text, yet it is manifestly implied; for if her 'hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon

the handles of the lock;' it then supposes, that her hands and fingers must first lay hold upon the lock-handles, which was also absolutely necessary to do, in order to open the door. It will be proper here to consider,

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

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

2dly, By her hands and fingers may be meant her faith in its exercise and operation, attended with the fruits thereof. Faith is usually represented in scripture as the hand of the soul by which it receives Christ, as the Father's free gift; embraces him as the only Savior; lays hold upon and retains him, as he stands in all the endearing characters and relations which he appears in to his own people, Now this faith is not idle and inactive, but 'works by love' to Christ and his people, to his ways and ordinances; it has its fruits, and is attended with the performance of good works,, and will put the person that is possessed of it, on the discharge of his duty; it put the church here upon attempting to draw back the lock of unbelief; faith laid its hands and fingers upon the handles of it, and used all its might, power and diligence to do it: but it may be asked, How could the church be able, with all her faith, industry and diligence, to draw back this lock? I answer, Faith cannot do this of itself; unbelief is a 'sin which easily besets us,' but it is not so easily got rid of; it is a weight, that the hand of faith of itself, cannot lift and lay aside; the believer must say, even in the exercise of faith, with the poor man in the gospel, <410924>Mark 9:24. 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;' this lock. grows too hard for faith to draw it back of itself; but yet faith's looking to, and dealing with Christ's person, blood, and righteousness, much weakens unbelief. When an unbelieving Thomas was indulged with a sight of Christ's pierced hands and feet, and was enabled to thrust his hand into his side; his unbelief immediately vanished and disappeared, and he could say, 'My Lord, and my God:' it is certain, that the stronger faith grows, lukewarmness, indolence, and carnal security decay; and the soul is quickened, stirred up, and put upon the performance of duty: and what is it that a soul is not enabled, to do in the exercise of faith? difficulties which are insuperable to carnal sense and reason, are got over by faith; read ever the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and you will see what heroic acts have been performed by faith though the strength in which these things have been performed, did not arise from the grace itself, but from Christ, the object of it, whose 'strength is made in faith's weakness;' for without him we can do nothing, but his 'grace is sufficient to enable us to do all things.' Now before she proceeds to tell how she succeeded in this attempt: she gives an account of a piece of sweet experience she met with, whilst she was trying to draw back the lock; 'my hands,' says she, 'dropped with myrrh, and my fingers, with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock.' By myrrh, is meant grace, in its aboundings and overflowings: but it may be inquired, From whence this myrrh came, and by whom it was brought? If we understand it of the church's myrrh or grace, as brought here by herself, as some think ¹⁸¹; who may be represented as taking up a pot of myrrh, intending with it to anoint and refresh his head which was wet with dew; which she either unawares or else designedly broke; or else, being in a panic fear, her hand shook, and the myrrh ran over her hands and fingers; or rather, not having time to perfume her garments with it, as was usual, see <194508>Psalm 45:8, she dipped her fingers in a pot of myrrh, to ingratiate and render herself acceptable to her beloved; supposing that he might be full

of resentment on the account of her carriage and behavior towards him: and then taking it in this sense, it will teach us these things following;

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

(1.) For the preciousness of it; myrrh is a precious spice, and one of the principal spices; and this in the text is the best of myrrh, there was a sort of myrrh called *odoraria*, sweet-smelling [f83](#): the word translated 'sweet-smelling myrrh,' signifies 'passing or current myrrh;' [f84](#) it being vendible or saleable, not in the least damaged, but what will pass; and so is in the same sense current, as money is said to be, [Genesis 23:16](#), or else, it is called 'passing myrrh,' because it diffuses its odor on every side; so R. Solomon Jarchi thinks: or, rather because it is that myrrh which bleeds or weeps, or drops from the tree of itself, which is always esteemed the best myrrh: and this sets forth the exceeding preciousness of Christ's grace, which is more valuable than all things else.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Song 5:13 “His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like *lilies* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L.) , dropping sweet smelling *myrrh* (1. *Commiphora kataf* (Forsk.) Engl. 2. *Commiphora Myrrha* (Nees) Engl. , No. 144).”

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

First, She describes him by his *cheeks*; which, she says, ‘are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:’ by which we are to understand, not the smooth and naked cheeks, but with hair growing upon them, which best suits with the metaphor of a bed of spices; for as aromatic plants and sweet-smelling flowers bud out,

and spring up from a bed of spices, and make it look very beautiful; so the hair of a man's beard puts itself forth, and grows upon his cheeks, or jaws, ^{f147} as the word may be rendered, and makes him look very graceful and majestic: R. Aben Ezra understands by his cheeks, his beard; as also do many Christian Interpreters. ^{f148} And this was literally true of Christ; who was not 'an infant of days,' but a man grown up, when he suffered in the room and stead of sinners; as is manifest from his 'giving his

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

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

2dly, The graces of the Spirit which are in Christ as man and mediator: these, like the hair of a man's beard which grow upon his cheeks, adorn the man Christ Jesus, and render him very lovely and graceful; these grow in large numbers on him; he is 'full of grace and truth;' and though there is a large communication of grace made daily to believers from this fulness which is in Christ; yet it is no way lessened thereby, even as the hair of a man's beard, which the oftener cut, the thicker and faster it grows. Now these lovely cheeks thus adorned, may be said to be 'as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,' because of their beauty and loveliness; no spicy bed, set and filled with aromatic plants and sweet-smelling flowers, can be more lovely and delightful to the eye of sense, than Christ, with all his grace, is to the eye of faith; the reason why he appears to a believer 'fairer than the children of men,' is, because grace, in all its fullness, 'is poured into his lips:' also they may be compared to these, because of the sweet odor of them; the effluvias of the sweet flowers and most fragrant spices growing in large numbers, in beds of them, cannot be more grateful to the smell, than the graces of Christ are to believers; and therefore they are compared to ointments, the savor of which cheats the minds, and attracts the hearts of his people to him: this oil of gladness being poured plentifully on his head, runs clown his beard, and so to every part of his garments; which makes them all 'smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia;' and renders him, and all that belong, to him, sweet, savory, and delightful to his saints. Likewise they may be compared to 'a bed of spices and sweet flowers,' because of the variety of them: as in an aromatic garden there are various beds, and in those beds various spices, plants and flowers; so there is in Christ a variety of the gifts and graces of the Spirit; there are diversities of gifts, and all sorts of grace, which make up that fullness, from

whence believers receive grace for grace, Or else,

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

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

1st, The scriptures of truth. The Targum understands them of the two tables of stone, which were written in ten lines, like the rows or beds of an aromatic garden, productive of acute and delightful senses; much to the same purpose does R. Solomon Jarchi give the sense of them: but it seems better to understand them of the whole word of God, the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. These are as it were the cheeks or face of Christ, which represent and set forth the glory of his person, the virtue of his blood, the excellency of his righteousness, and the riches of his grace: these may be said to be ‘as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers,’ being in several distinct plots or beds: for this garden of the scriptures was not thrown up at once, and formed in that beautiful order in which now it is; but first one spicy bed was made, and then another; for ‘God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets:’ these beds are set with a variety of ‘exceeding great and precious promises,’ and excellent doctrines; which the meditating soul, like the industrious bee, sucks much sweetness from: all those excellent spices, and sweet-smelling flowers which grow here, have their different usefulness; for

‘all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,’ ^{<550316>}2 Timothy 3:16. And as aromatic plants and fragrant flowers are delightful to the eye, sweet to the smell, and refreshing to the senses, so are these truths and promises; they are like ‘apples of gold in pictures of silver’ to the eye of faith; diffuse a delightful odor to the smell, give a savor of Christ’s knowledge, when and wherever explained; and being held in the hand of faith, refresh all the spiritual senses, and are ‘the joy and rejoicing of the heart.’ Or else,

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

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

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

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

2. His lips are compared to lilies for the beauty of them: and I suppose that not white lilies are here meant, but purple or red lilies; of which Pliny ^{f154} speaks, the flower of which, he says, some call the rose-lily; so Maimonides ^{f155} speaks of red lilies, by which he interprets ^{drwz} the rose; which, he says, have a good smell, and of them it is said, his lips, like lilies, ^{<220513>}Song of Solomon 5:13 and also R. Alshech on the text: the best of these grew in Syria, in Antioch, and Loadicea; ^{f156} and these best suit with lips; for not white, but red lips, ^{f157} are accounted the most beautiful; and therefore Christ compares the church’s lips to ‘a thread of scarlet,’ in chapter 4:3. There is a beauty and loveliness in all Christ’s words; they are

pleasant ones; they are gracious words, or words of grace, which drop from his lips; and indeed how can his lips drop any other? his speech cannot be but always with grace, and with gracefulness, when grace itself is poured into his lips.

3. They may be compared to lilies for the fineness, thinness, softness and delicateness of them: thinness, as well as redness, adds a beauty to the lips: Christ's voice was not heard, his lips did not move in setting forth his own praises; for he sought not his own, but his Father's glory; he did not speak for himself, but his words and actions spoke for him; he did as Solomon advised, <202702>Proverbs 27:2. 'Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.'

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

5. They may be compared to lilies for the glory and majesty of them: Christ says, that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field;' Christ's words come with authority, and are clothed with power; 'the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty,' <192904>Psalm 29:4.

Again, these lips of Christ are said to drop 'sweet-smelling myrrh;' for the construction is not with lilies, but with lips; for myrrh does not drop from lilies, but may be said to do so from Christ's lips: though some f158 think, the allusion is to crowns, made of red or purple lilies, wore at nuptial feasts, on which were poured oil of myrrh, and so dropped from them; but it is from the lips, and not lilies, the myrrh is said to drop. And here we may consider,

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

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

2. His lips drop words, for matter like 'sweet swelling myrrh,' preserving from rottenness, putrefaction and corruption: Christ's words preserve from the corruption of sin; his doctrines are 'according to godliness;' they are so far from having a tendency to encourage persons in sin, that they are the best antidote and preservative against it; the doctrines of grace teach us 'to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;' they are the means of implanting and maintaining principles opposite to them: they also preserve from the corruption of false doctrines, which are pernicious to souls, and 'eat as do a canker;' but Christ's words are wholesome ones; and those whose hearts are established with them, are not 'carried about with divers and strange doctrines;' nor are they 'tossed to and fro with every wind' of error, but retain their

steadfastness in Christ Jesus: likewise, wherever Christ's words come with power, they preserve from going down to 'the pit of corruption;' for Christ says that whosoever 'keeps his sayings, shall never see death,' that is, the second death.

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

- 1.** Gradually, and not all at once: Christ did not speak all at once to his disciples, but by little and little, as they were able to bear it; they had not their light, knowledge and comfort all at once; no more have saints now, nor must they expect it; we are first babes, then young' men, and then fathers in Christ.
- 2.** Seasonably, at proper times, as the wants and necessities of his people require; for 'God hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary,' <235004>Isaiah 50:4.
- 3.** Constantly; his lips dropped sweet-smelling myrrh when on earth, and still drop it now he is in heaven; 'see that ye refuse not him that speaketh;' that now speaketh, continues to speak, and will do so until all his people are gathered in.
- 4.** Powerfully and effectually; though his words do but drop, yet they drop with power; they make and leave impressions where they drop; they work effectually in them that believe.
- 5.** Yet sweetly and gently; not like hasty and sudden showers of rain, which beat down the grass and corn; but as rain that drops gently and mildly, and so is acceptable to the earth, and makes it fruitful; 'my doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew,' etc., <053202>Deuteronomy 32:2. Now this graceful and agreeable manner of his delivery, as well as the grateful matter of his words, render him very acceptable to his church, and shew him to be a most excellent person, and 'the chiefest among ten thousand;' which is what she attempts to demonstrate, in this description, to the daughters of Jerusalem. The kisses of Christ's lips, or the manifestations of his love, may be taken into the sense of these words which are as delightful as sweet-smelling myrrh; see chapter 1:2 and such a sentiment is expressed in the same language by others.

Song 5:15 "His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars (*Cedrus libani* Loud, No. 101)."

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

- I.** She describes him by 'his legs,' which, she says, 'are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.'
- II.** She describes him by 'his countenance;' or his appearance f191, look or aspect; which is the ninth particular instanced in: by this is meant, not his countenance or look by which he beholds others; but that by which he is visible to, and beheld by others, and which recommends him to them; as his grand and majestic form, his tall stature, his graceful mein and deportment, and stately walk. And

this she says, is,

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

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

2. For pleasantness; Lebanon is called by Moses, that goodly mountain which before his death he had a great desire to see: Christ's countenance, form or personage, is more glorious and excellent than Lebanon, or any other mountain whatever; he is 'the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' **3.** For the fruitfulness of it; Lebanon was a fruitful mountain for vines and cedars: on Christ all those 'trees of righteousness' grow, which are the Lord's planting; from him they receive their life and nourishment, their verdure and fruitfulness; and by him they are supplied with all needful grace; for in him all fullness of it dwells,

4. For the fragrancy of it; hence we read that the saints smell is as Lebanon, <281406>Hosea 14:6, the trees and plants which grew there, were very odoriferous, and diffused a grateful smell to passers by: Christ's person, grace, righteousness, sacrifice, and all that belong to him, are exceeding savory to believers; and hence it is, that he is in this song compared to spikenard, myrrh, camphire, the rose and lily, etc. Lyra interprets this, not of the mountain of Lebanon, but of the aromatic tree, *lebanah*, or frankincense; so Theodoret.

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

3dly, It may be meant of the temple, which is sometimes called Lebanon, as in <381101>Zechariah 11:1, and it may be very well called so, because it was chiefly made of the wood of Lebanon: and Christ may be very well compared unto it, for the stateliness and magnificence of it; as well because that all that belonged to it, or were performed in it, were eminently typical of him, and did gloriously prefigure him; and hence he calls his body the temple, in <430219>John 2:19.

Secondly, She says, that his countenance is, or 'he is excellent or choice as the cedars' which grew on Lebanon; and her meaning is, that as the cedars in Lebanon were the choicest, and were preferable to all other trees, so was Christ her beloved to her: saints are compared to cedars; see <199212>Psalm 92:12 and <042405>Numbers 24:5,6, but Christ is the chief cedar, the choicest of all the cedars; in him these are planted and take root, and by him they are made fruitful; to these sort of trees Christ may be compared, for their tallness, stateliness, fragrancy and durableness; but these and all other things failing short to express his beauty, and set off his greatness, she concludes the description in the following words.

Song 6:2 “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather *lilies*(1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L.).”

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

- I.** The place whither she says he was gone; ‘my beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices.’
- II.** The end of his going down, or what his business and employment was when there; which was twofold:
 - 1st,** ‘To feed in the gardens.’
 - 2dly,** ‘To gather lilies.’
- I.** The place whither she says he was gone, ‘into his garden;’ and more particularly, ‘to the beds of spices.’ And,
 - 1st,** It may be inquired what was meant by his garden, into which he was gone down. Some ^{r207} understand it of the heavenly paradise, whither Christ was gone to share the everlasting joys thereof, and converse with angels and saints; who may be said to be the ‘trees of righteousness,’ those spicy plants and precious flowers which are planted there; and in the midst of which stands ‘the tree of life,’ Christ Jesus, the glory of the whole garden; and into this, Christ’s lilies, when fully ripe, are transplanted by him. This sense is favored by R. Aben Ezra’s gloss upon the text, who says, ‘This is he who ascended on high,’ to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies, ‘because he dwelleth with the angels, who are the righteous ones.’ But if the words design Christ’s ascension into heaven, they should rather have expressed thus; ‘my beloved is gone up into his garden,’ than as they are, ‘my beloved is gone down into his garden:’ therefore I rather think, that the church of Christ here on earth is meant; which is as a garden separated by Christ from this world, whose enclosure is sovereign and distinguishing grace; in which are various trees, plants and spices, set and planted there by Christ himself, and where he takes his walks with pleasure; but in what sense the church may be compared to a garden, see more on chapter 4:12.
 - 2dly,** It may be observed, that this garden is said to be his; and so it may very well; for of all others he has chosen this to be his garden; he asked it of his Father for this purpose, and he gave it him; he has also purchased it by his own blood, and distinguished it by his grace; he takes the care of it, waters it, and watches over it; it is he that hath brought it to its present perfection, and will bring it to a far greater; so that Christ retires and takes his walks here, not as one either upon trespass or sufferance, and by the leave of others; but as having an undoubted right and title to it, and as being sovereign lord and owner of it; but of this, see more on chapter 4:16.
 - 3dly,** Christ is said to be gone down into his garden: which perhaps may be an allusion to Solomon’s gardens, which lay lower than his palace: and it is probable that those stairs, which went down from the city of David, the palace royal of the kings of Judah, were made to go down into the king’s gardens, of both which you read in ^{<160215>}Nehemiah 2:15, and so ‘the garden of nuts,’ in verse 11. seems to be in the

valley: or the allusion may be to what Solomon himself was wont to do, as Josephus ^{f208} relates; who used to go very early in a morning, in great pomp, to Etham, about two miles from Jerusalem, a pleasant place, abounding with gardens and flows of water, which might lie lower than Jerusalem. And in the spiritual or mystical sense, may point out,

1. The low estate of Christ's church here on earth: the saints are compared to myrtle-trees; and these are said, ^{<380108>}Zechariah 1:8. to be 'in the bottom,' that is, in a low estate, being depressed with many sorrows, afflictions, and persecutions; they are doves, but 'doves of the rallies,' mourning under a sense of their iniquities, being burdened with the weight of sin; and they are not only in a low estate, but also low and humble in their own eyes: and with such Christ delights to dwell; he often goes down into his garden to those humble souls, pays them a visit, grants them his presence, and bestows larger measures of his grace upon them.

2. It is also expressive of Christ's condescension in doing this: It was a wonderful stoop, and an amazing instance of his condescension, to come down from heaven, clothe himself with our nature, and converse with sinful mortals here on earth; for a king to come from his royal palace, and enter into the cottage of a beggar, and to eat, drink, and lodge there for a time, would not express so much humility and condescension as this does; and next to this is his granting his presence to his churches, and to particular believers here on earth; so that we have reason to say, when we consider the greatness of his majesty, and our vileness, sinfulness and unworthiness, with Judas, not Iscariot. 'How is it, Lord, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' ^{<431422>}John 14:22. And if,

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

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

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

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

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

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

1st, She says, it was ‘to feed in the gardens.’ By gardens, I understand particular congregated churches [r209](#); for though there is but one ‘general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven;’ which is redeemed by Christ’s blood, and will be presented ‘a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ and therefore before called a garden, in the singular number; yet there are many distinct and particular churches; such as those of Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, Thessalonica, and the seven churches of Asia, were; which were as so many distinct gardens, or plots of earth, that the one garden was subdivided into. And by feeding, here, is meant, either,

1. His feeding himself; [r210](#) which as to be understood of that pleasure and delight which Christ takes in being among his saints, and seeing their graces exercised upon their proper object; for as believers feed themselves by exercising their grace on Christ, so he feeds or delights himself in observing this; this is his meat and drink; this is his supping with them, as the other is their supping with him; and this Christ is invited to, in chapter [<220416>4:16](#), to which he complies, in chap. 5:1. Or else,

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

2dly, Another end of his going down into his garden, is ‘to gather lilies or roses, as the Targum renders it; to crop them with the hand [r211](#); lilies are liable to be cropped; hence Horace [r212](#) calls the lily, *breve lilium*, the short-lived lily: by which may be meant, either the good works of the saints, which he is well pleased with, and takes notice of; insomuch that he writes them down in ‘the book of his remembrance,’ as R. Solomon Jarchi observes; for he ‘is not unrighteous to forget their work, and labor of love,’ but will reward them in a way of grace: or else, by them is meant, the sweet-smelling graces of his own Spirit, growing in his churches, as Ainsworth thinks, with which he is wonderfully delighted: or rather, the persons of the elect, and members of his church, who may be compared to lilies, for the glory, splendor, and beauty in his righteousness; of which see chapter 2:2.

Now there was,

1. A gathering of these lilies at Christ's death: as all the Sins of the elect were collected together and were laid on Christ, when he hung upon the cross; so all their persons were collected and gathered together in one head, Christ Jesus; they all met in his person, and were represented by him; for this purpose Christ came down from heaven, took our nature, and suffered in it; see John 11:51,52; Ephesians 1:10.
2. There is a gathering of these lilies in effectual calling, through the ministry of the word, by the mighty power of divine grace; and this work Christ is daily concerned in, in his church, and will be until all his elect are gathered in.
3. There is a gathering of them into church-communion, which is also Christ's work; who takes 'one of a city, and two of a family,' and brings them to Zion; and in doing this, he shows his regard to the good of souls, and at the same time 'glorifies the house of his glory;' see <236007>Isaiah 60:7,8.
4. There is a gathering into nearer communion with himself, which he often does after great desertions; see <235407>Isaiah 54:7.
5. This may be expressive of that great delight and pleasure which Christ takes in his people: no man can take more delight in plucking fruit, or gathering flowers in a garden, than Christ does in his own people, and in his own grace in them; see <220501>Song of Solomon 5:1.
6. This may be meant of their being gathered by death; so Abraham and Isaac, when they died, are said to be 'gathered unto their fathers,' <011508>Genesis 15:8 and 35:29. Christ comes into his garden, the church, sometimes to plant new lilies, and sometimes to crop and gather old ones, when they are fully ripe; not to destroy them, but to remove them into his paradise above; and at the last day, by the means of angels, he will gather in all his elect ones from the four winds, as wheat into his barn, and as lilies into his garden; see <400307>Matthew 3:7 and 13:48 and 24:31. This sense of the word is given by several Jewish writers. f213 And now, lest any should think that this was a mere surmise, conjecture, and imagination of hers; or if any should call in question her knowledge in this matter, she declares in the following verse, that she was not only well acquainted with him, but was nearly related to him; and therefore was capable of informing any person where he was, and what he was about.

Song 6:3 "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the *lilies* (1. *Hyacinthus orientalis* L. 2. *Lilium candidum* L.)."

THAT these words are expressive of that mutual interest and property which Christ and his church have in each other, of that strict and inseparable union that there is between them, and also of that mutual affection and complacency which they have to and in each other, as well as of her knowledge and assurance of her interest in Christ, has been shown on chapter <220216>2:16, but it may be farther observed, that the order of the words is here inverted; that whereas in chapter <220216>2:16, the order of the words is this, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his;' from whence has been observed, that Christ is first ours, and then we are his, which is an undoubted truth; for Christ first gives himself to us, before we are capable of giving ourselves to him; but that which was first there is here last, and what was last is first; for she first says, 'I am my beloved's; and then, 'my beloved is mine:' from whence it may be observed, that though Christ is first ours in fact, yet our being his, may come first to our knowledge, may be first in discovery;

that is to say, that we may know that he has called us by his grace, and enabled us thereby to give up ourselves to him: so that we can say, Lord, we are thine, thou hast conquered our souls by thy grace, and hast taken possession of us, which thou wouldest never have done, had we not been thine; and from this work of grace upon our souls, we conclude that thou art ours. Thus the cause may be known by the effect; and our interest in Christ, by the displays of Christ's grace to us, and in us; likewise, if we consider the words as connected with her former carriage and behavior to Christ, and what she had met with from him, they will lead us to observe; that all the infirmities, sins, and miscarriages of God's people, do not destroy their union with, and interest in Christ Jesus: she had treated him very rudely, when he, in the most moving manner, and with the most tender language, entreated her to arise and let him in; she put him off with idle excuses, which he so much resented, as to absent himself from her, and left her to seek him in vain, and to be abused by the watchmen and keepers of the walls; and though he thus visited her transgressions with this rod of correction, his own absence, for that is so to God's children; and with those stripes and blows which she received from the watchmen; yet he did not take away his loving-kindness from her, nor break his covenant with her; and she was satisfied of this, and therefore could say, notwithstanding all this, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;' and if, with R. Aben Ezra, we connect the words with the preceding verse, there will appear a beauty and glory in them, 'My beloved is gone down into his garden,' etc. It is true, he is so; but though he is gone, and I am left alone, he is departed from me, and when he will return, I cannot tell; perhaps I may never see his face more here on earth, in a way of sensible communion and fellowship with him, as I have heretofore done, though I hope I shall; yet if I never do, I am satisfied as to my covenant- interest in him, and union to him; I know that I am my beloved's, and that my beloved is mine; here lies the glory and excellency of faith, thus to believe in an unseen Christ: though it may be, as the Targum intimates, that she had now the presence of Christ, the glorious Shekinah, with her; he had once more shewn himself to her, and, upon the sight of him, she says, as Thomas did, my Lord, and my God: but however, whether she had or had not the visible tokens of Christ's presence, her faith was certainly in exercise upon him; nay, she had not only faith, but the joy of faith; she not only knew her interest in Christ, as her salvation, but also had the joys of this salvation restored to her. And again it may be observed, that tho' she excludes all other beloveds from having any share in her affections, or from being in competition with him; yet by saying what she does, she does not exclude others, particularly the daughters of Jerusalem, from having an interest in him, as well as she, as R. Sol. Jarchi thinks; who paraphrases the words thus, 'I am my beloved's, and ye are not his, and therefore shall not build with us,' and then explains it by ^{<150403>}Ezra 4:3, but though the church knew that a whole Christ was hers, yet she knew that he was others also; and would therefore never say so to the daughters of Jerusalem, to discourage them in seeking of him.

Moreover she adds, as in chapter 2, 'he feedeth among the lilies:' which may be considered, either as an apostrophe to him, 'O thou that feedest among the lilies;' or as descriptive both of him and of the place where he was; that others might, readily know where her beloved was, and where he was to be found: but of this we have spoken, on chapter 2:16, and shall not here repeat it; only observe, that Christ having been a long time absent from his church, and would not make himself known, nor speak one word a great while, at last breaks silence, and, like another Joseph, cannot refrain himself any longer from her; but must make himself known to her, and bursts out with words of love and joy, in the following

commendations of her.

Song 6:4 “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as *Tirzah* (1. *Crocus cancellatus* var. *damascenus* (Herb.)G. Maw 2. *Crocus hyemalis* Boiss. & B1. 3. *Crocus vitellinus* Wahlenb. 4. *Crocus zonatus* J. Gay.), comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.”

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

I. He says,

II. ‘Comely as Jerusalem.’

III. ‘Terrible as an army with banners.’

I. He declares her to be as ‘beautiful as Tirzah.’ The Septuagint do not take it to be the proper name of a place, as we, with R. Aben Ezra, do, and therefore translate the word, and render it thus, $\omega\theta\pi\ \epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\alpha$, as good-will or *good-pleasure*; which may be expressive of the sweetness of her temper and disposition, which is heightened by using the abstract; she was all over good-will and good-nature, not only sweet, but sweetness itself, as she says of him, in chapter <220516>5:16. Moreover, this may be spoken of her, as she is the object of God’s good-will and pleasure; and so she appears to be, as chosen in Christ by him, to be a partaker of grace and glory with him; which was not done upon the foot of works, but by an act of his sovereign good-will and pleasure, who ‘will have mercy on whom he will have mercy:’ also, as she is redeemed by Christ: in which there was such a discovery of ‘the exceeding riches of God’s grace,’ such an appearance of his ‘goodwill to men,’ that the angels could not but take notice of it, when they celebrated with a song the birth of an incarnate Savior, <420214>Luke 2:14. likewise, as called and sanctified by the blessed Spirit of grace, who ‘worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ And now if we thus consider the church as the object of God’s good-will and pleasure, in those several instances of it, she will appear beautiful and lovely. Or else, this may be said of her, as she is filled with good-will to God, to Christ, his people, gospel, worship, ways and ordinances: the church and all true believers in Christ bear a good-will to God; they ‘love him, because he first loved them;’ they love him, not only for what he is unto them, and what he has done for them, but also for what he is in himself: for he is in his own nature, in his own perfections, amiable and lovely: they bear a good-will to Christ, he is altogether lovely to them; they have none in heaven but him, nor as there any on earth they desire besides him; every thing that belongs to him is exceeding precious to them: ‘his name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love him;’ they bear a good-will to his people, who have his image enstamped upon them, and to his gospel, which they prefer to their necessary food; and to his worship, ways and ordinances; they love the habitation of his house; his tabernacles are amiable; his ways are ways of pleasantness; his

commands are not grievous, but exceeding delightful to them. Now if we consider the church :as being of this sweet and loving disposition, which is wrought, influenced and maintained by divine grace, how beautiful does she appear!

Again, the word Tirzah comes from a root, which signifies to be grateful, or to be accepted; and so R. Solomon Jarchi paraphrases the words, “Thou art beautiful, O my love, seeing that thou art acceptable to me;” and so he says it is explained in an ancient book of theirs, called Siphre ^{r214}: and if we take the words in this sense, they set forth the beauty and glory of the church, as she stands before God, ‘accepted in Christ the beloved.’ God is well pleased with Christ, and with the church in him; he is well pleased for his righteousness sake, and with her as she appears in that; for so considered, she is a complete beauty, fair and without spot, lovely to look upon, delightful to Christ, and acceptable to God.

The Targum paraphrases the words thus, ‘How beautiful art thou, O my love, in the time it is thy will to do my pleasure. Our righteousnesses are indeed as filthy rags, and we ourselves as an unclean thing;’ yet when we are made ‘willing in the day of God’s power,’ to act according to his will, and that in faith, from a principle of love, and with an eye to his glory; it is accepted by him, the same way as our persons are. But I see no reason why we should not take the word as the proper name of a place; seeing it is certain that there was such a city as Tirzah, in the land of Judea, which was a very pleasant and delightful place, as its name manifestly shows; for which reason, no doubt, it was made choice of by one of the ancient kings of Canaan, to be the place of his residence; see ^{<061224>}Joshua 12:24, as it was afterwards by Jeroboam and his successors, until Zimri’s time: who, when the city was taken, burnt the king’s house with fire. Now either for its pleasant buildings, or beautiful situation, or some such tiring, the church is here compared unto it, being arrayed with Christ’s righteousness, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit.

Song 6:7 “As a piece of a *pomegranate* (*Punica granatum* L. , No. 132) are thy temples within thy locks.”

THESE commendations of the church’s beauty are delivered in the same words in chapter 4:1-3, but the repetition of them here is not vain and idle, but may be for the following reasons:

- 1.** To show the reality and certainty of her beauty; that it was no imaginary beauty, but a real one: so things are sometimes repeated for the confirmation of them.
- 2.** To put her in mind of it, that she might value it, and herself upon it, as coming from Christ; who had made her perfectly comely, through the comeliness which he had put upon her.
- 3.** To assure her that her beauty was still the same, and that he had the same opinion of it as ever he had, notwithstanding all her failings and infirmities; and therefore expresses it in the very same words he had used before her backslidings from him.
- 4.** To manifest the unchangeableness of his love towards her; that he is ‘Jesus, the same today, yesterday, and for ever;’ that is ‘the Lord that changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.’ But having explained these words in chapter 4. I shall not consider them any farther here; but only just observe some variations and differences between them, though they are not indeed very material. In verse 5, the word mount is omitted, which may be supplied from chapter 4:1. In verse 6, the word sheep is

expressed, which is understood in chapter 4:2, as are the words even shorn omitted here, though expressed there. In verse 7, is wholly omitted that part of the description which concerns the beauty of the church's lips and speech; though it is added at the end of the sixth verse by the Septuagint; but is not in the Hebrew copies; neither is it taken notice of by the Targum on the place; nay, the Masora on chapter 4:3, remarks some words as only used in that place, and therefore this was not repeated here in the copies then in use.

Song 6:11 "I went down into the garden of *nuts* (*Juglans regia* L.) to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the *vine* (*Vitis vinifera* L. , No. 111) flourished, and the *pomegranates* (*Punica granatum* L. , No. 132) budded."

THESE are either the words of the church, or of Christ: Some take them to be the words of the church, who not finding Christ on earth, sought him in the heavenly paradise, which they understand by this nut-garden; and by her going down into it, ,he lively exercise of her faith on the unseen joys and glories of it, in looking to them, seeking of them, and pressing after them: though others ^{r243} who also understand them as the words of the church; yet think that they represent her as giving a reason why, upon his departure from her, she went not only into the city, but also into the fields, and that in the night-season, which might not appear so reputable to one of her sex; therefore to wipe off all reproach, and to remove all suspicion of evil designs in her, as well as to inform him now she had employed herself during his absence, she tells him that she went into the nut-garden, to inspect the fruits of it, and to see in what case the vines and pomegranates were. Tho' I rather think that they are the words of Christ, declaring to his church where he went, and what he employed himself about, when he departed from her; and that he was not even then altogether unmindful of her; but narrowly looked into the state and case of her, and her members, when she thought he was at a distance from her: and this agrees with what Christ had said, in chapter 5:1, 'I am come into my garden,' etc. and also confirms what she had said, in 5:2, of this chapter, 'My beloved is gone down into his garden,' etc. Besides, it best suits with him, who is the owner of the garden, to look after the fruits of it, and to see in what case it stands: moreover, this was the usual place of Christ's residence. Taking them then to be the words of Christ, there are two things to be considered.

I. What is meant by this 'garden of nuts,' into which, Christ says, he 'went down.'

II. The tact of his going there; which is threefold.

1st, 'To see the fruits of the valley.'

2dly, 'To see whether the vine flourished.'

3dly, Whether 'the pomegranates budded.'

1. I shall inquire what is meant by this 'garden of nuts,' into which Christ is said to go Some Jewish interpreter, understand by it, the second temple, which was built by the commandment of Cyrus king of Persia; but it seems better to understand it of the church of Christ, which is compared to a garden, in chapter 4:12, and for what reasons has been there shown; and Christ being said to go down into it, may be an allusion to Solomon's gardens, which lay low, and required a descent unto them from his palace; and thus not only is expressive of the state and condition of Christ's church, but also of his condescension

in visiting it, as has been observed on ver.

2. Now this garden here, is said to be a ‘garden of nuts;’ a garden where nut-trees only grew; for the ancients had places appropriated to such trees, ^{r245} and with propriety might be called nut-gardens; tho’, by what follows, there seem to be vines and pomegranates, and other fruits, as well as nuts in this garden; nuts might be the principal tree whence it had its name. The words are by some translated, ‘the pruned gardens,’ or ‘the gardens of pruning or shearing:’ deriving the word from a root, which signifies to cut or sheer; and so signifies that it is a garden well dressed, and pruned, and kept in good order: and so indeed is Christ’s church; and therefore is opposite to, and different from the field and vineyard of the sluggard, Proverbs 24:30,31, which was neither in good order, without nor within; without, its stone-wall, its fence, was broken down; and within, it was all overrun with thorns and nettles: but Christ’s garden is in a much better case; for,

1. It is well fenced with sovereign powerful and distinguishing grace; nay, God himself is ‘a wall of fire’ about it, and has appointed ‘salvation for walls and bulwarks’ all around it; so that it is strongly enclosed, and well secured from the ‘boar out of the wood’ wasting it, and from ‘the wild beast of the field’ devouring it.

2. It is well planted; it is not an empty garden within, but is well stored with plants of all sorts, and those the most excellent, as appears from chap. ^{<220413>}4:13,14, it is filled with ‘trees of righteousness,’ which are laden with the fruit thereof, and therefore are very valuable.

3. It is well pruned; for as Christ is the vine, the principal plant in this garden, on which all others grow, and from whence they receive their life and nourishment; so Christ’s ‘Father is the husbandman, the vine-dresser, the keeper of the garden, and he keeps the plants in good order; for ‘every branch that beareth not fruit,’ he lops it off, and taketh it away; and ‘every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth,’ or pruneth it, ‘that it may bring forth more fruit, ^{<431501>}John 15:1,2.

4. It is well watered; as the Lord is the keeper of it, so he ‘waters it every moment’ with the refreshing dews and delightful showers of divine love and grace; there as a fountain in the midst of it to water all the beds, and this is Christ himself; who therefore, in chapter ^{<220415>}4:15, is called the ‘fountain of gardens;’ who also is the ‘well of living waters;’ and whose grace is as ‘streams from Lebanon:’ so that every particular believer, every plant here, is ‘like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.’

5. It is well weeded; there are tares grow up in Christ’s field, and weeds in his garden, such as hypocrites and carnal professors; and Christ sometimes weeds his garden of many of these; and that by causing the sun of persecution to arise upon them, which scorches and burns them up, they not having root in themselves; he sometimes takes his fan in his hand, and with it purges his flower of the chaff, and clears his churches of such sort of persons as these; but this he will do more effectually at the last day, when he shall send his angels to ‘gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity,’ Matthew 13:41.

Moreover, by these well-dressed or pruned gardens may be meant, those particular churches of Christ, which are regularly formed, are in good order, and are well disciplined; whose members are lively in the exercise of their faith, walk agreeably in their lives and conversations; are zealous for the truths of the gospel, and for the maintaining the ordinances of it in their purity; and are not remiss in dealing with

offenders, whether they be immoral in their lives, or erroneous in their principles, such were. in a great measure, the churches of Ephesus, and Colosse, see Revelation 2:3; Colossians 2:5, and with such churches Christ delights to be; and these may expect his presence.

But the word, ^{f247} though only used in this place, is by Jewish writers generally rendered a *nut*; and so it is by the Septuagint, as well as by our translators and others: this is very properly taken notice of in this love- poem; it being usual for new-married persons to get nuts, and throw them among children to make pastime; and to signify, among other things, that they now renounced childish things. ^{f248} And by the garden, is meant the church of Christ, as has been observed before; and by the nuts which grow in this garden, from whence it has the name of a nut-garden, are meant believers; who may be called so, for the following reasons:

- 1.** Because though they are mean and abject without, yet are glorious and valuable within: the ‘king’s daughter is all glorious;’ the inside of a believer, like that of the nut, is the best part of him: the outward appearance of saints is but mean, and the world judging according to that, not capable of seeing any farther, look upon them as the off-scouring of all things: but Christ, who knows their inside as well as their outside, knows what they are by his grace, as well as what they are by nature, that though they are black in themselves, yet are comely in him; he reckons them the excellent in the earth, in whom is all his delight.
- 2.** Because of their several coverings: in the nut there are the husk and shell, and besides these, an inward covering; believers have several coverings; they have the robe of Christ’s righteousness to cover them, which may answer the shell of the nut; being lasting and durable, will abide for ever, and will bring the soul that is enwrapped in it safe to glory: there is also ‘the new man,’ or garment of sanctification, which is put on by the believer; and this may answer the inward covering of the nut, as being more thin and tender, weak and imperfect: and then there is likewise the outward garment of a gospel-conversation; and this may answer the husk of the nut, as being the coarser and more imperfect covering, which, continually needs washing in Christ’s blood.
- 3.** Because of their hardiness in enduring afflictions: they wade through a sea of troubles in this world, before they enter the kingdom; and this they do with becoming cheerfulness, patience, courage, and magnanimity of mind; they ‘are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed,’ 2 Corinthians 4:8,9 and that because they are supported under all these trials and exercises, and carried above them by a superior power.
- 4.** Because of their hiddenness; the best part of the nut is hid: the saints are hid from everlasting, in the bosom of the Father, in the hands of the Son, and in the everlasting covenant of grace; until they are made openly to appear to be the people of God, by powerful and efficacious grace in conversion, and therefore are called God’s ‘hidden ones;’ and after conversion they are hid from the men of the world; the work of grace upon their souls is hid from them, and therefore called ‘the hidden man of the heart;’ their joys and comforts are hid from them, and so indeed is their whole life of grace here, as well as their life of glory hereafter: for though they are ‘the sons of God, yet it does not appear’ so fully to themselves, much less to the men of the world, ‘what they shall be.’
- 5.** Because of the safety and security both of their persons and their graces: nuts, in the greatest showers of rain, have only their outside washed the more, but their inside remains untouched, and is no ways hurt;

so saints are safe and secure, notwithstanding all the floods, storms, and tempests of temptations, persecutions and afflictions; being built upon the rock, Christ Jesus, and hid in him, the ark of the covenant; the inward principle of grace in them cannot be lost; that hidden seed is incorruptible, and will abide so for ever.

6. Nuts often grow in clusters; which may not only denote the multitude of believers, and their close adherence to Christ, his gospel, cause and interest; but also their unity among themselves: and as it is a very pleasant and delightful sight to see nuts grow in clusters; so it is much more to see ‘brethren dwell together in unity.’

7. Saints being compared to nuts, and to those of the best sort which grow in gardens, shows, that they have not only the shell of an outward profession, but also the kernel of true grace: some have only ‘the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; profess to know God in words, but in works deny him;’ have a name to live, but yet are dead; but such are not these who are here compared to nuts.

8. Their being compared to nuts, may denote their preservation from the pollution of the world, though in the midst of them: as a nut, though it may fall into the mire and dirt, yet the inside is no ways defiled therewith; so R. Solomon Jarchi, out of the Midrashes explains these words of the impollution of the works of the Israelites, when they were in captivity among the nations of the world.

9. The kernel of the nut does not appear, until the shell be broke: the graces of God’s children generally show themselves most when they are under afflictions; for ‘tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;’ that is, makes those graces to appear more in their lively exercise; even as spice smells most when beaten in a mortar: moreover, this rich treasure of divine grace, which is put into our ‘earthen vessels,’ will not be so clearly seen, until these vessels are broken in pieces; nor will the soul appear so beautiful and glorious, being clothed with Christ’s righteousness, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit, as when it is dislodged from ‘the earthly house of its tabernacle,’ and is joined with the ‘spirits of just men made perfect.’

10. Some think, that not the common nuts, but the fruit, which we call nutmegs, are here intended; but such nuts grew not in those parts: rather, walnuts are meant, which the Arabs call *gauz* or *geuz*, which is the same word that is here used; as walnuts were in great esteem in the eastern countries, among the gardens Solomon had, [<210207>Ecclesiastes 2:7](#), one might be appropriated to these; and at Etham, about two miles from Jerusalem, Solomon had gardens, into which he had used to go early in a morning, as Josephus relates: pistacia-nuts were well known in Syria, which joined to Judea, and which might have a part in this garden: nuts grew in Judea, of which Josephus makes mention, as in great plenty; and they are reckoned among the beat fruits of the land of Canaan, [Genesis 43:11](#), and if nutmegs were designed, they might be expressive of the fragrancy and sweet odor of the saints, as they are clothed with Christ’s garments which ‘smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia;’ and as they are perfumed with ‘his ointments,’ which are exceeding savory. But,

II. Let us consider the end of Christ’s going down into this garden of nuts; which is,

1st, ‘To see the fruits of the valley.’ By fruits, are meant the graces of the Spirit; the growth, actings and exercises of which, Christ went down to take notice of: and these are said to be the ‘fruits of the valley,’ because they grow upon humble souls, with whom Christ delights to be, and on whom he bestows more grace; though it is a wonderful instance of his grace and condescension to vouchsafe a regard to such

poor, low, mean, and worthless creatures: see Isaiah 57:15 and 6:1,2. Some interpreters translate the words, ‘the shoots or fruits of the brook or river; agreeable enough to the Hebrew word, ^{f256} which signifies a torrent, as well as a valley; and so are expressive of the fertile soil in which believers are planted, and which is the occasion of their fruitfulness; see Psalm 1:3.

2dly, ‘To see whether the vine flourished.’ In what sense particular churches or believers in Christ may be compared to vines, has been shown on chapter 2:13, who may be said to flourish, when they increase in number, gifts and grace, and become fruitful in every good word and work, which Christ much looks after in his churches and in particular persons.

3dly, To see whether ‘the pomegranates budded.’ By pomegranates are meant believers; see chapter 4:13, and by their budding, the beginnings or first putting forth of grace in them; which Christ takes much notice of, and is highly well pleased with. And from all this may be observed,

1. The particular care and notice which Christ takes of his plants; he misses none, but goes from one to another; observes them all in what case they are, takes notice of the meanest, as well as the greatest; the fruits of the valley, as well as the vines and pomegranates.

2. That Christ is well pleased with the fruitfulness of them; he has been at a great deal of labor and expense to make them so; for this purpose he has made, planted, dunged and watered this garden: and now it must be some pleasure to him, to ‘see of the travail of his soul, and to have the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands;’ for as herein is his Father glorified, so herein is he well pleased, that his people ‘bring forth much fruit;’ see John 15:8; Colossians 1:10.

3. That he particularly takes notice of the first appearances and budding of grace in young converts; these he has a tender regard for, and takes a more than ordinary care of; see chapter 2:15, Isaiah 40:11 and 42:3.

4. That Christ has plants of various sorts and different growths in his garden; some vines, some pomegranates, and some nut-trees: all have gifts and grace differing one from another; some have ripe fruit upon them, others are blossoming, and some are but just budding forth.

5. Yet they are all fruit-bearing trees in Christ’s garden: there are none else mentioned here; and there are none in it, which are of his planting, but what are fruitful. Seeing then that Christ does so narrowly inspect the plants and trees in his garden, and expects fruit from every one of them; how much should we be concerned to be ‘filled with the fruits of righteousness!’ lest when he comes into his garden, and finds no fruit upon us, neither in the blossom nor in the bud, he should give orders to cut us down for cumber-ground; Luke 12:6,7.

Song 7:7 “This thy stature is like to a *palm tree* (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.), and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.”

CHRIST, having gone through the ten particular instances of his church’s beauty, in the five first verses of this chapter, and given a comprehensive summary of the whole, in verse 6, one would have thought he had done; but as not satisfied with the commendations he had given, and as not knowing when nor how to give over, the subject being so delightful to him, begins anew in these words; where he,

I. In general commends her stature, by comparing it to a palm-tree.

II. Her breasts in particular, which are likened to ‘clusters of grapes.’

I. He compares her stature to a ‘palm-tree.’ Her stature is what arises from and is made up of the above said parts, which he had commended, as is manifest from the relative *this*; which being all set in their proper place, and in a just proportion, as the members of the church are by God, see 1 Corinthians 12:12-18, look very beautiful and comely: the word properly signifies height, tallness, and straightness: to be of a tall stature, was accounted very honorable, and an indication of majesty; such an one was fit to be chosen a king, as Saul was, who ‘was higher than any of the people; from his shoulders and upwards;’ and when Samuel came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, as king in his stead, the first-born, Eliab, was presented to him; who, when he saw his comely countenance, and the height of his stature, judged him to be the Lord’s anointed; but the Lord bid him not look on these things, nor judge according to them as man does, for he was not the person he had his eye upon. As the tallness of men is expressed by the palm-tree; thus Moses is said to be admired by the Ethiopians for his beautiful stature, like the palm-tree; so the simile of a tree, as here of a palm-tree, is not an improper one to express the tall stature of women; so Galatea is, for height and tallness, compared to an alder and to a plane-tree; and Helena, to a cypress-tree in a garden, on the same account: and if Solomon here has any reference to Pharaoh’s daughter, his wife, since the Egyptian palm-tree is said to be the best, he might think of that, which is described ‘of body straight, high, round and slender;’ and fitly expresses a good shape and stature, which recommended a person to their lovers. Now the church being here represented as tall of stature, may be expressive of her royal majesty and greatness; and so the Septuagint render the words, ‘This thy greatness is like to the palm-tree’. Moreover, tallness of stature was ever accounted no small addition to beauty; and therefore women have, in former as well as in latter ages, wore ornaments upon the very top of their heads, as well as high shoes on their feet, to make them appear the taller ⁴ and perhaps this was the reason why the Jewish women walked ‘with stretched-forth necks,’ as is observed in Isaiah 3:16, so that this may be taken notice of by Christ, as a commendation of the church’s beauty. The palm-tree is a beautiful tree; and some have been compared to it for their beauty; thus Homer compares the beauty of Nausicaa to the tender branch of a palm-tree; here the church is compared to it for her stature: and to be of a tall stature, is in many cases useful; and such, in many instances, have the advantage of others; Zaccheus, because he was low of stature, was obliged to climb a sycamore-tree, or he had lost the sight of Christ, which he was so desirous of gratifying his curiosity with, But to proceed: by the church’s stature, is meant no other than that ‘measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?’ mentioned in Ephesians 4:13, which the church and all true believers are growing up to, and shall arrive at; for which reason the means of grace, the ministry of the word, and the ordinances of the gospel, are instituted and continued: and then will the church have arrived to this stature, when all the elect are gathered in, and every member joined to the body; and these all filled with the several gifts and graces of the Spirit designed for them; and are all grown up to a just proportion in the body: and in this state and condition Christ seems to view his church here; and therefore gives her this commendation. Now to this stature no addition can be made, but by the grace and Spirit of God; as no man, ‘by taking thought’ or projecting ever so many ways and methods, ‘can add one cubit unto his bodily stature;’ so none can, by any methods of their own, add to their spiritual stature, nor to the stature of the church of Christ: it is the Spirit of God that convinces and converts sinners; he works upon their wills and affections, and powerfully inclines their hearts to give themselves first to the Lord, and

then to the churches; and when they are planted there, it is he that, by the effusions and influences of his grace, makes them grow up as ‘willows by the water-courses.’

Now this stature of the church, is by Christ compared to a palm-tree: a tree well known in Judea, where great plenty of them grew; and as Pliny ^{f338} says, the noblest and best of this sort of trees, and especially about Jericho; which is frequently in scripture called ‘the city of palm trees;’ as is Engedi sometimes called Hazazon-tamar, from the palm-trees which grew there: and some ^{f339} have observed that this tree, in future times, became an emblem of that country; and therefore the coin of several of the Roman princes had the figure of a palm-tree upon them, and particularly Vespasian’s and the medal of the emperor Titus was struck with the figure of a captive woman, sitting under a palm tree, with this inscription on it, *Judaea capta*, ‘Judaea is taken:’ the metaphor is taken, as are usually all the metaphors, similies and comparisons in this book, from what was well known in this country; and it is no unusual thing in scripture for saints to be compared to palm-trees; in ^{<199212>}Psalm 92:12, it is said ‘the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree;’ and in Solomon’s temple, which was a figure of the church of Christ, were palm-trees carved upon all the wails of the house round about, and upon the doors of the oracle; to teach us, that none but saints ought to have a place in God’s house below, or shall be admitted into heaven above, signified by the oracle, or holy of holies: also in Ezekiel’s temple, which was shown him in a vision, were palm-trees and cherubim; between every cherub and cherub was a palm-tree; which temple was either a figure of the gospel-church, or of the church-triumphant in glory; and if that is true as some have thought, that the places of the fallen angels are filled up with men redeemed by Christ; that the same number are redeemed among the one, as fell among the other; this description would give a beautiful illustration of it; for as a cherub and a palm-tree, a cherub and a palm-tree, were placed in this order throughout the house; so an angel and a saint, an angel and a saint, an equal number of each according to this notion, will be in the heavenly glory. *But*, to consider a little particularly why the church, and all true believers, may be compared to palm-trees: and they may, for these following reasons:

- 1.** The palm-tree grows up very tall, straight and upright; ^{f341} and therefore the idols of the Gentiles are compared unto it, in Jeremiah 10:5, ‘they are upright as the palm-tree:’ and saints may be said to be so in a spiritual sense; and that if we consider them either in the exercise of their faith, or in the motions of their affections, or in the tendency of their desires, or agreeableness of their conversations; their faith looks straight upwards to a Christ above, and fixes its eye upon his person, blood, and righteousness; and does not look downwards to its frames, duties, services or performances: their affections move heavenwards, and are set on things above, and not on things on earth; and therefore are Compared to pillars of smoke, which move straight upwards, and which rise up in the form of palm-trees, as has been observed on chapter ^{<220306>}3:6, their desires also steer the same course, and move after Christ; they want to have a larger knowledge of him, mote communion with him, and a neater conformity to him; they are breathing after the heavenly joys; and having seen the vanity and emptiness of this world, and the things of it, desire the better country and continuing city, which God is the builder and maker of; and long to be unclothed of this mortal body, that they might be clothed with their house from heaven: thus, like the palm-tree, their souls move upward in their faith in, love to, and desires after Christ, and those unseen glories which he is preparing for his people: and as they are upright in their hearts, so they are in their conversations, which are often in heaven, and employed about heavenly things, even whilst they are here

on earth, which renders them becoming the gospel of Christ Jesus.

2. The palm-tree will grow straight and upright, even though many weights are hung upon it: ^{f342} saints have many weights and pressures upon them; the apostle says, ^{<581201>}Hebrews 12:1, ‘let us lay aside every weight;’ which shows that they have more than one; they have a body of sin and death, which presses them hard, and makes them groan, being burdened with it; as also a variety of afflictions which attend them; as well as a load of reproaches and censures thrown upon them by the world, which often fall very hard and heavy; besides the many persecutions of various sorts which they endure; and yet, as the apostle says, 2 Corinthians 4:8,9, though they ‘are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;’ they ‘are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, hut not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;’ they are supported under all, and still grow upright like the palm-tree; ‘none of these things move’ them, to turn or bend either one way or another; nor tempt them to desert the cause they have espoused; but continue in it with an unshaken mind, and a courageous and magnanimous spirit; so R. Solomon Jarchi applies this to the Jewish church, which stood as upright, as the palm-tree, refusing to be guilty of idolatry, in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, when other nations bowed and fell down before his golden image: nay, saints not only bear up under all these weights and pressures, but oftentimes grow the more in their faith, love, knowledge and experience, under them; as the children of Israel, who the more they were afflicted, the more they grew and multiplied.

3. The palm-tree is a fruit-bearing tree; it bears the fruit which is called dates, which is not only of a beautiful aspect, but of a delightful taste, and it is fit both for food and drink; and this perhaps was the reason why the children of Israel pitched their camp at Elim, ^{<043309>}Numbers 33:9, because there were not only ‘twelve fountains of water’ there, but also ‘threescore and ten palm-trees:’ the saints, being implanted and engrafted in Christ Jesus, and abiding in him, bring forth fruit; they are laden with all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, the graces of the Spirit, and the precious fruits of righteousness; all which fruit they have from Christ, who is their ‘green fir-tree.’

4. Naturalists ^{f344} tell us, that the vital force or power of the palm-tree is not in its root, as in other trees, but in its top, which they call the cerebrum, or brain; and that if its top is lopped off, it immediately becomes barren: ^{f345} the saints life is not in themselves, but in their head, Christ Jesus; it is from him they receive all their grace and strength, their life and nourishment, their fruit and fruitfulness; and it was possible that any separation could be made between them and their head, they would not only become barren and unfruitful, but entirely dead and lifeless.

5. The leaves of the palm-tree are always green; it has on the top of it a tuft of leaves four feet long, which never fall off, but always continue upon it in the same verdure; it is a tree which never rots: ^{f346} the saints are frequently compared to trees in scripture, and that to such whose leaves do not wither, as in Psalm 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8, when hypocrites and carnal professors are called *δενδρα φθινσπωρινα*, ‘trees that are withered in autumn;’ at which time not only the fruit is gone but the leaves fall: but saints being engrafted in Christ, and planted by the rivers of divine love and grace, continually retain their verdure, shall never perish, but persevere for ever.

6. The palm-tree is very long-lived, and continues flourishing a long time; it is, as Dr Shaw ^{f349} was informed, in its greatest vigor about thirty years after it is planted, and continues in full vigor seventy years more, bearing all this while every year about three or four hundred pounds weight of dates; and

Symmachus renders the words here; 'this thine' age is like unto the palm-tree: hence the flourishing of the righteous is compared unto it, in ^{<199212>}Psalm 92:12, in opposition to that of the wicked, in 5:7, which is said to be as the flourishing of grass, which is soon over, and continues but a short time; but the palm-tree abides so for many years, as before observed: and this may be expressive of the perseverance of the saints, whose grace is immortal and incorruptible; whose persons shall never perish, nor ever be subject to the second death, but shall live for evermore.

7. The palm-tree grows and flourishes best in hot and sunny places; it will not grow in cold countries, and therefore we have it not here: so saints, being 'planted in the house of the Lord,' where in the ordinances, they sitting under the warm and quickening beams of the 'sun of righteousness,' Christ Jesus, 'flourish in the courts of our God;' these are the best places for them, namely, the house and ordinances of God; here thy delight to be, and here they thrive most, because here 'the Lord is a sun and a shield' unto them.

8. Branches of the palm-tree have been used as tokens of joy and emblems of victory; the Jews had a feast of tabernacles, which they kept as a time of rejoicing; and among other demonstrations of joy, this was only to carry palm-tree branches in their hands, ^{<032340>}Leviticus 23:40, as did also much people of the Jews, when Christ rode in triumph to Jerusalem, as an indication of the joy they were filled with at his coming, and to welcome him into their city; ^{<431213>}John 12:13, so likewise the saints are described, who were come out of great tribulations, and had got the victory over all their enemies, as 'clothed with white robes, and palms or palm-tree branches in their hands,' ^{<660709>}Revelation 7:9, saints, of all persons in the world, have reason to rejoice in the views of an atoning sacrifice, a justifying righteousness, and peace and pardon by Christ Jesus, through whom they are made 'more than conquerors' over sin, Satan, and the world; and a number of these, with palm-tree branches in their hands, will look like so many palm-trees.

But,

II. The church's breasts in particular are commended by Christ, and compared to 'clusters of grapes:' this part has been already commended in chapter 4:5, and is repeated in verse 3 of this chapter; but here a different metaphor is made use of; there they are compared to 'two young roes that are twins,' here to 'clusters of grapes; The word *grapes* is not in the Hebrew text; though the Targum supplies it, as our Translators do: R. Ahen Ezra thinks, that clusters of the vine are meant, which might be planted by, and run up upon the palm-tree; though I should rather think, that 'clusters of dates,' the fruit of the palm-tree itself, are here intended; especially seeing this fruit, as Pliny ^{f352} observes, grows in clusters, hanging upon the shoots, like bunches of grapes: moreover, her breasts are compared to: clusters of the vine,' in the following verse; and it does not appear so probable, that Christ should use the same metaphor, to commend the same part in two verses together. What we are to understand by the church's breasts, has been shown on chapter 4:5, but seeing a different metaphor is made use of here, it may not be improper to observe the agreement between them, And,

1st, By her breasts may be meant the ministers of the gospel. R. Solomon Jarchi would have Daniel, Hananiah, Misheel and Azariah, here understood who were as breasts to others in captivity: but it is much better to understand them of gospel-ministers; who not only direct men where they may have food, invite them to it, and dissuade them from every thing that would be pernicious to them; but also feed them themselves, with 'the sincere milk of the word, and bread of life; they rightly divide 'or cut the word of truth' and, as wise and faithful stewards, give to every one their portion of meat in due season. These may

be compared to clusters, either of grapes or dates,

- 1.** Because of their number: it is a great mercy to the churches of Christ, when there are plenty of gospel-ministers; Christ advised his disciples to pray for it, because the ‘harvest was plenteous,’ and laborers were but few, <400937>Matthew 9:37,38.
- 2.** Because of their unity, likeness and agreement; for though they have gifts and grace differing from each other, one has more than another has; yet they have one and the same commission, and preach one and the same Christ as the only way of salvation, though they may not be attended with equal success.
- 3.** Like dusters of dates, the fruit of the palm-tree, they are the fruit of the church; and such are the best ministers, who are educated and brought up in churches, and approved and sent out by them. Or else,
 - 2dly,** By the church’s breasts may be meant, the Old and New Testaments; which, like breasts, are full of the ‘milk of the word;’ than which, no two breasts are more like one another; like the two cherubim upon the mercy- seat, they look towards each other: these may be compared to clusters, because there are in them clusters of excellent doctrines and precious promises; there are not only here and there a berry, but clusters of them; which being pressed and squeezed by hearing, reading, meditation and prayer, yield both delight and nourishment to men. Or else,
 - 3dly,** By them may be meant the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper, which are ‘breasts of consolation’ to believers; and when they have the presence of Christ in them, and the discoveries of his love to them, then they are not ‘dry breasts;’ they cannot say, they have ‘no cluster to eat ;’ but as when there is ‘new wine found in the cluster, and one saith, ‘destroy it not, for a blessing is in it,’ <236508>Isaiah 65:8, so have they much pleasure, satisfaction and delight therein: and the church’s breasts being thus like clusters full in themselves are also delightful and beautiful in Christ’s eye, and therefore are thus commended by him.

Song 7:8 “I said, I will go up to the *palm tree* (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.), I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the *vine* (*Vitis vinifera* L. , No. 111), and the smell of thy nose like *apples* (*Prunus armeniaca* L. , No. 124).”

CHRIST having compared the church to a palm-tree and her breasts to ‘clusters of dates,’ the fruit thereof, does here,

- I.** Make a resolution or promise to go up into its and ‘take hold of the boughs thereof.’
- II.** Mentions several effects following upon his putting this resolution into practice, or fulfilling this promise; two of which we have an account of in these words: as,
 - 1st,** That her breasts should be filled, and become like ‘clusters of the vine.’
 - 2dly,** ‘The smell of her nose’ should be ‘like apples.’
- I.** We have in these words Christ’s resolution or promise which consists of two parts:
 - 1st,** He resolves to ‘go up to the palm-tree.’
 - 2dly,** When there, to ‘take hold of the boughs thereof.’
- 1st,** He signifies it as his will, to ‘ go up to the palm-tree.’ Some popish f353 writers have fancied that the

cross of Christ, or at least some part of *it*, was made of the wood of the palm-tree; to support which they have no sufficient proof or evidence; though it is not very unlikely, seeing there was such plenty of those sort of trees in Judea, as has been observed on the former verse: and therefore, some ^{f354} have thought, that by Christ's going up to the palm-tree, is meant his crucifixion, which he expresses by being lifted up, in ^{<431232>}John 12:32. Moreover, his going up to it may signify his voluntary submission unto death, even the 'death of the cross:' besides, the palm-tree being an emblem of victory, may represent the conquest which Christ has obtained over all his and our enemies; he has destroyed sin, overcome the world, abolished death, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them, openly triumphing over them on the cross.

Though others have thought, that by Christ's going up to the palm-tree, are meant his ascension into heaven, his conjunction with his church there, and that unspeakable pleasure which he will take in her for evermore: it is true, Christ not only ascended to his God and our God, to his Father and our Father; but also went up to the church triumphant, which may very fitly be compared to a palm-tree; the saints there appearing with 'white robes and palms, palm-tree-branches in their hands;' as a token of that joy they are possessed of, and of that victory over all their enemies, which they are sharers in, through Christ Jesus: and it was the delightful company of these persons, which Christ had in view in becoming a surety for them, assuming their nature, and dying in their room and stead; it was this 'joy that was set before him,' which caused him so patiently to 'endure the cross, despising the shame' which attended it. Though I am rather inclined to think, that by the palm-tree here, we are to understand the church militant, as in the foregoing verse; and Christ's going up into it; is expressive,

1. Of his right unto, and property in his church: she is his by the gift of the Father, and by the purchase of his own blood, as well as by the conquest of his powerful and efficacious grace; on which account he claims an interest in her, and says, 'I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine;' and she is very free to own and acknowledge this rightful claim unto her, as it is her honor, interest, and duty so to do: this palm-tree is of his own planting; he waters it every moment; he keeps it night and day; he prunes it, and makes it fruitful; and therefore has a right to go up into it when he pleases.

2. Of his presence with her, so Christ is said to be 'among the myrtle-trees,' in ^{<380108>}Zechariah 1:8, as he is here said to go up into the palm-tree: and this is the grand reason why the church is at any time in a flourishing condition, and like the palm-tree, grows, though never such weights and pressures are upon it; because Christ is in the midst of her, and grants his gracious and supporting presence to her.

3. Of his delight in her: he loves to be in her presence and company, as men do to go up into their trees, and handle the boughs thereof. His saints are 'the excellent in the earth,' in whom his delight was before the world began, and now is and ever will be: the mutual delight which appears in the bride and bridegroom, falls short of expressing that which Christ takes in his church; he 'rejoices over her with joy; he rests in his love towards her, and joys over her with singing,' ^{<380301>}Zechariah 3:17.

Now from Christ's going up into his palm-tree, the church, we are not to imagine that the church is higher than Christ, for he is far superior to her; and it is an instance of his grace and condescension, that he will take notice of her, and grant his presence to her; he is her head and husband, her Lord and king, and therefore she is inferior, and ought to be in subjection to him; and though he was in our nature, and that by reason of suffering in it, made 'a little lower than the angels;' yet he is vastly higher than they, yea,

higher than the heavens themselves. But this expression here is suited, and is very agreeable to the metaphor here made use of. The palm-tree is a very tall tree; and its boughs and branches do not grow out of the sides, as in many other trees, but only on the top of it; so that whosoever would lay hold upon them, and gather the fruit, must go up into it: moreover, the trunk and body of it is made with rings in the bark of it, like steps; so that it may be very easily climbed, which is done by the eastern people, with an incredible swiftness: ^{f356} these steps are made of the knots or polices, as Dr Shaw ^{f357} calls them, being gradually left upon the trunk of the tree, serve, like so many rounds of a ladder, to climb up the tree, either to fecundate it, or to lop it, or to gather the fruit: Lucian ^{f358} observes that ‘those who have seen how men get up into palm-trees, in Arabia, Egypt, and other places, must needs understand what he says, about climbing the Phalli in the temple of Hyrapolis in Syria, he is describing.’

2dly, Going up into the palm-tree, is in order to take hold on the boughs of it. The palm-tree has no boughs nor branches growing out of the sides of the trunk of it, as before observed, but shoots upon the top of it, on which its fruit hangs; and the Septuagint renders it, ‘I will take hold of the heights of it ;’ some render it, the *fruit* of it, as the Vulgate Latin version; to which Kircher inclines: and this ascent to the top of it was, either to gather the fruit, or to crop the shoots themselves, and eat them; for the tops of them, which are of the first year’s growth, are very tender and sweet, and may be eaten; ^{f359} so the top of the palm-tree, which some call the cerebrum, or brain, is very sweet; ^{f360} and is spoken of as very pleasant and nourishing. ^{f361} Christ’s end in doing this may be twofold:

1. To gather the fruits of it; which he has an undoubted right unto; they are his: whether we understand by them the blessings of grace, which believers are possessed of; or the graces of the Spirit, which are implanted in them; or the good works which they are enabled to perform; these all come from him; he is the ‘green fir-tree,’ from whom all the believers ‘fruit is found;’ therefore he may lay hold on the boughs, and gather the fruit when he pleases; in doing which, he takes much delight and pleasure, and is kindly invited by his church thereunto: see chapter 4:16.

2. His other end in laying hold on the boughs, may be to prune them, that they may bring forth more fruit; this he does sometimes by his word, and the preaching of it: by which sin is corrected, error refuted, and sharp reproofs and admonitions given on the account of both; for as the word is as an ax to cut down sturdy and obstinate sinners; so it is as a pruning knife in Christ’s hand, to remove all ‘superfluity of naughtiness,’ which hinders the growth of his trees and plants: sometimes also Christ prunes his churches by the ordinance of excommunication; by which he lops off unfruitful branches, such who are unfit for communion in his churches; which awful sentence is executed sometimes more mildly, and sometimes more severely, according to the nature of the offense; sometimes it is expressed in scripture by a withdrawing from disorderly persons; at other times, by a rejecting of heretics; as also, by putting away such who are notoriously vile and wicked: again, Christ prunes his people likewise by afflictive providences, by which their iniquity is purged, their graces are tried and exercised, and they made under those sharp trials, to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness: moreover Christ sometimes effects this work by suffering persecution to befall his churches; this sun scorches up those plants, which are not of Christ’s planting, and are not rooted in his person and grace; this is the fan which Christ sometimes takes in his hand, and ‘thoroughly purges his floor,’ the church, of hypocrites and formal professors; this is his pruning-knife, with which he lops off those fruitless and withered branches. This is an awful way of

pruning the boughs of his palm-tree.

It may be observed, that these words are delivered in the form of a purpose or promise, 'I said I will go up,' etc. Christ thinks, and then resolves, before he acts; he does all things deliberately, and according to the counsel of his own will, and always for his own glory and his church's good: moreover, this being a promise of Christ's, the performances of it may be expected by his people; for 'he is faithful who hath promised;' it may also be pleaded by them: Has he promised to go up into his palm-tree, or grant his presence in his church? He will be as good as his word; his people may expect his presence there; and they are allowed to put him in mind of such a promise, which they need not doubt the fulfillment of. But,

II. Let us now consider the effects of Christ's going up into his palm-tree: and we find two of them mentioned in this verse, and a third in the following one:

1st, The church's breasts become like 'clusters of the vine;' that is, of grapes which grow in clusters on the vine: ^{f362} which words may be considered, either as a wish, and be read thus, 'and now let thy breasts be as the clusters of the vine; ^{f363} or else, as a promise that they should be so; which accordingly was effected by his granting his presence to her, which filled her breasts, and made them like clusters of the vine. By which may be meant, either,

1. The ministers of the gospel; who not only direct men where the wine and milk of gospel-grace may be had, and invite them to it, but do also themselves feed them with 'the sincere milk of the word;' with which they are filled, by Christ's granting his presence to them in their studies and meditations; and are brought forth by him at proper opportunities, laden with 'the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ;' so that these breasts look like clusters of the vine. Or,

2. By them may be meant the ordinances; which are 'breasts of consolation' to God's people, When they have the presence of Christ in them, otherwise they are but dry breasts; it is that which fills them with milk for nourishment, and with wine for refreshment. Or,

3. The two Testaments, with those dusters of excellent doctrines and precious promises that are in them; which, when men have the presence of Christ, either in the hearing or reading of them, yield them much delight and comfort, though at other times they are but as a dead letter. Though,

4. This may in general intend that influence, which Christ's presence has on the fruitfulness of his people; it is this which makes them fat and flourishing, brisk, and lively in the exercise of grace, fruitful in every good word and work; so that they grow and thrive in every grace, and are not barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

2dly, Another effect of Christ's going up into his palm-tree, or of his presence in his church, is, that 'the smell of her nose' thereby becomes like that of apples. Formerly it was usual to anoint the nostrils, ^{f364} which was reckoned very healthful and refreshing to the head; as well as was done, that they might give the more agreeable smell: and some sort of ointments, it seems, gave a smell like that of apples, which in some is very grateful and delightful; and Cicero ^{f365} observes, that the plenty and variety of apples, their pleasant taste and smell, show that they were only made for men: and indeed there was an ointment made of them, called melinum; so that the nostrils being anointed with it, might well be said to smell like apples; and which was accounted one of the best. ^{f366} By which apples may be meant, either,

1. The refreshing doctrines of the gospel from Christ's ministers; who are the church's nose, and are capable of distinguishing truth from error: these doctrines which they preach, when fitly spoken,

seasonably applied, and attended with the power and presence of Christ to poor souls, are like ‘apples of gold in pictures of silver;’ nay, not only like apples for sight, being beautiful to look upon, but also for smell; for these diffuse a sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ in the souls of his people. Or else,

2. The fame and report of the church’s faith, piety and courage, which was spread far and near; her faith, for its strength and purity, is compared in verse 4 to ‘a tower of ivory;’ and her courage and magnanimity in defending, this faith against all opposition, is expressed by her nose, being ‘as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh towards Damascus:’ now the smell, fame or report of all this, like the smell of apples, was diffused abroad, and gained her credit and reputation, even from others; she having, like those heroes, in Hebrews 11, ‘obtained a good report through faith.’ Or,

3. It may be expressive both of her outward conversation and inward constitution, which were both sound and healthful; she had an inward principle of grace, from whence proceeded a savory conversation without; the hidden man of her heart, was that which is not corruptible, which sent forth, not a nauseous, but a grateful odor; no rotten nor corrupt communication proceeds from hence, but what is not only edifying to others, but grateful to Christ; and nothing has a greater influence than the presence of Christ, to make her inward constitution and outward conversation so. Though,

4. This may intend the savoriness of those things which she smelt, which were as grateful to her as the smell of apples: thus spiritual and heavenly truths, the divine truths and excellent doctrines of the gospel, are exceeding savory to believers, especially when they have the presence of Christ, the discoveries of his love, and the quickening influences of his Spirit. The third effect follows in the next verse.

Song 7:9 “And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.”

THESE words contain the third effect of Christ’s going up into his palm- tree, or granting his presence to his church: in which may be considered,

- I.** What is meant by the ‘roof of her month.’
- II.** Why it is compared to ‘the best wine.’
- III.** The commendations of this best wine, to which it is compared; which,
 - 1st,** Is commended from the person, for whose use it is: ‘for my beloved.’
 - 2dly,** From the property of it; ‘it goeth down sweetly.’
 - 3dly,** From its effect; ‘causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.’
- II.** Why this is compared to the best wine: Perhaps the wine of Sharon may be referred to, which was so strong, that they mixed it two parts water and one wine; ^{f368} tho’ there were other places in Judea that had the first name for wine ^{f369}; the wine of Lebanon was very grateful for taste and smell, ^{<281407>}Hosea 14:7, where was a city, called Ampeloessa, ^{f370} from the excellency of its wine.
 - 1.** That is the best wine which is pure and free from dregs and mixtures; that Which is upon the lees, well refined: such is the gospel, as preached by the faithful ministers of it, who are not as some, which corrupt the word of God; they do not mix it with their own inventions, but deliver out this wine of the gospel, neat and clean, as they have received it.

- 2.** Wine that has age, is also accounted the best: thus saith Christ, ^{<420539>}Luke 5:39. 'No man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better:' the gospel is no novel doctrine; for though it is more clearly made known under the New Testament dispensation, than it was under the Old, yet it was known then; it was wrapped up in the types, shadows and sacrifices of the old law; it was preached before unto Abraham, nay, to our first parents in the garden; and was spoken of more or less, ever since, by the mouth of God's holy prophets, which have been since the world began.
- 3.** The best wine is that which is of a good flavour, and delightful to the taste, as well as that which is of a good color: such is the gospel; it is like milk for nourishment, and like wine for pleasantness; nay, like Ezekiel's roll, as honey for sweetness; yea, the psalmist says, ^{<19B9103>}Psalm 119:103, that the words of God's mouth were sweeter than honey to his mouth.
- 4.** Wine is of a cheering and reviving nature; it is what makes glad the heart of man; and therefore is proper to be given to those that be of heavy hearts, that they may drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more of such a nature is the gospel; it being received by persons in distress, like the best wine; it cheers and revives their spirits, it makes them forget their spiritual poverty, and puts out of their minds their former misery and distress; whilst they behold what riches of grace are treasured up in Christ, and what ample provisions are there made for them; nay, it not only revives distressed and drooping souls, but such is the virtue and efficacy of it, that it will bring dead sinners to life; for it is the savor of life unto life to many.
- 5.** The best wine is very refreshing to weary persons, who have been fatigued with labor and travel: the gospel is a word in season to him that is weary; it not only directs the weary soul where it may have rest, kindly invites unto it, but is also the instrument of bringing him into it.
- 6.** Wine is reckoned a comforter and strengthener of the stomach; therefore the apostle Paul advised Timothy, ^{<540523>}1 Timothy 5:23, to use a little wine for his stomach sake; and his often infirmities: the doctrines of the gospel have a tendency to comfort souls; they are often blessed for that purpose; the ministers of it are employed herein on that account; and the Spirit of God does his work, and executes, his office as a comforter by them. Thus the gospel, the word; which is in and proceeds out of the church's mouth, may be compared to the best wine.

III. I shall now consider the commendations given of this best wine of the gospel. And,

1st, It is commended from the persons for whose use it is, for my beloved; and therefore must needs be the best: it is such wine as a man would give to his friend, whom he dearly loves; who, when he pays a visit to him, if he has any wine in the house, he shall be sure to have it; and if he has any better than the rest, it shall be at his service. But who are we to understand by this beloved, for whose use this wine is? And,

- 1.** We may understand these words as the words of Christ, speaking to and of his church and people, whom, in chapter 5:1, he calls his beloved, and his friends; and these he treats as such, with his best wine; the gospel, which is chiefly designed for their good, comfort, and establishment,
- 2.** If we take these words to be the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, as some do, and that not only these, but all that is Spoken in the preceding verses; then the beloved is Christi whom they call their own; having now arrived to a greater knowledge of him, and acquaintance with him, than they formerly had; see chapter 5:9 and 6:1, nor need it be wondered at, that it should be expressed in the singular number, my

beloved; seeing it may well be supposed, that but one of them spoke, and delivered these commendations of the church. Though;

3. I rather take them to be the words of the church, speaking to and of Christ; who, hearing such great things spoken in the commendations of herself, could hold no longer; but, as one ^{f371} expresses it, snatches the word out of Christ's mouth, breaks in upon his discourse before he had done, and thrusts in these words, referring all the glory to him: it is as if she should say, Is the roof of my mouth like the best wine? it is for my beloved; it is of his making and providing, and in which his glory is much concerned, as well as my comfort; 'for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;' he is the subject, the sum and substance of the gospel; it is designed for the manifestation of his grace; and the advancement of his glory; and its being so, makes it so comfortable and delightful to souls. Junius and Piscator render the word, *most lovingly* or *most lovelily*: and so understand it of the manner of this best wine, going down and being received by persons; but this is sufficiently expressed in the next clause, which I shall now consider.

2dly, This wine of the gospel, is commended from the property of it, which is here mentioned; it goeth down sweetly, which words may be differently rendered, and as differently understood. And,

1. They may be translated thus, *that walketh or moveth aright*; as they are in ^{<202331>}Proverbs 23:31, where wine is also spoken of, and denotes its sparkling in the cup; which shows it to be a generous wine, of a good body, and that it has life and spirit in it; therefore the wise man, in the fore-mentioned place, advises not to look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright, because when it is so, it is very ensnaring; but here is no such danger in this wine of the gospel; the pleasantness of which, both in the eyes of Christ .and of his church, may be here intended.

2. The words may be rendered thus, *which goeth to my beloved straightway* or *directly*; ^{f372} and so may denote the direct tendency of the gospel to lead souls to Christ, and to advance his honor and glory; for the whole of it consists in this, Christ in us the hope of glory. Or,

3. Thus, it goeth or leadeth to righteousnesses; ^{f373} for it is one principal part of the gospel to lead souls to the righteousness of Christ, which is clearly revealed therein; that, disclaiming all pretences to their own righteousness for justification, they may wholly and alone look unto, and depend upon that tot their acceptance with God, and justification in his sight: moreover, it also teaches them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Or,

4. They may be thus rendered, that goeth or walketh to upright persons; ^{f374} for so the word is rendered in chapter ^{<220104>}1:4, and indeed it is to such persons that the gospel is of real service and advantage; to them that believe, it is the power of God unto salvation; it works effectually in their hearts; these receive it in the love of it; by them it is highly valued and esteemed; and to them it yields much solid comfort, pleasure and satisfaction. For with such,

4. It goeth down sweetly, as our translators have rendered the words: This wine of the gospel is received and taken down with all readiness by all those who have once tasted the sweetness, and felt the power of it; with them the gospel is no hard saying, and who can bear it? but, like the best wine that is very delightful: with some persons, the doctrines of the gospel, such as those of an eternal, personal election, particular redemption, powerful and efficacious grace in conversion, final perseverance, etc. are very disagreeable; but to believers in Christ, they are like wine that goeth down sweetly.

3dly, This wine is commended, from the effect it has upon those who drink of it; it 'causeth, the lips of those that are asleep to speak.' In which may be considered,

1st, The persons on whom it has this effect, 'those that are asleep.'

2dly, The effect itself, which it has upon them, 'it causeth their lips to speak.'

1st, The persons on whom this wine of the gospel has this effect; and they are such who are asleep. The Hebrew word, ^{f375} here used, is by some rendered ancient persons; for persons, when they are grown old, have not their senses so quick, nor are they so full of talk, but are more slow of speech, than when they were in their youthful days; yet Cicero ^{f376} says, *senectus est natura loquacior*; and therefore this serves much for the commendation of this wine, that it should have such an effect upon such persons; for that must be noble and generous wine that invigorates old men, and fills them with a juvenile heat, warmth and sprightliness: it makes them loquacious, ^{f377} which is one effect of wine, when freely drank; ^{f378} and it softens the moroseness of ancient men; ^{f379} wine is even said to make an ancient man dance. ^{f380} But the word may very well, and perhaps better, be rendered as it is, 'those that are asleep;' by which may be meant, either,

1. Sinners, who are in the dead and deep sleep of sin. These,

(1.) As persons asleep, have not the free exercise of their senses; they do not see their lost, miserable and undone state by nature, nor their need of Christ, and the value of him: their ears are stopped, that they cannot hear, so as to understand the joyful sound; they have no taste nor savor of divine things; and many have arrived to such a prodigious pitch of wickedness, as to be past feeling, having their 'consciences seared with an hot iron:' nay, in this they exceed persons that are asleep who, though they have not the free exercise of their senses whilst asleep, yet are not destitute of them; but these have no spiritual sense at all, but are 'dead in trespasses and sins.'

(2.) Like persons asleep, they are strengthless, and are not in a capacity to do any thing that is spiritually good of themselves: they cannot redeem themselves from destruction; they cannot fulfill the righteous law of God, nor satisfy divine justice; they have not power to begin, nor carry on a work of grace upon their souls; they cannot subdue their corruptions, nor withstand Satan's temptations, nor perform the duties of religion; these things are not effected by the might and power of man.

(3.) Like persons asleep, they are inactive; 'their strength is to sit still;' they have neither power nor will to do that which is good; 'there is none that doeth good, no, not one;' they have no true knowledge of what is good; for though 'they are wise to do evil, yet to do good they have no knowledge;' and if they had knowledge, they have no inclination; and if they had that, yet still they have no power; 'for the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good that are accustomed to do evil.'

(4.) Like persons asleep, they are subject to illusions and mistakes; they are mistaken about the nature of the divine Being, whom they dither imagine to be such an one as themselves, who will either connive at sinful actions, or take little or no notice of them; or else, presume upon his absolute mercy, to go on in sin: and they are as much deceived about the nature of sin itself, which they now roll as a sweet morsel in their mouths, but will ere long find to be as gravel-stones: and so

they are like-wise with respect to the ways of God, and people of Christ; in the former of which they suppose there is no true pleasure; and in the latter, no enjoyment of true felicity; but in nothing are they more mistaken than in themselves and their state; which they imagine to be good, when at the same time they are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked,

(5.) Like persons asleep, they insensible of danger; they are walking in the broad road to destruction, and are upon the brink of it, and yet know it not; they are crying, Peace, peace, when sudden destruction is at hand. Or else,

2. By. those that are asleep, may be meant drowsy professors: the wise as well as the foolish virgins slept; Christ's church may sometimes be in such a condition, as she was in chapter <220502>5:2, this sleep is not a dead sleep, as the former; there may be life notwithstanding this, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh:' this consists in a non-exercise of grace, an indifference to religious duties, a lukewarmness and want of zeal for the glory of Christ and his gospel, occasioned by the prevailings of sin and corruption; see more on chapter 5:2. But,

2dly, Let us consider what effect the wine of the everlasting gospel has upon the above said persons; when it comes in power, and is received in the love of it, it causes their lips to speak. In the former of these persons, that is, in carnal and Christless sinners, it produces humble confessions of sin: it makes them speak in the praise of Christ and his grace, whereby salvation is procured for such lost and perishing creatures, as they by nature were; it brings them to the gates of Zion, there to declare to the saints the great things which God has done for them: it makes the tongue of the dumb to sing, who before had not one word to say for Christ, and of his grace; and those who were stammerers at these things, it makes them ready to speak plainly: as for the latter sort of persons, that is, sleepy and drowsy professors, it makes them speak-meanly and modestly of themselves, and very highly of Christ and his grace; for such souls who have drank the largest draughts of this wine, and have the greatest share of knowledge in gospel-truths, are the most humble; they are ready to acknowledge themselves the least of saints, and the chief of sinners: and none more frequent than they in magnifying Christ, and exalting the riches of his grace.

Song 7:12 "Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the *vine* (*Vitis vinifera* L. , No. 111) flourish, whether the tender *grape* (*Vitis vinifera* L. , No. 111) appear, and the *pomegranates* (*Punica granatum* L. , No. 132) bud forth: there will I give thee my loves."

IN these words are,

- I. A general invitation given by the church to Christ, to go along with her; 'Come, my beloved.'
- II. Some particular things mentioned which she invites him to:
 - 1st, 'To go forth into the field.'
 - 2dly, 'To lodge in the villages.'
 - 3dly, 'To get up early to the vineyards.'
- III. The things she had in view in so doing:
 - 1st. To see whether 'the vine flourished.'

2dly, Whether ‘the tender grape appeared.’

3dly, Whether ‘the pomegranates budded forth.’

IV. A motive which she makes use of to prevail upon him; ‘there will I give thee my loves.’

III. She mentions the several things she had in view in giving this invitation to Christ, or the several ends of it. And,

1st, It was to ‘see if the vine flourished;’ and she might well think that this and what follows would take with Christ, and go a great way to prevail upon him to go along with her; seeing her ends here are much the same with his in going down into his nut-garden, chapter <220611>6:11, and which, no doubt, she had some reference to. By the vine, the Targum understands the Israelites, who may be compared thereunto; and I think, true believers in Christ, who are Israelites indeed, may very well be meant. These indeed, like vines, are weak and worthless creatures of themselves: yet being engrafted in Christ, the true vine, and growing upon him, they bring forth fruit, and are exceeding valuable and precious: and by their flourishing may be meant, both their fruitfulness in the exercise of grace, and in the performance of good works: and though the believer is not always in a flourishing condition; there is sometimes but a small appearance of fruit upon him; his life, his grace is hid unto him; and his fruitfulness does not appear to others; yet he shall flourish again, because he is planted in a fruitful soil, by the rivers of divine love and grace; is well rooted in Christ Jesus, and whom he takes care of, waters every moment, and purges and prunes, that he may bring forth more fruit; this the church was sensible of, and therefore is desirous that Christ would go along with her.

2dly, Another end she had in inviting Christ to, go with her into the field, villages and vineyards, is, to see ‘whether the tender grape appear, or whether the flower of the grape opened itself.’ ¹³⁸⁷ By which may be meant young converts; who are weak and tender, have but little knowledge, a small degree of faith, and have not arrived to that solidity and establishment, as many others have; and are therefore compared to newborn babes, lambs, and kids of the flock: as also to a bruised reed, and to the smoking flax; but as Christ does not despise the day of small things, so neither does the church overlook them, but shows a very great concern for them; she is very desirous of seeing these appear in churches: this is a very great encouragement to churches, when souls are born again among them; it is a sign that the Lord designs to continue them, and to make them yet more flourishing and fruitful.

3dly, Her other end is to see whether ‘the pomegranates budded.’ By pomegranates, may be meant stronger believers, who are taller and more fruitful than the former; why they are so compared, may be seen in chap. <220413>4:13, and by the braidings of them, may be meant the actings and exercise of grace in them. We may observe that the church is concerned for the comfortable well-being and good estate of believers of all ranks and sizes; of the vines and pomegranates, as well as of the tender grapes; and of the buddings of the one, as well as of the blossoming or opening of the other.

Song 7:13 “The *mandrakes* (*Mandragora officinarum* L. , No. 163) give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant *fruits* (Unidentified Plant References), new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.”

IN these words the church makes use of another motive or argument to prevail upon Christ to grant her his presence and company, taken from the variety of fragrant flowers and pleasant fruits, which she abounded with, and had ready at hand, and which she had carefully laid up and reserved for his use and service; all which are commended,

- I. From the fragraney of them; ‘the mandrakes give a smell.’
- II. From the comprehensiveness of them; ‘all manner of pleasant fruits.’
- III. These are said to be ‘new and old.’
- IV. Not afar off, but at the very door; ‘at our gates.’
- V. They are all for his use and service; ‘which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.’

I. The fragraney of those flowers or fruits with which she abounds, is here expressed; ‘the mandrakes give a smell.’ The Hebrew word *uyawdd dudaim*, translated mandrakes, is only found in this place, and in Genesis 30:14-16, in this sense; but what plant or herb is intended by it, is not very easy to determine: Junius and Tremellius have rendered it, in both places, by ‘flores amabiles, lovely flowers;’ which they think best agrees with the etymology of the word: others ^{f389} render it, Jessamin; others, ^{f390} lilies; others, violets: R. Solomon Jarchi would have it rendered baskets here, and refers to ^{<242401>}Jeremiah 24:1, where the people of Israel are represented by two baskets of figs; where a word derived from the same root, and of the same form is used; and that both sorts of people, there represented, may be here said to give a good smell, because now they all sought the face of the Lord. Ludolphus, in his Ethiopic history, ^{f391} takes it to be the fruit which the Arabians call *mauz* or *muza*, (called, by some, the Indian fig) which, in the Abyssine country, is as big as a cucumber, and of the same form and shape; fifty of which grow upon one and the same stalk, and are of a very sweet taste and smell; from which cognation of a great many upon the same stalk, he thinks it took the name of *dudaim*. Some think, the fruit of the lote-tree is here intended; which, according to Homer, Herodotus, Ovid, and others, was a very sweet and delicious fruit; sweet apples, as some call them: there were a people in Africa, called Lotophagi, who lived upon it, as observed by the same authors: the mandrake of the Chinese is the famous root they call *ginseng*; which, with them, is a sovereign remedy for all weaknesses of body or mind; a preservative of health; and they call it the plant that gives immortality. Ravius, in his dissertation concerning the *dudaim*, thinks the words should be rendered, ‘the branches put forth their sweet-smelling flowers;’ and that the branches of fig-trees are meant, which give a good smell, agreeable to chapter ^{<220213>}2:13, and which, he supposes, to be the use of the word, in ^{<242401>}Jeremiah 24:1, and to his sense Heidegger ^{f396} agrees; only he thinks the word branches, is not to be restrained to a particular species, but may signify branches of sweet-smelling flowers and fruits in general. But the generality of Translators and Interpreters render it, mandrakes; as do the Septuagint, both the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, on ^{<013014>}Genesis 30:14, though the Targum on this place renders it, balsam: but then it is questionable whether the same plant, which is known among us by the name of mandrakes, is here meant, because of its strong smell; but of this more hereafter. Let us

consider what may be intended hereby. And,

1st, By these mandrakes may be meant, the saints and people of God; who are plants of God's right hand planting, are both fragrant and fruitful; and may be compared unto them,

1. Because the mandrake is a cold plant, and therefore used for the assuaging inflammations, and healing ulcers: ^{f397} the people of God, though they ought not to be cold in divine things, nor lukewarm in the cause of Christ, and vindication of his truths and ordinances; yet are, or at least should be, of cooling spirits, to allay those heats, and heal those divisions which too often appear in the churches of Christ; which they may be instrumental in, by a prudent carriage, a moderate temper, and by using soft and 'pleasant words;' which, as Solomon says, ^{<201501>}Proverbs 15:1 and ^{<201624>}16:24, 'turn away wrath' and are 'sweet to the soul, and health to the bones:' and when they appear to be of hot and fiery tempers and dispositions, it is what is opposite to the principle which is wrought in them and that profession which they make.

2. Because the mandrake is supposed to excite love; hence the apples of it are called 'apples of love;' and the Hebrew word here used comes from a root which signifies love: the saints may well be represented by them on this account; for they do not provoke Christ to love them, by the love they show him, or the obedience they perform unto him; yet these often draw out Christ's affections to them; and what he himself has wrought in them, and put upon them, render them lovely in his eye; besides, it is their incumbent duty, and should be the great employment of their lives, to provoke one another 'to love and good works.'

3. They have been also thought to help barrenness, ^{f398} and to make fruitful; which some have imagined to be the reason of that great contention between Rachel and Leah concerning them; and the same opinion of their prolific virtue remains in those eastern parts still, and they are applied for that purpose; and the plant is described as having a large leaf, bearing a certain sort of fruit, in shape resembling an apple, growing ripe in harvest, but of an ill savor, and not wholesome: ^{f399} hence the phrase here may intend the fruitfulness of the church in the first times of the gospel, through the vast numbers of souls which were born again therein, when that prophecy was fulfilled, ^{<235401>}Isaiah 54:1, 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord:' which fruitfulness of the church may be considered as a very good argument used by her here, to prevail on Christ to grant her his presence and company.

4. The mandrake is a narcotic, has a sleepy virtue in it, as Pliny ^{f400} observes, and much inclines thereunto; Levinus Lemnius ^{f401} writes of himself, that being in his study, he was suddenly taken with a sleepy fit, which he could by no means account for, until he espied a mandrake-apple upon one of the shelves, to which he ascribed it; and Plutarch ^{f402} relates, that mandrakes, which grow by vines, give the wine made of them such a virtue, that those who drink of it sleep mope sweetly: the saints are often in sleepy frames themselves; the wise virgins slept as well as the foolish; and conversation with sleepy professors makes others so likewise.

5. It not only inclines to sleep, but makes persons sluggish and slothful; hence those phrases, 'to drink the mandrake, and to sleep under a mandrake, ^{f403} are proverbially used of persons who are sluggish and inactive in the discharge of their office: the saints are too often so themselves, and the cause thereof in others; being 'slothful in business, and not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,' as they ought to be.

6. The apples of the mandrake are very delightful to look upon, being of a yellow or golden color; and so are the saints in Christ's eye; to them he looks, and with them he is well pleased, they being beautified with the garments of his salvation, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit.

7. These mandrakes are said to 'give a smell:' it is true, it is not said that they give a good smell; but it may be reasonably supposed that such an one is intended, because their commendation is designed; and they are taken notice of by the church, as what might be inviting to Christ; and so no doubt Reuben's mandrakes, which Rachel took such a fancy to, were fragrant, and of a sweet smell; or we may reasonably suppose the boy would not have gathered them, nor Rachel have took such a liking to them, no more than Leah would have contended with her about them, unless it was for a reason before given. But then the difficulty is to know what plant is intended, seeing our present mandrakes are of an ill and offensive smell; and so is the plant now shewn for it, as before observed; and such an account also Pliny gives of it; though Dioscorides, Levinus Lemnius and Augustine, who says, he saw the plant, and examined it, say, that it is of a very sweet smell; which though it does not agree with the plant which now bears the name, suits well with that intended here; for which reason the saints may be compared unto it, whose persons are of a sweet smell, being clothed with Christ's garments, which 'smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia,' and anointed with the savory ointments of the Spirit's grace; whose prayers are so, being perfumed with Christ's mediation; and their good works being accepted, with their persons, 'in the beloved :' so the Jews ^{f407} interpret the mandrakes, of the young men of Israel; who have not tasted the taste of sin, pure and holy persons, free from vicious habits. Or,

2dly, By these mandrakes, which give a good smell, may be meant the doctrines and promises of the gospel; which,

1. Like mandrakes, are of a healing and cooling nature: the law is a fiery law; and when it works, in a sinner's conscience, it makes fiery work there; it worketh wrath, which is only assuaged through the application of gospel doctrines and promises, by the blessed Spirit.

2. Like mandrakes, these excite love; for though it is the law which enjoins and requires love both to God and to our neighbor; yet it is the gospel which moves and presses us to it, with the noblest motives and most powerful arguments; such as those which are taken from the love of God and Christ to us.

3. Like mandrakes; are the means of fruitfulness: it is by the gospel, as the instrumental means, that souls are begotten again to Christ; for though they are born of an incorruptible seed, and are begot-. ten again according to the sovereign will of God, and as an instance of his abundant mercy, yet it is by the word of truth, which liveth and abideth for ever;

4. As the mandrake apples are delightful, so are the doctrines and promises of the gospel; which words being 'fitly spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'

5. As the mandrakes give a good smell, so do these; for to them that are saved, they are 'the savor of life unto life.'

3dly, By these dudaim or lovely flowers, as Junius translates the word, may be meant the graces of the Spirit; such as faith, repentance, love, thankfulness, hope, humility, etc.

1. Faith may be one of those lovely flowers which give a good smell: this is a flower that does not grow in nature's garden; bat is sown and raised in the Believer's heart, by the power and Spirit of God; which at first is but like a grain of mustard-seed, that is the least of all seeds; but afterwards grows in some

more, is others less; but in all it is 'alike precious faith,' which emits a sweet fragrancy to God and Christ.

2. Repentance may be another of those lovely flowers; this grows in the same garden as faith does; they are sown and raised up together, and that by one and the same hand; and when attended with fruits becoming it, is highly valued by Christ Jesus.

3. Love may be another of those lovely flowers; this precious flower springs from, is raised up and influenced by, as well as scented with the love of Christ: and of all the flowers in the believer's garden, none is fairer in Christ's eye, or gives trim, with its smell, more pleasure and delight; for of this he says, in chapter <220410>4:10, 'How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! etc.,'

4. The grace of thankfulness is another of these flowers; nay, a certain Expositor ^{r408} thinks, that it is chiefly intended: the exercise of this grace is required of us, for every mercy, both spiritual and temporal; and in every condition, state, and circumstance of life: this is more pleasing to God; and he smells a sweeter savor of rest in it, than in all burnt-offerings; and a contrary disposition is highly, resented by him, as appears from the case of the ten lepers that were cleansed, of which but one returned to give God thanks.

5. The grace of hope may be another of those lovely flowers: this is none of the meanest flowers which grow in the believer's garden; this is raised by powerful efficacious grace; is watered with divine love; is made to abound through the power of the Holy Ghost; and in which Christ takes no small pleasure and delight 'for the Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.'

6. The grace of humility is another precious flower; 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price:' this grace so much adorns believers, that Christ says, 'to this man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit;' neither can he take his eye off them, nor will he remove from them, but dwell with them for evermore. I might have mentioned many more of those lovely and sweet-smelling flowers, as patience, self-denial, etc, but these may suffice.

II. The church's fruits are commended from the comprehensiveness of them; she is possessed of 'all manner of pleasant fruits.' Which may denote,

1. The plenty of them: believers have not only abundance of grace in Christ, but also abundance in themselves; for 'where sin abounded, grace does much more abound;' they have also a fullness of all spiritual blessings in Christ, as well as a plenty of gospel-doctrines, and exceeding great and precious promises.

2. This may likewise denote the variety of them: the graces of the Spirit are many and various; as are the blessings of the gospel, such as redemption through Christ's blood, pardon of sin, justification by his righteousness, adoption, sanctification, etc. so are the doctrines and promises of the gospel, which are all suited to the several cases and circumstances of believers.

3. It also denotes the excellency of them; for here are not only plenty and variety of all manner of fruits, but all manner of pleasant fruits; such as do not grow every where, nor in any garden, but only in the garden of the church; whose 'plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, etc.' The allusion, no doubt, is to the most excellent fruits, with which the land of Judea abounded, as apples, figs, dates, pomegranates, etc. the word used includes every precious thing; not fruits only, but gold, silver, jewels, garments, etc.

III. These fruits are said to be both new and old, which still heightens and increases the commendation of

them; there is such plenty and fullness of them, as that the former year's produce is not gone, when the new is gathered in; here is some of both years increase, which is an indication of great plenty, as well as of the goodness of the fruit that will keep so long. By these fruits new and old,

1. Some ^{f410} understand the gifts of the Spirit; which Christ, after his ascension, received for his church, and bestowed on it; together with those temporal blessings which she enjoyed before. Though,
2. Others think that by them are intended moral and natural virtues, which may be found in an unconverted man; and the graces of the Spirit, which are only in renewed souls. But,
3. It seems much better to understand them of those fresh supplies of grace which believers have from Christ; for they cannot live upon their old stock, but must have a new supply; which they are graciously indulged with from Christ, from whose fullness they continually 'receive grace for grace.' Though,
4. I am rather inclined to think, that the doctrines of the Old and New Testament, which, for matter and substance are one and the same, are here meant with which; the church, and particularly her scribes and faithful ministers are furnished, so as they can 'bring forth out of their treasure things new and old,'

<401352>Matthew 13:52.

IV. These fruits are also said to be at their gates; which is mentioned,

1. In opposition to the mandrakes which grew in the field; which appears to be a field-plant, from <013014>Genesis 30:14, where it is said, that 'Reuben went in the days of wheat-harvest, and found mandrakes in the field;' but these fruits here grew at their very doors.
2. It may be an allusion to a custom of the eastern countries, in garnishing the doors of new-married persons with fruits and flowers; and not only at nuptial feasts, but at other festivals also; which made it very inviting to go within.
3. It may also signify, that these fruits were near at hand; there was no occasion to go far for them; they were even at the door, as the judge is said to be, James 5:9,
4. It may denote the publicness of them: they are not hid in secret, but exposed to public view; as the graces and good works of the saints should be; 'Let your light,' says our Lord, Matthew 5:16, 'shine before men,' etc. as well as the doctrines of the gospel, which are not to be spoken in a corner, but to be divulged upon the house-top.
5. By these gates may be meant, the means and ordinances of the gospel, where those fruits may be had; and it is therefore an encouragement to souls to 'watch daily at wisdom's gates, waiting at the posts of her door:' so some Jewish writers interpret them of their synagogues and schools.

V. All this plenty and variety of pleasant fruits which were just at hand, the church declares were all laid up for Christ; 'which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved:' respect may be had to a custom with lovers, to lay up fruits for those they love; at least such a custom may be compared with this. Christ had bestowed a large store and great plenty of fruit upon the church, which she had carefully reserved for him; she laid it up in her heart; she bore it in remembrance, which this phrase is sometimes expressive of: thus it is said, <420166>Luke 1:66, that all that heard of the surprising circumstances which attended the birth of John the Baptist, 'laid them up in their hearts,' that is, bore them in remembrance; so should we lay up the word of God, and the doctrines of it in our minds, and not forget them: thus David said, Psalm 119:11, he did 'Thy word,' says he, 'have I hid or laid up,' it is the same word that is here used, 'in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee:' so likewise should we treasure up in our minds all the instances of God's

grace and favor to us, and record the several experiences of his loving kindness; not as a stock to live upon, but to be brought out at proper times, to magnify the grace of Christ and to advance his glory; ‘for of him, and thro’ him, and to him, are all things. Now this appears to be a very great attainment and. a mighty instance of grace in the church, to have a stock of promises and experiences, and yet not live upon them herself, but upon Christ the author and donor of them; to lay them up for his service, and lay them out for his honor and glory: and her adding this endearing character, ‘O my beloved,’ shows not only the strength of her affection to him, but may also serve to assure him of the truth of what she said; as well as be an inducement to him to comply with her request, which she passionately renews in the beginning of the next chapter.

Song 8:2 “I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my *pomegranate* (*Punica granatum* L. , No. 132).”

- I.** Her resolution to ‘lead and bring him into her mother’s house’: wherein may be considered,
 - 1st**, What may be intended in those acts of leading and bringing.
 - 2dly**, What by, her ‘mother’s house,’ whither she should lead him, and into which she would introduce him.
- II.** Her expectation of receiving instruction there; ‘who would instruct me.’
- III.** The entertainment she promises to give him; ‘I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate’: some think, here is an allusion to a custom at marriage; when a cup of wine, after a benediction of it, was given to the new-married couple, who both drank of it; ^{f421} and in some places, the custom was ^{f422} for a young woman to bring in a cup of wine, all her lovers being present, and deliver it into the hand of him she fixed on to be her bridegroom; and by this action declared him to be so: and so here the church, by proposing to give to Christ a cup of her spiced wine, as the Vulgate Latin version renders it, declared him, and acknowledged him to be her husband. This is a different kind of entertainment, than what the old synagogue gave Christ; who, when she found him in the street, did not kiss him, showed no respect to him, made no profession of him, nor did she exercise any faith upon him, nay, despised those who dig so; she was so far from leading and bringing him into the temple, which the Jews ^{f423} here understand by her mother’s house, that she thrust him out of it, and gave him gall for his meat, and in his thirst gave him vinegar to drink; or, as one of the evangelists says, ^{<411523>}Mark 15:23. ‘wine mingled with myrrh; which, though it is of a sweet smell, yet is of a bitter taste: but the church here promises him spiced wine, such as was accounted the most pleasant and agreeable; and ‘the juice of her pomegranate, for her plants were an orchard of pomegranates; from the fruit of which a delightful juice is squeezed, of which is made a pleasant wine; and the word which is here translated juice, signifies must, ^{f424} sweet or new wine; and so it is rendered in ^{<234926>}Isaiah 49:26; ^{<290105>}Joel 1:5; ^{<300913>}Amos 9:13; and Pliny ^{f425} speaks of a wine made of pomegranates, which he calls rhoites; mention is also made of it in the Talmud ^{f426} and by Maimonides: ^{f427} there was a city in the tribe of Dan, called Gathrimmon, ^{<062124>}Joshua 21:24, ‘the winepress of the pomegranate,’ or where they made pomegranate-wine; and the word here

used comes from one which signifies to force, squeeze, or trade under; see ^{<390403>}Malachi 4:3, spiced wine was much used by the ancients; it was thought less inebriating; and therefore they sometimes put into their wine myrrh and calamus, and other spices; sometimes it was a mixture of old wine, water and balsam, and of wine, honey and pepper; sometimes wine and honey. These sorts of wine were no doubt accounted the best, and therefore she resolves to treat Christ with them: by which may be intended,

- 1.** The richness and plenty of this entertainment; a banquet of wine being accounted the richest banquet: hence the provisions of grace under the gospel, are represented by it, ^{<232506>}Isaiah 25:6, as are also the joys of heaven, ^{<402629>}Matthew 26:29. But here these metaphorical phrases intend the graces of God's people; which, when in exercise, are preferred by Christ to the richest wine.
- 2.** The variety of it; here are spiced wine, and wine of pomegranates, different sorts of wine; which are expressive of the various graces of the Spirit, which are implanted in the hearts of Christ's people.
- 3.** The delight and pleasure which Christ takes therein: for even one single grace, even that of love, is said to be 'better than wine, and the smell' of such ointments than all spices; which delight and pleasure is expressed by his drinking of it; see chapter 4:10 and 5:1. With the Hebrew writers, pomegranates are said to be a symbol of concord: the tree was sacred to love.

Song 8:5 "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the *apple* tree (*Prunus armeniaca* L. , No. 124): there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

IN these words are,

- I.** A question put by way of admiration, concerning the church who is here described:
 - 1st**, By her ascent out of the wilderness.
 - 2dly**, By her posture in coming up from thence; 'leaning upon her beloved.'
- II.** Some things asserted, either by Christ or by his church; 'I raised thee up,' etc.
- II.** In the following part of this text are some things asserted; either by Christ concerning his church, or else by the church concerning Christ; 'I raised thee up under the apple-tree,' etc. These words may be considered as the words of Christ; showing by whom and by what means the church was raised out of her former mean condition, and was brought to that honor and dignity which she now enjoyed.

1st, Says he, I raised thee up under the apple-tree: which may either intend the work of faith and conversion, which is the quickening or raising up a soul that is dead in trespasses and sins unto a newness of life; or else, the awakening of a sleepy and drowsy saint. If we consider the words in the former sense, they will lead us to observe,

 - 1.** The state and condition that the church was in before conversion; which Christ, it may be, remarks unto her, to teach her humility, that she might not be puffed up with spiritual pride, and forget what she once was; she was dead in sin, and must have continued so, had not Christ raised her up; she was like the wretched infant, in ^{<261606>}Ezekiel 16:6, which was 'cast out in the open field, to the lothing of us person in the day that it was born;' in which condition Christ found her, being like a new-born infant, thrown under

an apple-tree, and there left naked and helpless; where he took compassion upon her, and said unto her, whilst in her blood, live: moreover, some regard may be had in this place unto the manner how she came to be in this condition; which was through Adam and Eve's eating the forbidden fruit, which some have thought to be the apple; whereby 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned,' <450512>Romans 5:12.

2. That the work of faith and conversion is a resurrection from the dead; which for ever secures persons from being hurt by the second death; see <430525>John 5:25; <660211>Revelation 2:11.

3. That this work belongs to Christ, is performed by him, and the glory of it to be given to him; 'I raised thee up, etc.' this work cannot be effected by the free-will and power of man, but by the mighty and efficacious grace of Christ; hence he is said to be the resurrection and the life, <431125>John 11:25. No less a person than he, who said to Lazarus, come forth, can raise a dead sinner; and no less a power must be exerted in doing this work, than was in the resurrection of Christ's dead body; see <490119>Ephesians 1:19.

4. Christ's doing of this work upon the hearts of his people, is a very great indication of his love to them; he speaks of it here as a peculiar favor done to his church; see <490204>Ephesians 2:4; <243103>Jeremiah 31:3.

But,

If we understand these words of the awakening of her when asleep, they may teach us the following things:

- 1.** That she was fallen asleep; which is sometimes the case of God's own people, as in chapter 5:2.
- 2.** That this befell her when she was under the ordinances, under the shadow of the apple-tree, chapter 2:3.
- 3.** That Christ will not suffer his people to continue so; but will, by some means or other, awake them out of it.

2dly, He says, that there her mother brought her forth, etc. Here he expresses her conversion by a regeneration, as he had before by a resurrection; by both which names it is very well known in the New Testament; which work, though it is effected by the grace and Spirit of God, yet the ministry of the word and ordinances are the instrumental means thereof which Christ has placed, continues, and blesses in his church for that end.

But the words seem rather to be the words of the church, ^{f450} speaking these things concerning Christ; for though there is nothing in our version to determine the sense this way; yet the suffixes in the Hebrew text being of the masculine gender, manifestly show that they are spoken of a man, and not of a woman. And,

1st, The church says, that she raised Christ up under the apple-tree; that is, she sitting under the ordinances of the gospel, which are the shadow of the apple-tree, to which Christ is compared in chapter <220203>2:3, and finding no communion with him, he being as it were asleep all the while, did, by earnest prayer and entreaty, at length raise him up; so that she enjoyed a large degree of nearness to him, and familiarity with him.

2dly, That there his mother, which is the church and every true believer; see chapter 3:11; and Matthew 12:50, brought him forth

Song 8:9 “If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of *cedar* (*Cedrus libani* Loud, No. 101).”

THESE are the words of Christ, in answer to the solicitous concern of the old Jewish church for her little sister, the Gentile; declaring what should be done for her on such and such considerations.

- I. If, or ‘seeing she is a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver.’
 - II. ‘And if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar:’ all which is expressive of what strength and ornament should be added to her, and what grace and glory should be conferred upon her.
- II. Christ also assures her, that if she was a door, she should be inclosed with boards of cedar: the meaning of which may be, either,
1. If the Gentiles had the door of the gospel opened among them, as they had in many places, see <441427>Acts 14:27; <461608>1 Corinthians 16:8,9; <470212>2 Corinthians 2:12, this should be succeeded for the building up of an holy temple for the Lord; which should be of such ornament and strength, so well fenced and enclosed with the grace and power of Christ, that it should not be in the power of all their enemies to deface or demolish it. Or,
 2. If the door of their hearts was opened to Christ, as Lydia’s was, <441614>Acts 16:14, so as to receive and let in this king of glory, with his numerous train of graces; then she should be adorned and beautified with a larger measure of them. Or,
 3. If when they came into a church-state, the door was set open, that so ‘the righteous nation which keepeth truth, may enter in,’ and yet at the same time careful to exclude others; this should make much for their honor, comfort, safety, and security. Or,
 4. This phrase is expressive of the building being completed; but only it wanted some farther decorations and ornaments, which it should not be long without: so the setting up of gates or doors to towns or houses seems to signify; see Nehemiah 3. Though,
 5. It seems rather to intend the mean, low, and weak state and condition the Gentile church was first in, when there was but very little appearance of a building: there was only as it were a door set up; which afterwards grew up to be a magnificent and stately temple, built up of cedar-boards of the wood of Lebanon; of which Solomon’s temple was made: and to which an allusion here seems to be. But,
 6. Some have thought that these words carry in them some intimations of her inconstancy to Christ, and the wandering of her affections after other lovers; as also the methods which Christ would take to restrain and prevent her: ‘If she be a door;’ that is, if she will not keep at home, but will gad abroad, and go in and out at pleasure, we will use some methods to keep her in; ‘we will enclose her with boards of cedar;’ or, as it is expressed in <280207>Hosea 2:7. ‘I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.’ Though,
 7. The meaning rather seems to be, that however mean and abject she might appear to be, even as a door, yet she should be adorned with grace here, and enjoy glory hereafter; both which, for their perpetuity and incorruptibleness, may be compared to cedar-boards: besides, the safety and security of the church in this present state, her walls being salvation, and her gates praise, may be here intended; as well as the delights

and pleasures of the heavenly state, signified by the fragrant cedar, which she should, ere long, be inclosed and surrounded with.

Song 8:14 “Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”

THESE are the words of the church, earnestly imploring the presence of Christ. She begins and ends this song; and in both signifies her great affection to him, how much she valued his company, and how desirous she was of it: this appears throughout the whole song to lie uppermost in her heart, affections and desires; she had had much nearness of access to

Christ, and much communion with him, as appears from this chapter, and yet she wants more; she cannot be easy without the everlasting enjoyment of him on the mountains of apices. In the words may be considered,

I. The title she gives him; ‘my beloved.’

II. The request she makes to him; ‘make haste,’ etc.

2dly, She desires that he would be ‘like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices;’ for what reasons Christ may be compared ‘to a roe or a young hart,’ has been shown on chapter <220209>2:9. Her meaning here is, that he would come quickly and speedily, and be as swift in his motion as the roe or young hart, and flee as swift as they; \ which run upon the mountains, and other high places, where they delight to skip and leap; see <350319>Habakkuk 3:19, and by these ‘mountains of spices,’ we are not to understand mount Moriah, and the temple built upon it, as R. Solomon Jarchi interprets them; but rather, the mountains of Zion, or the several congregations and churches, where she desired his gracious presence until his second coming; which may be compared to mountains for their height and sublimity, being established and exalted above all others, <230202>Isaiah 2:2, as well as for their permanence and immoveableness; for, ‘they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which can never be removed, but abideth for ever,’ <19C501>Psalm 125:1, and may be called ‘mountains of spices,’ because of those precious plants which grow there; and those fragrant cruces with which they abound; as well as those sweet-smelling sacrifices of prayer and praise, which are there offered up. Though I rather think, that the joys and glories of the heavenly state are here intended; where the church desires to have everlasting and uninterrupted communion with her beloved, and that speedily, if it was his will; where she should be on high, and out of the reach of every snare and every enemy; where she would be safe, secure and immove-able, and in the possession of pleasures that will never end.

For,

- 1.** These mountains may denote the height and sublimity of this happy state; It is above, it is an ‘inheritance reserved in heaven; a hope laid up there, a prize of the high calling of God Christ Jesus.’
- 2.** May express the permanence and everlastingness thereof: it is a ‘city which hath foundations,’ and these immoveable; it is a ‘building of God, eternal in the heavens;’ these habitations are everlasting, from whence there never will be a remove.
- 3.** May signify the exceeding pleasantness and delightfulness thereof: that state may well be represented

by' spicy mountains, seeing in the presence of Christ there 'is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore;' no wonder then that the church should so passionately wish for the enjoyment of this happiness; and close this song in the manner she does, saying, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.'