

INTRODUCTION TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON

This book is entitled, in the Hebrew copies, “Shir Hashirim”, the Song of Songs. The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions call it, “the Song”; and the title of it in the Syriac version, is,

“the Wisdom of Wisdoms of the same Solomon;”

that is, the same who wrote the two preceding books. It has always been received and esteemed by the ancient Jews as a valuable part of the sacred writings, calling it “the Holy of Holies”^{f1}; forbidding their children to read it, because of the sublimity and mysteriousness of it, until they were at years to understand it: nor was there ever any controversy among them about the authenticity of it; but all their writers^{f2}, ancient and more modern, agree that it was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The ancient Christian fathers and councils have held it as a part of the holy Scriptures, and have continued it in the canon of them; and it has been received as canonical by Christians in all ages, except a very few, as Theodore of Mopsuest, condemned calling it in question by the second council at Constantinople, in 553; and Castalio, in later times, who for the same was censured and exiled by the senate at Geneva; and Mr. Whiston, in our age, whose objections to it I have attempted to answer, in my larger Commentary on this book, published in 1728, and since republished: and I am very sorry I am obliged to take notice of an objection to the antiquity of it, and to its being Solomon’s, made by a learned^{f3} man, very lately; who observes, that the word David, from its first appearance in Ruth, where it is written **dwd**, without the “yod”, continues to be so written through the books of Samuel, Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; but appears with a “yod”, **dywd**, in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah; wherefore he suggests, that if it was customary to write this word without a “yod” till the captivity, and with one after it; then he thinks a strong argument may be drawn from hence against the antiquity of the Canticles, and its being made by Solomon, since this name is written with a “yod” in (~~2004~~ Song of Solomon 4:4); the only place in it in which it is used: but in answer to this it must be said, that it is not fact that the word is invariably without a “yod” in the books mentioned, particularly the book of Kings: for the authors of the Masorah have observed, on (~~1084~~ 1 Kings 3:14), that it is five times written in that book full, as they call it, that

is, with a “yod”, **dywd**; three of the places I have traced out, (~~1084~~1 Kings 3:14 ~~1104~~1 Kings 11:4,36); and have found it so written in all the printed copies I have seen; and so it is read by the eastern Jews, in (~~36724~~Ezekiel 37:24). This learned man is aware that it is so written, once in Hosea, and twice in Amos, books written two hundred years before the captivity; but then he observes, that in the two last places, in Bomberg’s edition, it has a little circle (o) to mark it for an error, or a faulty word, though none over the word in Hosea: but it should be known, that that circle, in hundreds of places, is not used to point out anything faulty in the copy; but is only a mark referring to the margin, and what is observed there; and be it that it does point out an error, or a faulty word, the same circle is over the word in Canticles, and consequently shows it to be faulty there, and to be corrected and read without the “yod”, as it was originally without it there; which observation destroys the argument from it: and so it is read in that place in the Talmud^{f4} without it, and in the ancient book of Zohar^{f5}; and indeed it seems as if it was read without the “yod” in the copies seen by the authors of the Little Masorah; since in their note on (~~1084~~1 Kings 3:14); besides the five places in the Kings, where it is written full, or with the “yod”, they say, it is so written throughout the Chronicles, the twelve minor prophets, and Ezra, which includes Nehemiah; but make no mention of Solomon’s Song, which, one would think, they would have done, had it been so written there in the copies before them: so that, upon the whole, the argument, if it has any force in it, turns out for, and not against, the antiquity of Solomon’s Song. This book of Canticles has plain marks of a divine original, and proofs of its being of divine inspiration: it was written by, one that was inspired of God, as appears by the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, written by him; the greatness of the matter contained in it, the dignity, sublimity, and majesty of its style, show it to be no human composure; the power and efficacy which it has had over the hearts of men, in reading it, and hearing it explained, is another evidence of its being the word of God, which is quick and powerful; the impartiality of it, the bride, who is introduced speaking in it, confessing and proclaiming her own failings and infirmities, is no inconsiderable proof of the same; to which may be added the agreement between this and other portions of Scripture, as particularly (~~980~~Psalm 45:1-17); and there seem to be many allusions and references to various passages of this book in the New Testament; see (~~1093~~Matthew 9:13 ~~1052~~Matthew 13:52 ~~1218~~Matthew 21:38 ~~1211~~Matthew 25:1), etc. (~~664~~John 3:8,29 6:44 ~~4718~~2 Corinthians 11:3 ~~4827~~Ephesians 5:27) (~~5027~~Colossians 2:17 ~~660~~Revelation 3:20 ~~6907~~Revelation

19:7,8); compared with (²⁰⁰³Song of Solomon 1:3,4 ²⁰¹⁷Song of Solomon 2:17 ²⁰⁴⁷Song of Solomon 4:7,16) (²⁰⁸¹Song of Solomon 5:1,2 ²⁰⁷³Song of Solomon 7:13 ²⁰⁸¹Song of Solomon 8:11,12). In what time of Solomon's life this book was written is not agreed on: some of the Jewish writers say the book of Proverbs was written first, then the Song of Songs, and last of all Ecclesiastes; others, that the Song was written first, then Proverbs, and then Ecclesiastes^{f6}; though their chronologer^{f7} says they were all written in his old age, as indeed the last book seems to be; but the Song rather seems to have been written in the middle part of his life, when in the most flourishing circumstances as to body, mind, and estate. Dr. Lightfoot^{f8} is of opinion it might be written in the thirtieth year of his reign, about ten years before his death, after he had built his summer house in Lebanon, to which he supposes respect is had in (²⁰⁰⁸Song of Solomon 4:8 ²⁰⁷⁴Song of Solomon 7:4); and upon his bringing Pharaoh's daughter to the house prepared for her, (¹⁰²⁴1 Kings 9:24); but be this at it may, it was not a celebration of the amours between Solomon and her, since the literal sense, in many places, would be monstrous and absurd; and besides it must be written twenty years at least after that, if the house of the forest of Lebanon is referred to in the above places; nor does it set forth their amours, and the marriage between them, as typical of the inexpressible love and marriage union between Christ and his church; though there is a resemblance between natural and spiritual marriage, and the love of persons in such a relation to one another, and to which there may be an allusion in some passages. Nor is this book historical and prophetic, expressing either the state of the people of Israel, from the times of Abraham to Solomon, and so to the Messiah; in which way go many Jewish interpreters, as the Targum, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and others: nor is it to be considered as describing the state of the church: of God, whether legal, from the times of David and Solomon, and before, in and after the captivity, to the birth and death of Christ; or the Gospel church, in its beginning, progress, various changes, and consummation, as Brightman and Cotton nor as setting forth the several ages and periods of the Christian church, in agreement with the seven churches of Asia, as Cocceius, and those that follow him, Horchius, Hofman, and Heunischius; which latter, particularly, makes this distribution of them:

(1) The Ephesian church, (²⁰⁰⁵Song of Solomon 1:5-17); from the ascension of Christ to heaven, A. C. 33, to 370.

- (2) The Smyrnaean church, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 2:1-17); from A. C. 371, to 707;
- (3) The church at Pergamos, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 3:1-11); from A. C. 708, to 1045.
- (4) The Thyatirian church, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 4:1-5:1), from A. C. 1046, to 1383.
- (5) The Sardian church, (~~2182~~ Song of Solomon 5:2-6:8), from A. C. 1384, to 1721.
- (6) The church at Philadelphia, (~~2189~~ Song of Solomon 6:9-7:13), from A. C. 1722, to 2059.
- (7) The Laodicean church, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 8:1-14), from A. C. 2060, and onwards.

But these senses are very arbitrary, uncertain, and precarious, and limit the several parts of it to certain periods; whereas it is applicable to believers in all ages of time. The whole is figurative and allegorical; expressing, in a variety of lively metaphors, the love, union, and communion, between Christ and his church; setting forth the several different frames, cases, and circumstances of believers, in this life; so that they can be in no case and condition spiritual whatever, but there is something in this Song suitable to them; and which serves much to recommend it, and shows the excellency of it; and that it justly claims the title it bears, the Song of Songs, the most excellent. M. Bossuet¹⁹ is of opinion, that whereas the nuptial feast with the Hebrews was kept seven days, this Song is to be distributed into seven parts, a part to be sung, one each day, during the celebration: The first day, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 1:1-2:16). The second day, (~~2187~~ Song of Solomon 2:7-17). The third day, (~~2181~~ Song of Solomon 3:1-5:1). The fourth day, (~~2182~~ Song of Solomon 5:2-6:9). The fifth day, (~~2180~~ Song of Solomon 6:10-7:11). The sixth day, (~~2172~~ Song of Solomon 7:12-8:3). The seventh day, (~~2184~~ Song of Solomon 8:4-14). The thought is ingenious, but seems too fanciful, and without foundation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO SONG OF SOLOMON 1

In this chapter, after the general title of the book, (~~2000~~Song of Solomon 1:1), the church expresses her strong desires, and most ardent wishes, for some fresh discoveries of the love of Christ to her, and for communion with him; having tasted of his love, smelt a sweet savour in his grace, and enjoyed fellowship with him in his house, (~~2000~~Song of Solomon 1:2-4). She observes her blackness and uncomeliness in herself; the trials and afflictions she met with from others; and her carelessness and negligence of her own affairs, (~~2005~~Song of Solomon 1:5,6); and entreats her beloved to direct her where she might meet with him, feeding his flocks, and giving them rest, to which he returns a kind and gracious answer; gives her proper instructions where to find him, (~~2007~~Song of Solomon 1:7,8); and commends her beauty; sets forth her amiableness and loveliness, by various metaphors; and makes promises of more grace and good things to her, (~~2009~~Song of Solomon 1:9-11). And then she declares what a value she had for Christ, her beloved; and how precious he was unto her, like a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire, (~~2012~~Song of Solomon 1:12-14). Christ again praises her beauty; and particularly takes notice of her eyes, and her modest look, (~~2015~~Song of Solomon 1:15); and she returns the encomium back to him, and expresses her pleasure and satisfaction in the house he had built for her, and the furniture of it, (~~2016~~Song of Solomon 1:16,17).

Ver. 1. *The Song of songs, which [is] Solomon's.*] Wrote by Solomon, king of Israel, as the “amanuensis” of the Holy Ghost; and not by Hezekiah and his men, as the Jews say^{f10}: or, “concerning Solomon”^{f11}; Christ, of whom Solomon was a type; (see ~~2007~~Song of Solomon 3:7); of his person, excellencies, love to his church, care of her, and concern for her; and of the nearness and communion he admitted her to, and indulged her with the Jews have a saying^{f12}, that wherever the word Solomon is used in this song, the Holy One is meant, the holy God, or Messiah: it is called “the Song of songs”, because the most excellent, as the Holy of holies, King of kings, etc. which, with the Hebrews, express a superlative; this being more excellent than the one hundred and five songs, written by Solomon, or than

any human composure whatever; yea, preferable to all Scriptural songs, as to subject, manner of style, and copiousness of it.

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*, etc.] That is, Solomon; Christ, the antitype of Solomon, the church's beloved; or it is a relative without an antecedent, which was only in her own mind, "let him"; him, whom her thoughts were so much employed about; her affections were so strongly after; and whose image was as it were before her, present to her mind: and "the kisses of his mouth", she desires, intend some fresh manifestations and discoveries of his love to her; by some precious word of promise from his mouth, applied to her; and by an open espousal of her, and the consummation of marriage with her. It may be rendered, "with one of the kisses of his mouth"^{f13}; kisses with the ancients were very rare, and used but once when persons were espoused, and as a token of that; and then they were reckoned as husband and wife^{f14}: on which account, it may be, it is here desired; since it was after this we hear of the spouse being brought into the nuptial chamber, and of the keeping of the nuptial feast, (~~2004~~ Song of Solomon 1:4,12);

for thy love [is] better than wine; or "loves"^{f15}; which may denote the abundance of it; the many blessings of grace which flow from it; and the various ways in which it is expressed; as well as the high esteem the church had of it. This is said to be "better than wine"; for the antiquity of it, it being from everlasting; and for the purity of it, being free from all dregs of dissimulation and deceit on the part of Christ, and from all merit, motives, and conditions, on the part of the church; for its plenty, being shed plenteously in the hearts of believers, and who may drink abundantly of it; and for its freeness and cheapness, being to be had without money and without price; and it is preferable to wine for the effects of it; which not only revives and cheers heavy hearts, but quickens dead sinners, and comforts distressed saints; and of which they may drink plentifully, without hurt, yea, to great advantage.

Ver. 3. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments*, etc.] It was usual for lovers to anoint themselves, their hair, garments, etc. to commend themselves to each other; and it was common to commend each other's ointments, and the grateful smell of them^{f16} none being like them, or so agreeable as theirs: by these ointments may be meant the grace of Christ, the fulness of it, the oil of gladness with which he is anointed above his

fellows, and without measure; and which so greatly recommends him to his church and people, (^{<3987>}Psalm 45:7 ^{<3014>}John 1:14);

thy name [is as] ointment poured forth; which emits the greater odour for its being poured forth out of the box. The very names of lovers are dear to one another, sweeter than nectar itself^{f17}; the very mention of them gives an inexpressible pleasure. This may respect not merely the fame of Christ spread abroad in the world through the ministry of the word; nor the Gospel only, which is his name, (^{<4015>}Acts 9:15); and is like a box of ointment broke open, which diffuses the savour of his knowledge everywhere; but some precious name of his, as Immanuel, God with us; Jesus, a Saviour; but more particularly his name Messiah, which signifies anointed, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of his church;

therefore do the virgins love thee: for the preciousness of his person, the fulness of grace in him, and the truths of his Gospel: and which love shows itself in a desire of his presence, and communion with him; in a regard to his word and worship, to his truths and ordinances; and to his people, to conversation and communion with them. By these virgins are meant either congregational churches that strictly adhere to Christ, and to his pure worship; or particular believers, for their inviolate attachment to him; for the singleness and sincerity of their love to him; for their uncorruptness in the doctrine of faith; for the truth and spirituality of their worship; for the purity of their lives and conversations; for their beauty and comeliness through Christ; for their colourful and costly attire, being clothed with his righteousness; and for their modest behaviour, having the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

Ver. 4. *Draw me*, etc.] With the cords of love, for what draw lovers to each other more strongly? under the influence of that they cannot bear to be without each other's company. Aben Ezra takes these words to be spoken by the virgins, who everyone of them said this, promising upon it to follow after the drawer; but they are rather the request of the church, desirous of nearer and more intimate communion with Christ; for this is not to be understood of drawing at first conversion, as the fruit of love, and under the influence of grace, (^{<2813>}Jeremiah 31:3 ^{<3164>}John 6:44); but of being brought nearer to Christ, and to enjoy more of him;

we will run after thee; the church and the virgins, she and her companions, or particular believers; everyone of them in their respective stations would act with more rigour upon such drawings; would run in a way of duty,

follow Christ, and walk in his steps; and as they had him for an example, and according to his word, and in the ways of his commandments: or “that we may run after thee”^{f18}; intimating that there is no running without drawing; no following Christ, at least no running after him with alacrity and cheerfulness, without being drawn by his love, and influenced by his grace;

the King hath brought me into his chambers: the blessing she sought after, and was so solicitous for in the preceding verses; namely, to have the marriage consummated, to be owned by Christ as his spouse and bride, by taking her home, and introducing her into the nuptial chamber; by putting her into the enjoyment of himself, and the possession of his substance: and this being done by him as King of saints, yea, of the world, showed great condescension on his part, and great honour bestowed on her; since by this act, as he was King, she was declared queen!

we will be glad and rejoice in thee: she and her bridesmaids, the virgins that attended her; that is, “when he should introduce” her into his chambers, as some^{f19} render the words; then they should express their joy and gladness on that occasion; and that in the greatness, glory, and fitness of his person; in the fulness of grace in him; in the blessings of grace from him; in what he has done for, and is to his church and people; in the offices he bears, and in the relations he stands in to them; and particularly that of a husband, now declared;

we will remember thy love more than wine: which, upon the introduction of the bride to the bridegroom, might be plentifully drank; of the preferableness of Christ’s love to wine, (see Gill on “~~2100~~ Song of Solomon 1:2”); it may design more particularly the love of Christ, expressed at this time of solemnizing the marriage between him and his church in an open manner, (~~2109~~ Hosea 2:19); and which would never be forgotten: Christ’s love is remembered when thought of and meditated upon; when faith is exercised on it, and the desires of the soul are drawn after it, and the affections set upon it; and when it is often spoken of to others, being uppermost in the mind; saints under the Gospel dispensation have an ordinance for this purpose, to, commemorate the love of Christ;

the upright love thee; or “uprightnesses”^{f20}; men of upright hearts and conversations, who have right spirits renewed in them; or Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile; who have the truth of grace in them, walk uprightly according to the rule of God’s word, and the Gospel of Christ; and do all they do sincerely, from a principle of love, and with a view to

the glory of God; such love Christ superlatively, sincerely, fervently, and constantly; and “love [him] rightly”, or “most uprightly”, as some^{f21} render the phrase.

Ver. 5. *I [am] black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem*, etc.] The church having obtained of Christ, what she wanted, turns to the daughters of Jerusalem, the same perhaps with the virgins her companions; they seem to be young converts, it may be not yet members of the visible church, but had a great respect for the church, and she for them; and who, though they had but a small knowledge of Christ her beloved, yet were desirous of knowing more of him, and seeking him with her; (see ^{218B}Song of Solomon 3:9-11 ^{218B}Song of Solomon 5:8,9 ^{218B}Song of Solomon 6:1); to these she gives this character of herself, that she was “black” in herself^{f22}, through original sin and actual transgression; in her own eyes, through indwelling sin, and many infirmities, spots, and blemishes in life; and in the eyes of the world, through afflictions, persecutions, and reproaches, she was attended with, and so with them the offscouring of all things: “but comely” in the eyes of Christ, called by him his “fair one”, the “fairest among women”, and even “all fair”, (^{218B}Song of Solomon 1:8,15 ^{218B}Song of Solomon 4:7); through his comeliness put upon her, the imputation of his righteousness to her; through the beauties of holiness upon her; through, the sanctifying influences of his Spirit; and, being in a church state, walking in Gospel order, attending to the commands and ordinances of Christ; and so beautiful as Tirzah, and comely as Jerusalem, (^{218B}Song of Solomon 6:4); and upon all accounts “desirable”,^{f23} to Christ, and to his people, as the word may be rendered;

as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon: each of which are thought by some to refer to both parts of her character; and suppose that the tents of Kedar, though they might look poor on the outside, were full of wealth and riches within; and Solomon’s curtains, or hangings, might have an outward covering not so rich and beautiful as they were on the inside; but rather the blackness of the church is designed by the one, and her comeliness by the other. With respect to her blackness, she compares herself to the tents of Kedar, to the inhabitants of those tents, who were of a black or swarthy complexion; Kedar signifies the name of a man whose posterity these were, that dwelt in tents, even of Kedar the second son of Ishmael, and who inhabited some part of Arabia; and, their employment being to feed cattle, moved from place to place for the sake of pasturage, and so dwelt in tents, which they could easily remove, and hence were

called Scenites; and the tents they dwelt in being made of hair cloth, and continually exposed to the sun and rain, were very black, and yet a number of them made a fine appearance, as Dr. Shaw relates^{f24}; though black, yet were beautiful to behold; he says,

“the Bedouin Arabs at this day live in tents called “hhymes”, from the shelter which they afford the inhabitants; and “beet el shaar”, that is, “houses of hair”, from the materials or webs of goats’ hair whereof they were made; and are such hair cloth as our coal sacks are made of; the colour of them is beautifully alluded to, (²⁰⁰⁶Song of Solomon 1:5); for nothing certainly can afford (says he) a more delightful prospect than a large extensive plain, whether in its verdure, or even scorched up by the sunbeams, than, these movable habitations pitched in circles upon them; of which (he says) he has seen from three to three hundred.”

And for her comeliness the church compares herself either to the curtains of Solomon, about his bed, or to the rich hangings of tapestry in the several apartments of his palace, which no doubt were very costly and magnificent.

Ver. 6. *Look not upon me*, etc.] Meaning not with scorn and disdain because of her meanness; nor as prying into her infirmities to expose her; nor with joy at her trials and afflictions; neither of these can be supposed in the daughters of Jerusalem addressed by her: but rather, not look on her as amazed at her sufferings, as though some strange thing had befallen her; not at her blackness only, on one account or another, lest they should be stumbled; but at her beauty also;

because I [am] black; or “blackish” somewhat black^{f25}, but not so black as might be thought, or as she was represented: the radicals of the word being doubled, some understand it as diminishing; but rather it increases the signification; (see ¹⁹⁴²Psalms 14:2 ²⁰³¹Proverbs 8:31); and so it may be rendered “very black”,^{f26} exceeding black; and this she repeats for the sake of an opportunity of giving the reason of it, as follows;

because the sun hath looked upon me; and had burnt her, and made her black; which effect the sun has on persons in some countries, and especially on such who are much abroad in the fields, and employed in rural services^{f27}; as she was, being a keeper of vineyards, as in this verse, and of flocks of sheep, as in the following. This may be understood of the sun of persecution that had beat upon her, and had left such impressions on her,

and had made her in this hue, and which she bore patiently; nor was she ashamed of it; nor should she be upbraided with it, nor slighted on account of it, (see ~~1006~~ Matthew 13:6, 21);

my mother's children were angry with me; by whom may be meant carnal professors, members of the same society, externally children of the same mother, pretend to godliness, but are enemies to it: these were “angry” with the church for holding and defending the pure doctrines of the Gospel; for keeping the ordinances as they were delivered; and for faithful reproofs and admonitions to them and others, for their disagreeable walk: and these grieved the church, and made her go mourning, and in black; and more blackened her character and reputation than anything else whatever: though it may be understood of any carnal men, who descend from mother Eve, or spring from mother earth, angry with the church and her members preciseness in religion; and particularly violent persecutors of her, who yet would be thought to be religious, may be intended;

they made me the keeper of the vineyards; this is another thing that added to her blackness, lying abroad in the fields to keep the “vineyards” of others, by which may be meant false churches, as true ones are sometimes signified by them; and her compliance with their corrupt worship and ordinances, which was not voluntary, but forced; they made me, obliged her, and this increased her blackness; as also what follows;

[but] mine own vineyard have I not kept; which made her blacker still; her church state, or the spiritual affairs of her own, her duty and business incumbent on her^{f28}, were sadly neglected by her: and this sin of hers she does not pretend to extenuate by the usage of her mother's children; but ingenuously confesses the fault was her own, to neglect her own vineyard and keep others, which was greatly prejudicial to her, and was resented by Christ; upon which it seems he departed from her, since she was at a loss to know where he was, as appears from the following words. With the Romans, neglect of fields, trees, and vineyards, came under the notice of the censors, and was not to go unpunished^{f29}.

Ver. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth*, etc.] With all her heart, cordially and sincerely; for, notwithstanding her sinful compliance with others, and neglect of her own affairs, she had not lost her love to Christ; and, being sensible of her sin and folly, whereby she was deprived of his company, and communion with him, applies to him to guide, direct, and restore her wandering soul; and particularly inform her

where, says she,

thou feedest; that is his flock, like a shepherd: for this phrase supposes him to be a shepherd, as he is, of God's choosing, appointing, and setting up, the chief, the good, the great, and only Shepherd of the sheep; and that he has a flock to feed, which is but one, and a little one, is his property, given him by God, purchased by his blood, called a flock of slaughter, and yet a beautiful one, he has undertook to feed; and feeding it includes the whole business of a shepherd, in leading the sheep into pastures, protecting them from all enemies, restoring them when wandering, healing their diseases, watching over them in the night seasons, and making all necessary provisions for them. Or, "tell me how thou feedest"^{f30}; the manner of it, and with what; which he does by his ministers, word, and ordinances; with himself, the bread of life; with the doctrines and promises of the Gospel, and with the discoveries of his love;

where thou makest [thy flocks] to rest at noon, either at the noon of temptation, when Satan's fiery darts fly thick and fast; when Christ is a shadow and shelter in his person, grace, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, (~~2294~~ Isaiah 25:4,5); or the noon of affliction, when he makes their bed in it, and gives them rest from adversity; or the noon of persecution, when Christ leads his flocks to cooling shades, and gives them rest in himself, when troubled by others: the allusion, is to shepherds, in hot countries, leading their flocks to some shady place, where they may be sheltered from the scorching heat of the sun; which, as Virgil says^{f31}, was at the fourth hour, or ten o'clock, two hours before noon; we read of **προβατια μισημβριαζοντα**^{f32}, sheep nooning themselves, or lying down at noon, under a shade, by a fountain, asleep;

for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? not real associates with Christ, that keep company with him, and are attached to his word and ordinances; but false friends, hypocrites and heretics^{f33}, rivals with him, who set up schemes of worship and doctrine in opposition to his; such as Papists, Socinians, etc. now such false teachers have had their flocks in all ages, such as have followed them, and have formed separate societies; and therefore the church, sensible of their craftiness, and her own weakness, and liableness to go astray, desires she might not be under, and left to such a temptation, as to apostatize from Christ, and join to such persons and their flocks, or seem to do so: or, "be as one that covereth herself", or "is covered"^{f34}; as a harlot; so Tamar,

(~~OR~~ Genesis 38:14); or as a widow in mourning; she chose not to be, or to be thought to be, either as one that left her husband, an unchaste woman; or had lost her husband, or as if she had none, when neither was the case: or, “as one that spreads the tent”^{f35}; by the flocks of such; as if in communion with them, and joining with them in feeding their flocks; and therefore desires she might speedily know where Christ was, and go to him, that such an aspersion or suspicion might at once be wiped from her.

Ver. 8. *If thou know not*, etc.] Or, “seeing thou knowest not”^{f36}; the saints in this imperfect state know but in part, are ignorant of many things, and in some measure of themselves; for though they know much of the sinfulness and deceitfulness of their hearts, yet they know not all; and of their imperfection and weakness, yet not the whole of it; and some render the words, “if thou know not to thee”, or, “for thyself”, as Ainsworth; or “know [not thyself]”^{f37}, as others; hence Ambrose^{f38} observes, that “nosce teipsum” was not originally from the Pythian oracle; Solomon had it before that, and he from Moses, (~~OR~~ Deuteronomy 4:9); Saints have not a perfect knowledge of Christ and his truths, and are sometimes at a loss to know where he is, his word is purely preached, and his ordinances faithfully administered;

O thou fairest among women; these are not the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, as some think, who were not capable of giving her the following advice and directions; but of Christ himself, to whom the church applied for it; who, though black in her own eyes, and in the eyes of others, yet was fair, surpassingly fair, fairer than all others in his eye, even notwithstanding her late sinfulness and negligence; which shows the invariableness of his love; who directs her as follows;

go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock; not “from the footsteps”^{f39}; as if it was an exhortation to depart from false teachers, their doctrine and worship, and the abettors of them, she was tempted to turn aside to; but the “footsteps” are the rule and mark by which she was to go, and on which she was to keep her eye, and steer her course by, in seeking after Christ: for by “the flock” is meant the flock of Christ; and by the “footsteps” of it the ways and ordinances in which saints walk in obedience to Christ; and who are to be followed so far as they follow him; their steps are to be trod in; and this is the readiest and most likely way to find Christ, even where saints meet together, the word is preached, and ordinances administered;

and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents; the faithful ministers of the word, who are Christ's undershepherds, have their mission and commission from him, and are qualified by him to feed his flocks, and do feed them by the pure administration of the word and ordinances; and by the tents are meant the places of public worship, where they usually preach the Gospel, and administer ordinances. The allusion is to the tents of shepherds pitched for the convenience of feeding their flocks; and "by" or "near"^{f40} these the church is directed to "feed [her] kids", young converts weak in the faith; men of "little faith", as Aben Ezra interprets it; called "kids" or young goats, lascivious^{f41}, and of an ill smell; because of sin in them, of an ill smell to themselves and others; and of whom the world have an ill opinion; and such on all accounts need encouragement from the church and ministers. It was common in the eastern countries, as Philo says^{f42} of the Arabs, not for men only to keep flocks, but women also, and young virgins; and not the common people only, but nobles; of women keeping flocks see (^{<Q29D>}Genesis 29:9 ^{<R216>}Exodus 2:16); This verse and (^{<Q207E>}Song of Solomon 1:7) show this song to be a pastoral; since the bridegroom and bride, the principal persons in it, are represented in it as a shepherd and shepherdess.

Ver. 9. *I have compared thee, O my love*, etc.] The church having taken the direction of Christ, had now found him, and was with him; and when for her encouragement and comfort he greets her as his love, an appellation very usual among lovers; and in the chastest sense between husband and wife; the church was Christ's love, being both the object and subject of it; to whom he had showed love, and whose love was shed abroad in her heart; or "my friend"^{f43}, another name used among lovers; there is a mutual friendship between Christ and his people; they are Christ's friends, and he is theirs, (^{<Q210E>}Song of Solomon 5:1,16). The Septuagint render it "my neighbour", whom Christ loves as himself; and they dwell near each other; he dwells in them, and they in him, (^{<R166E>}John 6:56); and here are compared by him

to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots; or "I have likened thee", or reckoned thee like^{f44}; formed such an image of thee in my mind, with regard to some peculiar excellencies in her which agreed therewith: or to "my mare"^{f45}, as some translate the word, which ran in one of his chariots, called Pharaoh's chariot; because perhaps it was made a present of to him by Pharaoh king of Egypt, his father in law, for which he had a particular regard, as Alexander for his Bucephalus; nor is such a comparison of a woman a disagreeable one, since, as Marckius observes, many women have

had their names from the horse, because of some celebrated excellency in them^{f46}; and Theocritus^{f47} compares Queen Helena to a Thessalian horse in a chariot; and it is thought he took the hint from this song, as admiring it; so, by others^{f48}, persons are compared to mares for their beautiful form. Christ's church and people be compared to "the horse" for their strength, majesty, and comeliness; they are strong in Christ, and in his grace, and of an undaunted courage in bearing hardships, reproaches, and persecutions for his sake, and in fighting the Lord's battles; and are stately and majestic, especially a company of them in Gospel order, (²⁰¹⁸⁴Song of Solomon 6:4); and are very comely and beautiful in their trappings, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and the graces of his Spirit; and to a "company" of them, a collection of goodly ones, as Egyptian ones, reckoned the best; and those in Pharaoh's chariot best of all; choice, costly, well fed, and well taken care of; and not wild and loose, but coupled and joined together in a chariot, all drawing one way. Christ's church and people are a choice and select company, distinguished from others by the grace of God; cost a great price, the blood of Christ; are well fed with the finest of the wheat; and are under the care both of angels and Gospel ministers; and look very beautiful as under the yoke of Christ, and joined together in Gospel bonds, being of the same faith and judgment; drawing one way, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Ver. 10. *Thy cheeks are comely with rows [of jewels],* etc.] Or "beautiful as turtledoves", as the Septuagint; or it may be rendered "with turtles", since the word "jewels" is not in the text; not with images of turtles on the bridles of the horses before mentioned, as Aben Ezra; but rather some ornaments of women having such images on them may be meant, called "turtles", or "turturellas"; they seem to me to be the same with the earrings, which being fastened to a thin plate of gold or silver, which went across the forehead, or to a ribbon bound on it, as Aben Ezra on (⁰²⁴²Genesis 24:22); observes, hung down by the ears in rows on both sides of the cheeks, and made but one ornament; as they did when another jewel from the same plate or ribbon hung down from the forehead to the nose, called a nose jewel, (²³⁶¹²Ezekiel 16:12);^{f49}; and such an ornament, consisting of these several parts, Abraham's servant is said to put upon the face or cheeks of Rebekah, (⁰²⁴⁷Genesis 24:47); and these may respect the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, with which the church is ornamented; and are many and various, and are orderly and regularly disposed, and

make very comely and lovely, and may be further described in the next clause;

thy neck with chains [of gold]; the word “gold” not being in the text, the chains may be understood, as they commonly are by the Jewish writers, of precious stones; as pearls bored and strung, which make a necklace; so Stockius^{f50} interprets it of an ornament of pearls and precious stones, orderly disposed and put about the neck, in use with great personages; so the eldest daughter of Priamus had, “collo monile baccatum”^{f51}, a pearl necklace, which Aeneas made a present of to Dido; such was the chain of gold, beset with amber, presented to Penelope by her suitors, which shone like the sun^{f52}. The church has her golden chain, or pearl necklace; which are either the graces of the Spirit, so linked together, that where there is one there are all; and which consists of those ten links, or pearls, faith, hope, love, repentance, humility, patience, self-denial, contentment in every state, spiritual knowledge, longsuffering, or forbearance; sincerity goes through them all. Or else the spiritual blessings of the covenant of grace, with which the church and all the saints are blessed in Christ at once, and with one and all; and which golden chain of salvation, one link of which cannot be broken, is excellently described by the apostle in (^{<680>}Romans 8:30).

Ver. 11. *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*] Christ here in his own name, and in the name of the other two divine Persons, promises to the church a greater glory than as yet she had enjoyed; and seems to have respect to the Gospel dispensation; for by “golden borders” studded with “silver” may be meant the ordinances of the Gospel, preferable to those under the law; and therefore said to be of “gold [and] silver”, for their glory, splendour, and durability: or else the doctrines of the Gospel, being of more worth than thousands of gold and silver; and being called “borders”, or rather “rows”^{f53}, may denote their orderly disposition and connection, their harmony and agreement with and dependence on each other: and the Gospel is full of silver “specks” or “studs” of exceeding great and precious promises; a variety of them useful and pleasant; a greater measure of the grace of the Spirit may be here promised: or the “borders” may intend the groundwork of the church’s faith and hope, the justifying righteousness of Christ, more clearly revealed; and the “studs of silver” the curious work of sanctification, more enlarged and increased; and so take in both Christ’s righteousness imputed to her, and his grace implanted in her; but perhaps these phrases may be best of all

understood of the New Jerusalem state, and of the ultimate glory of the saints in heaven, sometimes set forth by such similes, (^{f541}Isaiah 54:11,12 ^{f542}Revelation 21:18,19, 21). Both grace and glory are given by Christ, and in which all the three divine Persons are concerned; for not angels, nor the daughters of Jerusalem, are here the speakers, to whom such things promised cannot agree; nor God, speaking after the manner of men, and for honour's sake, is designed: but the trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, are meant; the ordinances are of their institution, and administered in their name, (^{f543}Matthew 28:19); they have all a concern it, the Gospel and the doctrines of it, which is called the Gospel of God, and the Gospel, of Christ, and the ministering of the Spirit; the grace of God, in regeneration and conversion, is sometimes ascribed to one and sometimes to another; and an increase of it in the heart is wished for from all three, (^{f544}Revelation 1:4); and they have a hand in all the glory the saints shall enjoy hereafter: the Father has prepared the kingdom from the foundation of the world; the Son has made way for it by his obedience, sufferings, and death; and the Spirit is the earnest of it, makes meet for it, and introduces into it.

Ver. 12. *While the King [sitteth] at his table*, etc.] These are the words of the church, relating what influence the presence of Christ, her Lord and King, had upon the exercise of her graces, while he was keeping the nuptial feast, on account of his marriage with her. He was anointed King of saints from eternity, before his incarnation, when he was rejoicing before God his Father, as if at a feast; and while he was thus distant, the faith, hope, desire, and expectation of the saints, were exercised on him, as their Lord and King, that was to come: when he did come, he came as a King, as was foretold of him, though his kingdom was not of this world; and while he was here, the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven was preached, and emitted a sweet savour in Judea: and when he went up to heaven, after his resurrection, he was declared Lord and Christ, and sat down at the right hand of God, “in his circuit”,^{f54} or at his round table; alluding to such the ancients used, and great personages fed on, peculiar to themselves^{f55}; being encircled by angels and glorified saints: and in the mean while, before his second coming as King, when he will appear as such in a more glorious manner, he sits down at his table, in the ordinance of the supper, feasting with, entertaining, and welcoming his church and people. When as follows, she says,

my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof: or “nard”, of which there are many sorts; but that which grows in spikes is reckoned the best, and from thence is called “spikenard”: it was a chief ingredient in ointments, as Pliny says ^{f56}; (see ^{<812B>}John 12:3); and was much used at festivals, to anoint guests with; and with which their head and hair being anointed, gave a fragrant smell, and therefore used to make them acceptable ^{f57}: in Syria, at royal banquets, as this here was, it was usual to go round the guests, to sprinkle them with Babylonian ointment ^{f58}. This may have respect to the grace of the Spirit in the church, comparable to the most excellent ointment; and which grace being in exercise in her, both before and after the incarnation of Christ, and since his ascension to heaven, and while he grants his presence in Gospel ordinances, is very delightful and acceptable to Christ; or this spikenard, according to some ^{f59}, may be meant of Christ himself, just as he is said to be “a bundle of myrrh” in (^{<2113>}Song of Solomon 1:13), and “a cluster of camphire”, in (^{<2114>}Song of Solomon 1:14); and as ointments were used at feasts, and the church was at one with Christ, and as he was both master and feast, so he was the ointment of spikenard to her; and it is as if she should say, my beloved is at table with me; he is my food, and he is my spikenard ^{f60} I need no other; he is instead of spikenard, myrrh, cypress, or any unguents made of these: his person is exceeding precious; his graces, of ointments, have a delightful savour in them; his sacrifice is of a sweet odour; his garments of righteousness and salvation smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; he is all in all.

Ver. 13. *A bundle of myrrh [is] my well beloved unto me*, etc.] These are the words of the church continued; expressing her great delight in Christ, and her strong love and affection for him, and therefore calls him “my well beloved”; which is expressive both of the greatness of Christ’s love to her, and of the strength of her affection to him, as well as of her faith of interest in him; hence she says, he was as “a bundle of myrrh” to her. Some think ^{f61} sweet marjoram is meant, or an herb of a sweet smell, very much like it, called “marum”; but myrrh is commonly understood; and not twigs or branches of it but sprigs, or the flowers of it, bound up as a nosegay, and carried in the bosom; or better, liquid myrrh, or “stacte”, as the Septuagint render it, put in a bag ^{f62} or bottle, as the word is rendered, (^{<8147>}Job 14:7 ^{<3006>}Haggai 1:6); the allusion being to persons that carry smelling bottles in their bosoms, for refreshment or for pleasure. Now what these were to such, that, and much more, is Christ to his church; like sweet smelling myrrh, exceeding delightful and reviving, and make him very acceptable;

his very garments smell of myrrh: and “a bundle” of this, or a bag of it, denotes the abundance of the odours of divine grace in Christ, who is full of it, which he communicates in great plenty: and now Christ is all this, not to any and everyone; but to his church and people, to whom alone he is precious, “my beloved is unto me”; which expresses not only the strength of her affection to Christ, and the value she had for him, and the delight she had in him; but the particular application of him to her own soul by faith;

he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts; “it” or “he”; the bundle of myrrh, or Christ, which comes to the same sense: by her “breasts” are meant her heart, where Christ dwells by faith, which is the best room the church has, and where she desires Christ might lodge; so Alshech explains it of being in her heart: and the time in which she would have him continue here is “all night”; meaning the night of affliction, temptation, etc. or rather the whole time of this life, until the everlasting day breaks; and so it is a desire of Christ’s presence with her, and of her having communion with him, as long as she lived in the world; and between her breasts, and in her bosom she desires he might be for an ornament to her, like sweet flowers, and for her delight and pleasure, refreshment and comfort; and that he might be always in her sight, and never be forgotten by her.

Ver. 14. *My beloved [is] unto me [as] a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.*] Engedi was a place near Jericho, and famous for palm trees, as that was, hence called Hazazontamar, (^{4am}2 Chronicles 20:2). Pliny^{f63} speaking of this place, which he calls Engadda, says, it is second to Jerusalem for fertility and groves of palm trees; and Josephus^{f64} observes, that there grew the best palm trees and opobalsam; wherefore Aben Ezra, and other Jewish writers, think that dates, the fruit of the palm trees, which grow in clusters, are here meant: and because the balsam tree also, grew in this place, as observed before from Josephus, and grew in the manner of vines, as others^{f65} assert; and this being said to, be in vineyards, some have thought that that might be in, tended; but what is valuable in it is a gum or tear, that drops from it, and not fruit in clusters, which it bears not: nor can it be supposed that what we call “camphire” should be meant, which grows not in clusters, and was unknown to the ancients; nor the “cyperus”, or “cypirus”, as Cocceius and others. The Septuagint version readers it “cypirus”: and there was a tree of this name which grew in Askelon in Judea, which, according to Pliny^{f66}, bore a white flower of a sweet smell; and which, in Italy, was called “ligustrum”, the privet tree, commended by the poets^{f67} for its peculiar whiteness; and the cypress tree

is reckoned by Josephus^{f68} among the odoriferous trees which grew about Jericho, near to which Engedi was. The word here used is to be found in the Misnah^{f69}; and the commentators^{f70} on it say, it is the same which, in Arabic, is called “alhena”, the cypress tree, and refer to this place; of which Dr. Shaw^{f71} says,

“this beautiful and odoriferous plant, “alhenna”, 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.”

But, after all, perhaps the Cyprus vine is here meant, which, according to Pliny^{f72}, was the best and largest of vines; and which, though it grew in Cyprus, from whence it had its name, yet some plants of it might be obtained by Solomon, and planted in the vineyards of Engedi; or there were such there like them, and were called by the same name: Jarchi, from an ancient exposition of theirs, relates, that the vineyards of this place brought forth fruit four or five times a year; Alshech says seven. Now as Christ compares himself to a vine, (~~<BIBL>~~John 15:1); the church may compare him to a cluster of the grapes of the Cyprus vine, reckoned the best; there being a cluster of all perfections, divine and human, in him; and of all the spiritual blessings of the everlasting covenant, and of all the precious promises in it; and of all the grace of the Spirit, and the fulness of it, which is in him. The Jews call a man, eminent for virtue, and a large share of knowledge, “clusters”^{f73}; and they interpret “eschol”, a cluster, by **וה** **ל** **כח** **צ** **י** **א**, “a man that has all things in him”^{f74}: such an one is Christ, in the highest sense, having all perfections, excellencies, and virtues, in him. Some leave the word untranslated, “copher”^{f75}, and which has the signification of atonement and propitiation; and so well agrees with Christ, who is the propitiation for sin, and has made atonement for it. Bishop Patrick observes, that the ancient Hebrew doctors, by dividing the first word “eschol”, found out the mystery of the Messiah; considering it as if thus read, **ר** **פ** **ו** **כ** **ל** **כ** **צ** **י** **א**, “my beloved is unto me the man that propitiates” or “expiates all things”; that is, all sins and transgressions: in the Talmud^{f76} it is explained,

“he, whose all things are, has atoned for my iniquity;”

which Christ has done for his church and people; and which makes him precious, and is matter of joy and gladness to them, (^{<RB1>}Romans 5:11 ^{<RB2>}Romans 3:25) (^{<RB3>}1 John 2:2 ^{<RB4>}1 John 4:10).

Ver. 15. *Behold, thou [art] fair, my love*, etc.] These are the words of Christ, commending the beauty and comeliness of the church, expressing his great affection for her, and his high esteem of her; of her fairness and beauty, (see Gill on "^{<RB5>}Song of Solomon 1:5"), (see Gill on "^{<RB6>}Song of Solomon 1:8"); of the title of Christ's love, as given her by him, (see Gill on "^{<RB7>}Song of Solomon 1:9"); a "behold" is prefixed to this account her, as a note of attention, to consider her complete comeliness in Christ, and not pore on her own blackness; and as a note of admiration, that she who was so black and uncomely in herself should be so fair and beautiful in his eyes, through his blood, righteousness, and grace; and as a note of asseveration, assuring her of the truth of it, which she might be apt to call in question; and, to prevent which, it is also repeated,

behold, thou [art] fair; exceeding fair, really so, both inwardly and outwardly; both with respect to justification and sanctification;

thou [hast] doves' eyes; or "eyes like doves"^{f77}; these are taken notice because much beauty lies in the eyes, either in the size or colour of them^{f78}; similes taken from doves are frequently used in this sacred poem, both with respect to the bride and bridegroom; see (^{<RB8>}Song of Solomon 2:14 ^{<RB9>}4:1 ^{<RB10>}5:2,12 ^{<RB11>}6:9); and it may easily be observed, that this creature furnishes much matter for poets^{f79}, which they apply to lovers: and here the eyes of the bride are compared to the eyes of doves; meaning either the ministers of the Gospel, who are to the church what eyes are to the body; are set in the more eminent part in the church, to order, guide, and direct the members of it; to watch over them, lest any hurt come to them, and give warning of danger; to hold forth the word of light to them, and instruct them how to behave in the church and in the world: and they may be compared to the eyes of doves, for their clearness and perspicuity in discerning Gospel truths; and for their sincerity and simplicity, uprightness and faithfulness, in preaching them; and for the dove like gifts of the Spirit, whereby they are qualified for it; and for, their meekness and humility; or rather the eyes of her understanding are meant, being spiritually enlightened; and particularly the eye of faith by which believers take a view of Christ, of his glory, fulness, and suitableness, and look to him alone for life and salvation. And it may be compared to the eyes of doves for the

clearness and quickness, of it, being the evidence of things not seen; and, for its singleness and chastity, the dove looks only to its mate, and destroys those that look with lustful eyes on others^{f80}; believers, being espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ, look only to him as their beloved, to him only for acceptance, righteousness, pardon, and eternal life; and for its modesty and humility, excluding all boasting in the creature, and giving all glory to Christ; and for its beautifulness in the sight of Christ, so that he is even ravished with it, (~~2049~~ Song of Solomon 4:9).

Ver. 16. *Behold, thou [art] fair, my beloved*, etc.] These are the words of the church, giving back to Christ his commendation of her, and much in the same words, as more properly belonging to him than her; he calls her “my love”, she calls him “my beloved”: he says that she was “fair”; the same she says of him, with a like note of wonder, attention, and asseveration, he had prefixed to the commendation of her; suggesting, that his fairness and beauty were essential, original, and underived, but hers was all from him; and therefore he only ought to have the character: he, as man, is “fairer” than the children of men; as Mediator, is full of grace and truth, which makes him look lovely in the eyes of his people; and, as a divine Person, is the brightness of his Father’s glory. To which she adds,

yea, pleasant; looks pleasantly, with a smiling countenance on his people, being the image of the invisible God; pleasant to behold, as the sun of righteousness, and Saviour of men; pleasant in all his offices and relations; the doctrines of his Gospel are pleasant words; his ways, his ordinances, are ways of pleasantness; and especially having his presence, and communion with him in them; and which may be designed in the next clause;

also our bed [is] green; the same with “his bed which is Solomon’s”; his by gift and purchase; the church’s, by having a right through him, and an admittance to all the privileges of it: where the word is preached, ordinances administered, souls are begotten and born again, there Christ and his church have fellowship with each other; said to be “green”, in allusion to the strewing of beds with green herbs and leaves, and branches of trees^{f81}; particularly the nuptial bed, called from thence “thalamus”^{f82}; and it may denote the fruitfulness of the saints in grace and holiness, like green olive trees, in the house of God: or else numerous converts in the church, a large spiritual seed and offspring of Christ and the church, as were in the first times of the Gospel, and will be in the latter day: a green

bed is an emblem of fruitfulness in the conjugal state; so the Targum and Jarchi interpret it.

Ver. 17. *The beams of our house [are] cedar*, etc.] Or “houses”^{f83}; where their bed was, and where they had fellowship and communion together. By which may be meant particular congregations or churches, in which houses Christ has a property, being of his building and beautifying; where he takes up his rest and residence, and where he feeds and feasts with his people, and to the privileges of which all the saints have a right: and by the “beams” of these houses may be intended the ministers of the word, who are pillars here, as James, John, and Cephas, were; and who are the means of supporting and strengthening such communities, by their excellent doctrines and exemplary lives: or common saints may be meant, who are also beams and pillars in the churches of Christ; and serve greatly to support, strengthen, and cement the spiritual building, fitly framed together: and these being of “cedar” wood, of a pleasant smell, and durable, may denote their gratefulness and acceptableness to Christ and his church, in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; and of their continuance and perseverance therein, having in them the incorruptible and immortal seed of divine grace; (see ^{<1922>}Psalm 92:12);

[and] our rafters of fir; which Pliny says^{f84} is the best and strongest wood for roofing and raftering: by these may be meant the ordinances of the Gospel, which are that to the churches as “rafters” are to a house, the means of supporting and strengthening it; so by the ordinances saints are supported in their spiritual state, and by them their spiritual strength is renewed; and these being said to be of “fir”, which is a pleasant and lasting wood, may signify the delight that is had in ordinances, and the continuance of them. Some render the word by “cypress”^{f85}; which is also of a pleasant smell^{f86}, and very durable, never admits of worms, nor ever rots, nor is ever sensible of old age^{f87}; and so may denote the pleasure that saints take in ordinances, and the long continuance of them, as of the present ones, which will remain until the second coming of Christ. Some think the “brutine” tree^{f88} is meant, which Pliny calls “bruta”^{f89}; and is near in sound to the word here used, is much like the cypress, and of a sweet smell, like cedar; it grows beyond Pasitigris, on Mount Zagras. Some will have it to be the tree of paradise; and, so applied to ordinances, may signify the same as before. The word for “rafters” is elsewhere rendered “gutters” and “troughs” for water; and some^{f90} render it so here, and are so called from water running in them: and as the grace of God is often expressed by

water, this is commonly conveyed in the use of ordinances; these are the canals in which it runs. Moreover the same word is translated “galleries”, in (~~2106~~ Song of Solomon 7:5); which, as Kimchi and Ben Melech observe, were buildings in high houses in which men walked from house to house, or from one end of the house to the other; and might be called by this name, from their droning along the sides of houses, and seem to be like our “balconies”: now ordinances are the galleries or “walking places”,^{f91} where Christ and his people walk and converse together.