

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO SONG OF SOLOMON 4

In this chapter is contained a large commendation of the church's beauty by Christ; first, more particularly, by an enumeration of several parts, as her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, temples, neck, and breasts, (⁽²⁰⁴⁰⁾Song of Solomon 4:1-5); and more generally, (⁽²⁰⁴⁷⁾Song of Solomon 4:7); And having observed where he himself was determined to go, he invites her to go with him; which he enforces, partly from the danger she was exposed unto where she was (⁽²⁰⁴⁶⁾Song of Solomon 4:6,8); and partly from the comeliness of her person and graces in his esteem; with which he was ravished, and therefore was extremely desirous of her company, (⁽²⁰⁴⁹⁾Song of Solomon 4:9-11); And then enters into some new descriptions of her; as a garden and orchard, as a spring and fountain, (⁽²⁰⁴²⁾Song of Solomon 4:12-14); all which she makes to be owing to him, (⁽²⁰⁴⁵⁾Song of Solomon 4:15); And the chapter is closed with an order from Christ to the winds to blow on his garden, and cause the spices of it to flow out; and with an invitation of the church to Christ, to come into his garden, and relax there, (⁽²⁰⁴⁶⁾Song of Solomon 4:16).

Ver. 1. *Behold, thou [art] fair, my love; behold, thou [art] fair,* etc.] The same as in (⁽²⁰¹⁵⁾Song of Solomon 1:15); here repeated by Christ, to introduce the following commendation; to express the greatness of his love to his church; and show that he had the same opinion of her, and esteem for her, notwithstanding what had passed between that time and this;

thou [hast] doves' eyes within thy locks; the same comparison, (see Gill on "⁽²⁰¹⁵⁾Song of Solomon 1:15"); only with this difference, here her eyes are said to be "within [her] locks": which, whether understood of the ministers of the Gospel; or of the eyes of the understanding, particularly of, the eye of faith, as has been observed on the above place; do not seem so much to design the imperfection of the sight of the one or of the other, in the present state, as eyes within or under locks and in some measure covered with them, hinder the sight of them; as the modesty of either of them; locks being decently tied up, as the word signifies^{f203}, is a sign thereof, as the contrary is a sign of boldness and wantonness. Doves' eyes themselves are

expressive of modesty and humility, and, this phrase added to them, increases the idea; such ministers, who have the largest gifts, greatest grace, light, and knowledge, are the most humble, witness the Apostle Paul; and this phrase expresses the beauty of them, not only in the eyes of Christ, but in the eyes of those to whom they publish the good tidings of salvation: and so it may denote what an exceeding modest grace faith is, which receives all from Christ, and gives him all the glory, and takes none to itself; and what a beauty there is in it, insomuch that Christ is ravished with it, (²⁰⁴Song of Solomon 4:9); and seems rather to be the sense here;

thy hair [is] as a flock of goats; like the hair of goats, so Ben Melech. Hair adds much to the comeliness of persons, and is therefore frequently mentioned, both with respect to the bride and bridegroom, in this song, (²⁰⁵Song of Solomon 5:1 ²⁰⁶Song of Solomon 6:5 ²⁰⁷Song of Solomon 7:5); and so in all poems of this kind^{f204}; and one part of the comeliness of women lies in their hair;

“let a woman, says Apuleius^{f205}, be adorned with ever such fine garments, and decked with gold and jewels, yet, without this ornament, she will not be pleasing; no, not Verus herself.”

The women^{f206} in Homer, are described by their beautiful hair; nor is it unusual to compare the hair of women, and represent it as superior to a fleece of the choicest flock^{f207}. And here the church’s hair is said to be like the hair of goats, for that is the sense of the expression; and which is thought to be most like to human hair, (⁰⁹¹³1 Samuel 19:13); and it is compared to that, not so much for its length and sleekness, as for its colour, being yellowish; which, with women formerly, was in esteem, and reckoned graceful^{f208}; this being the colour of the hair of some of the greatest beauties, as Helena, Philoxena, and others, whose hair was flaxen and yellow; hence great care was taken to make it look so, even as yellow as gold^{f209}: the Jewish women used to have their perukes, or false hair, of goats’ hair, and still have in some places to this day^{f210}; and it should seem the Roman women also had, to which the poet^{f211} refers. And the church’s hair here is said to be like the hair of a flock of goats,

that appear from Mount Gilead; or rather “on Mount Gilead”, as Noldius: Gilead was a mountain in the land of Israel, beyond Jordan, famous for pasturage for cattle, where flocks of goats were fed, as was usual on mountains^{f212}; and, being well fed, their hair was long, smooth, neat, and glistening; and so to spectators, at a distance, looked very beautiful and

lovely; especially in the morning at sun rising, and, glancing on them with its bright and glittering rays, were delightful. So R. Jonah, from the use of the word in the Arabic language, which signifies the morning, interprets it, which “rise early in the morning”; and which, as Schultens^{f213} observes, some render,

“leading to water early in the morning;”

the Vulgate Latin version is, “that ascend from Mount Gilead”, from a lower to a higher part of it; which is approved of by Bochart^{f214}. Now the hair of the church may be interpreted either of believers, the several members of the church of Christ; the hairs of the head are numerous, grow upon the head, and have their nourishment from it; are weak in themselves, but depend upon the head, and are an ornament to it: so the saints, though few in comparison of the world, yet by themselves are a great number, which no man can number; these grow upon Christ, the Head of the church, and receive their nourishment from him; and, though weak in themselves, have strength from him, and have their dependence on him; and are an ornament and crown of glory to him; and who are cared for and numbered by him, so that no one can be lost; see (~~2000~~ Ezekiel 5:1-5). Or rather it may be interpreted of the outward conversation of the saints; hair is visible, is a covering, and an ornament, when taken care of, and managed aright, and has its dependence and is influenced by the head: the good conversation of the church and its members is visible to all, as the hair of the head, and as a flock of goats on Mount Gilead; and is a covering, though not from divine justice, yet from the reproaches of men; is ornamental to believers, and to the doctrine they profess; especially when their conversation is ordered aright, according to the weired of God, and is influenced by grace, communicated from Christ, the Head.

Ver. 2. *Thy teeth [are] like a flock [of sheep]*, etc.] That is, like the teeth of a flock of sheep; as her eyes were like the eyes of doves, and her hair like the hair of goats: and Galen long ago observed, that human teeth are much like the teeth of sheep, in figure, order, and structure, as well as are small and white; neatly set, innocent and harmless, not ravenous and voracious, cropping herbs and grass only^{f215}; the whiteness of the teeth is chiefly intended, in which the beauty of them lies, for which they are sometimes compared^{f216} to Parian marble for whiteness. The Targum interprets these teeth of the priests and Levites; but it is much better to understand them of the ministers of the Gospel: teeth are bony, solid, firm,

and strong, sharp to cut and break the food, and prepare it for the stomach: all which well agree with ministers; who are strong in the Lord, and in his grace, to labour in the word and doctrine; to oppose gainsayers, withstand Satan's temptations; bear the reproaches of the world, and the infirmities of weaker saints; and remain firm and unmoved in their ministry; unshaken by all they meet with, from without and from within: they are sharp to rebuke such who are unsound in the faith, or corrupt in their morals, and to penetrate into Gospel truths; to cut and rightly divide the word of truth, and break the bread of life to others, and so chew and prepare spiritual food for souls; not raw and crude; not hard and difficult of digestion, but plain and easy to be understood. And they are like to a flock of sheep,

[that are even] shorn; on which no wool is left, sticking out here and there; which is another good property of teeth, that are of equal size and bigness, do not stand out, nor rise up one above another; and are as if they had been "cut [and] planed, [and made] alike"^{f217}, as some render the word: which may denote the equality of Gospel ministers in power and authority; one having no superiority over another; all having the same mission and commission, employed in the same work, preaching the same Gospel; and though their gifts are different, yet there is a harmony and agreement in the doctrines they preach;

which came up from the washing; white and clean, which is another property of good teeth; as the teeth of sheep be, and they themselves are, when just come up out of the washing pit: this may signify the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which are necessary to ministers of the word, in order to preach it; and more especially the purity of their lives and conversations, in which they should be examples to the flock;

whereof everyone bear twins, and none [is] barren among them; the figures are just and beautiful; it is common with sheep to bear twins, or more, in the eastern countries, as the philosopher observes^{f218}; frequent mention is made of goats bearing twins^{f219}: these may answer to the two rows of teeth, and the word for "teeth" is in the dual number; and when these are white and clean, and equal, are well set, and not one wanting, none rotten, nor shed, nor fallen out, look very beautiful. This may express the fruitfulness and success of Gospel ministers, in bringing many souls to Christ; and was particularly true of the apostles, and first ministers of the Gospel, who were instrumental in the conversion of many; and who bore

twins to Christ, Jews and Gentiles; and none were without their usefulness. Likewise all this may be understood of believers in general, and of meditation and faith in them; by meditation they feed upon Christ, his Gospel, doctrines, and promises; they chew the end, and ruminate on the word of God; and are equal, alike partakers of the same grace, and blessings of it; and are sanctified, and, in some measure, cleansed, from the pollution of their minds and actions; ascend heavenwards in their thoughts, desires, and affections; and are not “barren” and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel; and generally, through meditation, bring forth the “twins” of prayer and praise: by faith also they feed on Christ and his grace; and which is “alike”, precious faith in all, as to nature and quality; is “pure”, sincere, and unfeigned; is always fruitful, and bears the “twins” of love to Christ, and of love to his saints; and is not “barren”, but attended with the fruits of righteousness.

Ver. 3. *Thy lips [are] like a thread of scarlet*, etc.] To a “thread” for thinness, to “scarlet” for colour; thin red lips being beautiful, as well as white teeth; so the beautiful Aspasia had red lips^{f220}, and teeth whiter than snow; hence we read of red and purple lips^{f221}. Now as lips are the instruments of speech, the words of the church, and of all true believers, may be designed; what is said by them in their prayers, which are filled, not with great swelling words of vanity, exalting themselves, and magnifying their works, like the Pharisee; but with humble confessions of sin, and acknowledgments of their unworthiness of mercy; and they are constant, like one continued thread, they go on praying all their days: and the scarlet colour may denote the fervency of them, whereby they become available with God; and the acceptableness of them to God, through the mediation of Christ, whose blood, and not any worthiness of theirs, is pleaded in them: their words of praise also may be signified hereby; which are not filled with big swollen encomiums of themselves, and of what they have done; but with expressions of the goodness and grace of God to them; and with thankfulness for all mercies, both temporal and spiritual, bestowed upon them; and these are hearty and sincere, coming from a heart inflamed with the love of God, which make such lips look like scarlet; and that being in great esteem may intimate the acceptableness of them to God, through the blood and sacrifice of Christ. To which may be added, that the doctrines of the Gospel, delivered by the ministers of the church, who are her lips, may be taken into the sense of this clause; which are like a “thread”, spun out of the Scriptures, and are harmonious and all of a piece,

consistent and closely connected; the subject and matter of which are the blood, sufferings, and death of Christ, and the blessings that come thereby; and which also, like scarlet, are valuable and precious;

and thy speech [is] comely; which explains the preceding clause; and shows, that by her lips her speech is meant, which is “comely”, that is, graceful and amiable; as it is when believers speak of Christ, of his person, offices, and grace; and for him, in vindication of his truths and ordinances; when they speak to him, in prayer or in praise; and when, in common conversation, their speech is with grace;

thy temples [are] like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks; not like a piece of the tree, but of the fruit, when the shell of it bursts of itself, through the abundance of liquor in it; such the Israelites found at one of their stations, and therefore called it “Rimmonparez”, the pomegranate of rupture, or the bursted pomegranate; and in the tribe of Zebulun was a city called Remmonmethoar, the beautiful pomegranate, (^{<66913>}Joshua 19:13); now the rind being broken ^{f222} it appears full of grains or kernels, of a white colour, interspersed with a reddish purple juice, like blood, as Pausanias remarks ^{f223}, and looks very beautiful; and is aptly used to set forth the church’s beauty, who, like her beloved, is “white and ruddy”, (^{<21510>}Song of Solomon 5:10): by which may be meant ecclesiastical officers, placed on an eminence in the church; to take care, among other things, of the discipline of it, according to the laws of Christ, (^{<54517>}1 Timothy 5:17 ^{<58137>}Hebrews 13:17 ^{<61138>}Romans 12:8); The temples, in the Hebrew tongue ^{f224}, have their name from the thinness and tenderness of them, having but little flesh on them, and covered with a thin skin; and, in the Greek tongue ^{f225}, from the evident beating of the pulse in them; and their situation is between the ear and the eye: all which denote, that such officers should be spiritual men, and have as little carnality in them as may be; that they should use great tenderness in the administrations of their office, particularly in giving admonitions and reproofs: and, as by the beating of the pulse the state of a constitution is discerned, whether healthy or not; so the state of the church may be judged of by the discipline of it; if that is neglected, it is in a bad state, and in a declining condition; but if strictly observed, it is in a healthful and flourishing one: and the temples being between the eye and the ear may teach, that, in the management of church affairs, the officers are to make use of both; their ears are to be open to all; and they are not to shut their eyes against clear and plain evidence: and being said to be “within [her] locks”, may be expressive of the meekness and humility of

such officers, who are not to lord it over God's heritage; and of the private manner in which admonitions are to be given, in case of private offences; and of the affairs and concertos of a church being kept private, and not blazed abroad. And these may be compared to "a piece of a pomegranate", because of their being full of gifts, and grace, and good works, visible to men; and for their harmony and union among themselves, and with the church and its members; and the strict regard that, in all things, is had to the rules and laws of Christ; all which make the officers of the church, and the discipline of it, acceptable to him. It may be further observed, that the temples, taken largely, include the "cheeks" also; and so some render the word^{f226} here; and the purple juice of the pomegranate well expresses the colour of them; hence we read of purple cheeks^{f227}: and this may denote the beauty and modesty of the church; whose blushing looks, and ruddy cheeks, made her extremely beautiful in the eye of Christ.

Ver. 4. *Thy neck [is] like the tower of David, builded for an armoury,* etc.] This was either the strong hold of Zion; or some tower erected by David for an armoury, wherein his worthies or mighty men bring up their shields; Mr. Sandys^{f228} says, it stood aloft in the utmost angle of a mountain, whose ruins are yet extant: though the neck is compared to this, not for its height, seeing a high and outstretched neck is a token of pride and haughtiness with the Jews, (²³⁸⁶Isaiah 3:16); see (^{394B}Psalm 74:5); and so the phrase is used in Latin writers^{f229}; but for its being ornamented with spoils hung up in it, as golden shields after mentioned, as the neck is with pearls, jewels, and chains of gold, (²⁰¹⁰Song of Solomon 1:10); The word for "armoury" is from "alaph", "to teach"; not as being a pattern to teach artificers, as Jarchi; nor to show passengers their way, as R. Jonah and others, who think this tower was built as a "pharus", for such a purpose^{f230}; but it was as an arsenal, in which young learners of the art of war laid up their weapons, as well as what were taken from an enemy; or what were made and laid up here, as a store in time of need. By the church's neck may be meant either the ministers of the word, set in the highest part of the body, the church, next to Christ the Head, and in subjection to him; to whom they hold, and whose name, cause, and interest, they bear up and support in the world; and are the means of conveying spiritual food from him to the souls of men; and are adorned with the gifts and graces of the Spirit: and may be compared to the "tower of David", for their integrity and uprightness, and for their strength and immovableness, standing firm and unmoved against the batteries of Satan and the world, and for the

defence of the Gospel; and to that “built for an armoury”, they being furnished with the whole armour of God. An ancient writer^{f231} supposes the Apostle Paul is particularly meant; that eminent exalter of Christ the Head, and who was set for the defence of the Gospel: or it may be rather the Scriptures themselves are meant; which point out and hold forth Christ the Head, and make him manifest to the sons of men; and are a means of conveying spiritual breath; when attended with a divine power, then are they spirit and life; and of conveying food to the souls of men, very nourishing and satisfying; and are bespangled with glorious truths and precious promises; where every truth is a golden link, and every promise a pearl, to a believer: and they may be compared to the “tower of David” for their sublimity, being out of the reach and above the capacity of a natural man; and for their firmness and immovableness, which Satan and all his emissaries will never be able to remove out of the world; and like to that as “built for an armoury”,

whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men: no other armour is mentioned, as in this armoury, but shields; they being a principal part of armour, and are especially^{f232} so called, as in the Septuagint version of (^{<11145>}1 Kings 14:26,27); these shields are armour of mighty men; mighty, through God and his grace, to perform mighty actions, and do great exploits; being furnished from the spiritual armoury with the whole armour of God, to repel Satan’s temptations, to defend the Gospel, and refute error; particularly the ministers of the word are those mighty men; though it is applicable to all saints.

might have a fountain of nourishment; and are fitly compared to twins of the doe. The hind, for the most part, brings but one roe at a time; but there are some, the philosopher says^{f233}, bring twins; by which the beauty of the breasts is expressed: “young roes” may point at the smallness of them, large breasts are not accounted handsome; and “twins”, at their equal size and shape, not one larger nor higher than the other, that would be a deformity; twins are generally alike;

which feed among the lilies; and are fat and plump: the allusion may be to the putting of lilies in the bosom, between the breasts, as other flowers; lilies are reckoned among the decorations of women, in the Apocrypha:

“And pulled off the sackcloth which she had on, and put off the garments of her widowhood, and washed her body all over with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment, and braided the

hair of her head, and put on a tire upon it, and put on her garments of gladness, wherewith she was clad during the life of Manasses her husband.” (Judith 10:3)

Ver. 5. *Thy two breasts [are] like two young roes that are twins*, etc.] Or, “two fawns, the twins of a doe”: Providence, as Plutarch observes^{f234}, has given to women two breasts, that, should they have twins, both or rather to the creatures mentioned, the roes and hinds, which feed among lilies, in fields where lilies grow; for these grow in fields as well as in gardens, and are called the “lilies of the field”, (~~4068~~ Matthew 6:28); and we read^{f235} sometimes of harts and hinds among lilies. By “breasts” may be meant, either the ministers of the word, who impart “the sincere milk of the word”, and who deliver out the nourishing doctrines of grace, like milk out of the breast, (~~4111~~ 1 Corinthians 3:2 ~~4112~~ 1 Peter 2:2); and may be like to “roes” for their affection to those who are under their ministry; and pleasant to them, to whom they are made useful; and for their sharp sightedness and penetration into the mysteries of grace; and for their quick dispatch in doing their work, though through many difficulties, which, like young roes, they leap and skip over: and “two” of them show a sufficient number of them Christ provides for his church; and being “twins” express their equal authority, and harmony of doctrine; and feeding “among lilies” is where Christ himself feeds, (~~2116~~ Song of Solomon 2:16); where Christ feeds they feed, and where they feed Christ feeds, even among his saints, comparable to lilies, (~~2117~~ Song of Solomon 2:2); or these “breasts” may design the two Testaments, the Old and New, which contain the whole sincere milk of the word; are like “young roes”, pleasant and delightful to believers; and, as “twins”, are alike, agree in their doctrines concerning Christ, and the blessings of grace through him; the types, figures, prophecies, and promises of the one, have their completion in the other; and both abound with the lilies of Gospel doctrines and promises: though rather these “breasts” may point at the two ordinances of the Gospel, baptism, and the Lord’s supper; which are breasts of consolation to believers, out of which they suck, and are satisfied; and through feeding on Christ in both, they receive much nourishment and strength; and are very amiable and lovely to the saints, when they enjoy the presence of Christ in them, and have the discoveries of his love to them; and may be said to be “twins”, being both instituted by Christ, and both lead unto him, and require the same subjects; and are received and submitted to by saints, comparable to lilies, as before.

Ver. 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away*, etc.] Until the day of grace breaks on every elect sinner, and the shadows of darkness, ignorance, and unbelief, are in a great measure fled and gone; or until the everlasting day breaks, and there will be no more night, nor any darkness of affliction, nor any more desertion, doubts, and fears; see (²¹⁰⁷Song of Solomon 2:17). They are the words of Christ, declaring whither he would go till that time came, as follows:

I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense: the allusion may be to the mountains and hills where these odoriferous plants grew. It is said of Pompey the great, that when he passed over Lebanon (later mentioned, (²¹⁰⁸Song of Solomon 4:8)) and by Damascus, he went through sweet smelling groves and woods of frankincense and balsam^{f236}; and Lebanon is thought, by some^{f237}, to have its name from the frankincense that grew upon it; though rather from the whiteness of the snow continually on it. By this “mountain” and “hill” may be meant the church of Christ, gathered together in Gospel order, so called for its visibility and immovableness, (²¹⁰⁹Isaiah 2:2 ¹⁹⁵¹Psalm 125:1); and for the trees of righteousness which are planted and flourish there, the saints; and for the fragrantcy of their graces; and for the sweet smelling odour of their sacrifices of prayer and praise; and because of the delight and pleasure Christ takes in his people, and they in him here; where they have mutual communion, so that it is to them both a mountain of myrrh and a hill of frankincense: particularly, here Christ delights to be, and here he resolves to dwell until his second coming.

Ver. 7. *Thou art all fair, my love*, etc.] Being justified by the righteousness of Christ, washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit; of the title, my “love”, (see ²¹¹⁰Song of Solomon 1:9). The church is often said by Christ to be “fair”, his “fair one”, and the “fairest among women”, (²¹⁰⁸Song of Solomon 1:8,15 ²¹¹⁰Song of Solomon 2:10 ²¹¹⁰Song of Solomon 4:1); but here “all fair”, being a perfection of beauty, and perfectly comely through his comeliness: this is said to show her completeness in Christ, as to justification; and that, with respect to sanctification, she had a perfection of parts, though not of degrees; and to observe, that the church and “all” the true members of it were so, the meanest and weakest believer, as well as the greatest and strongest. It is added,

[there is] no spot in thee; not that the saints have no sin in them; nor any committed by them; nor that their sins are not sins; nor that they have no

spots in them, with respect to sanctification, which is imperfect; but with respect to their justification, as having the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and covered with that spotless robe, they are considered as having no spot in them; God sees no sin in them, so as to reckon it to them, and condemn them for it; and they stand unblamable and unproveable in his sight; and will be presented by Christ, both to himself and to his father, and in the view of men and angels, “not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing”, (^{<487>}Ephesians 5:27), upon them.

Ver. 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, [my] spouse, with me from Lebanon*, etc.] This is a new title given the church, my “spouse”; here first mentioned, because the day of espousals was over, (^{<281>}Song of Solomon 3:11); and having on the wedding garment, in which she was so fair and spotless, as before described, she looked somewhat like a bride, and the spouse of Christ; and is chiefly used by Christ, to prevail upon her to go with him, which relation, duty, and affection, obliged her to do. The invitation is to come with him from Lebanon, which is repeated, to show earnestness and vehemency; not Lebanon, literally taken, a mountain to the north of the land of Canaan, famous for odoriferous trees, and where to be was delightful; but figuratively, the temple, made of the wood of Lebanon, and Jerusalem, in which it was, which in Christ’s time was a den of thieves, and from whence Christ called out his people; or this being a pleasant mountain, may signify those carnal sensual pleasures, from which Christ calls his people off. Some render the words, “thou shalt come with me”, etc.^{f238}, being influenced by the powerful grace of Christ, and drawn by his love; and what he invites and exhorts unto, he gives grace to enable to perform;

look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards; Amana is thought by some to be the mountain which divided Cilicia from Syria, taken notice of by several writers^{f239}; but it seems too distant from Lebanon; perhaps it is the same with Abana, from whence was a river of that name, (^{<182>}2 Kings 5:12); where, in the “Keri” or margin, it is read Amana; so the Targum here explains it of the people that dwelt by the river Amana, which washed the country of Damascus: Jarchi takes it to be the same with Hor, a mountain on the northern border of Israel; and indeed, wherever mention is made of this mountain, the Targum has it, Taurus Umanus; and, according to Ptolemy^{f240}, Amanus was a part of Mount Taurus, with which it is joined by Josephus^{f241}; and with that and Lebanon, and Carmel, by Aelianus^{f242},

Shenir and Hermon were one and the same mountain, called by different names; Hermon might be the common name to the whole; and that part of it which belonged to the Sidonians was called by them Sirion; and that which the Amorites possessed Shenir, (^{<48R>}Deuteronomy 3:9); Now all these mountains might be called “dens of lions”, and “mountains of leopards”; both because inhabited by such beasts of prey; hence we read of the lions of Syria ^{f243}, and of leopards ^{f244} in those parts; in the land of Moab, and in the tribe of Gad, were places called Bethnimrah, and the waters of Nimrim, which seem to have their names from leopards that formerly haunted those places, (^{<4826>}Numbers 32:36 ^{<2316>}Isaiah 15:6); or because inhabited by cruel, savage, and tyrannical persons; particularly Amana, in Cilicia or Syria, as appears from Strabo ^{f245}, Lucan ^{f246}, and Cicero ^{f247}; and Shenir and Hermon were formerly, as Jarchi observes, the dens of those lions, Og king of Bashan, and Sihon king of the Amorites: unless rather these were the names of some places near Lebanon; for Adrichomius ^{f248} says,

“the mountain of the leopards, which was round and high, was two miles from Tripoli northward, three from Arce southward, and one from Lebanon.”

Now these words may be considered as a call of Christ to his people, to come out from among wicked men, comparable to such creatures; and he makes use of two arguments to enforce it: the one is taken from the nature of such men, and the danger of being with them; who are like to lions, for their cruel and persecuting temper; and to leopards, for their being full of the spots of sin; and for their craftiness and malice, exercised towards those who are quiet in the land; and for their swiftness and readiness to do mischief; wherefore it must be both uncomfortable and unsafe to be with such persons: the other argument is taken from their enjoyment of Christ’s company and presence, which must be preferable to theirs, for pleasure, profit, and safety, and therefore most eligible. Besides, Christ chose not to go without his church; she was so fair, as before described, and so amiable and lovely in his sight, as follows.

Ver. 9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [my] spouse*, etc.] Here another new title is given to the church, “my sister”, with the repetition of the former, my “spouse”: for one and the same person, with the Hebrews, might be sister and spouse; (see ^{<40B>}1 Corinthians 9:5). And this may be used in a love strain, and so not improper in a love poem, as this was ^{f249};

(see ²¹⁸⁸Song of Solomon 8:8); likewise the church may be called Christ's sister, because of his incarnation, in virtue of which he is not ashamed to call his people his brethren, and so his sisters, (⁸¹¹Hebrews 2:11); and on account of their adoption; in which respect, he that is Christ's Father is theirs; and which is evidenced in regeneration; when they, through grace, do the will of his Father, and so are his brother, and sister, and mother, (⁴¹²⁰Matthew 12:50). And, upon the whole, it is used to express the great affection of Christ for the church, and his high esteem of her; and which appears by his saying, "thou hast ravished my heart"; which is but one word in the Hebrew text, and nowhere else used, and is variously rendered: the Vulgate Latin version is, "thou hast wounded my heart"^{f250}; with one of love's darts, (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 2:5); "thou hast drawn my heart unto thee", so some Jewish writers^{f251}; which is surprising, since no love nor loveliness are in her of herself; this shows how free and unmerited the love of Christ is; according to the use of the word with the Talmudists^{f252}, the sense is, "thou hast coupled mine heart with thine"; the heart of Christ and his church are so closely knit and joined together in love, that they are but one heart, and can never be separated: others, "thou hast seized my heart"; or, "claimed it for thyself"^{f253}; thou art master over it; it is no more mine, but thine The Septuagint version is, "thou hast unhearted us"; Father, Son, and Spirit; particularly the second Person: or thou hast stolen away my heart; I have no heart left in me; which, as it is the case through fear, is sometimes through love: this sense is approved by Aben Ezra. Some render it just the reverse, "thou hast heartened me"^{f254}; put heart into me, animated me, made me of good cheer; so the word is used in the Syriac version of (⁴¹¹²Matthew 9:2 ³¹⁵⁴1 Thessalonians 5:14). The sense may be, that such was the love of Christ to his church, and so much was he charmed by her, that the thought of his having her company in heaven to all eternity animated him to endure all sufferings he did for her sake, (⁸¹¹²Hebrews 12:2); The Targum is,

"thy love is fixed upon the table of my heart;"

where the church herself was fixed, (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 8:6);

thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes; the allusion may be to the custom of the eastern women; who, when they walked abroad or spoke to any, showed but one eye, the other, with the rest of the face, being covered with a veil^{f255}: the eyes of women are ensnaring to lovers^{f256}; the church has more eyes than one. Mention is made of the eyes of the

understanding, (^{<4018>}Ephesians 1:18); faith is one of them, and may he here chiefly intended; by which a soul looks on Christ, the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace; and looks so him for the blessings of grace now, and eternal glory hereafter: and with this Christ's heart is ravished; even with "one look" from it, or "glance" of it, as some ^{f257} render it;

with one chain of thy neck; with the several graces of the Spirit, linked together as in a chain; which were about the neck of the church, and as ornamental to her as a pearl necklace, (^{<2010>}Song of Solomon 1:10); and with every link in this chain Christ's heart is ravished and delighted. The Vulgate Latin version is, "with one lock of hair of thy neck": which hung down in it, and looked very beautiful; and with which lovers are sometimes taken ^{f258}.

Ver. 10. *How fair is thy love, [my] sister, my spouse!* etc.] Of these titles, (see Gill on "^{<2018>}Song of Solomon 4:8-9"); and of the love of the church to Christ, (see Gill on "^{<2018>}Song of Solomon 1:3"); here said to be "fair", lovely and delightful, grateful and acceptable; as it is to Christ, in the several acts and effects of it, and therefore the word is plural, "thy loves"^{f259}; being exceeding beautiful in his eye, and extremely well pleasing to him; therefore says, "how fair!" as admiring it, it being hard to say how fair it was; and this appears from the large manifestations of Christ's love to those that love him; and from his causing all things to work together for the good of such; and from his preparing and laying up things, unseen and unheard of, for them;

how much better is thy love than wine! which is saying the same thing of her love to him she says of his to her, (^{<2009>}Song of Solomon 1:2,4); her love to Christ is more pleasant, more cheering, and more acceptable to him, than the wine of legal sacrifices, or than all burnt offerings; or than any duty whatever, unless that is the principle from whence it flows, (^{<4123>}Mark 12:33,34);

and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! the same with Christ's ointments, commended (^{<2008>}Song of Solomon 1:3); namely, the graces of the Spirit, which are in Christ without measure, and from him communicated to his people; and when exercised by them, are very delightful to him, and preferred by him to "all spices": even to all those used in the holy anointing oil, typical of them, (^{<4023>}Exodus 30:23,24).

Ver. 11. *Thy lips, O [my] spouse, drop [as] the honeycomb*, etc.] Words, for sweetness, delight, and pleasure, like that; so the speech of persons, flowing from their mouth and tongue, is said to be sweeter than the honeycomb^{f260}; and lovers are said to be sweeter to one another than the sweet honey^{f261}: so the lips or words of the church in prayer, as the Targum; or in praise of Christ, and thankfulness to him; or in the ministration of the doctrines of the Gospel, which are pleasant words; or in common conversation, are pleasing to Christ; when, like the honey, they drop freely and without constraint; gradually, at proper seasons and opportunities, as prudence directs; and continually, more or less, ever dropping something to the glory of divine grace, and the good of souls;

honey and milk [are] under thy tongue; rolled, as a sweet morsel, there: the ancients had a sort of food of this mixture, a cake made of honey and milk, called by the Greeks “meligala”^{f262}, and sometimes “candylos”^{f263}, which was the same composition; Galen^{f264} says, it was not safe to take goats’ milk without honey; Jove is said^{f265} to be nursed with such a mixture: and this being very grateful to the taste, the speech of the church for pleasantness is compared unto it; so Pindar^{f266} compares his hymn or ode to honey mixed with milk, as being sweet and grateful; and in Plautus^{f267},

“your words are honey and milk:”

and, it may be further observed, that such a mixture of milk and honey, with poppies in it, was given to the newly married bride, and drank when brought home to her husband^{f268}; which was now the case of the church. The doctrines of the Gospel may be meant, comparable to honey and milk; to “honey”, for their sweetness and acceptableness: for their nourishing nature; and for, their being gathered out of the choice flowers of the Scriptures, by the laborious ministers of the word, who are like to bees; (see ~~190~~ Psalm 19:10 ~~191B~~ Psalm 119:103); to “milk”, for the purity of them and the nourishment had by them; for their being easy of digestion, when mixed with faith; and for their being of a cooling nature, to allay the heat of a fiery law in the conscience; and for the recovery and restoration of souls by them, in a declining condition; (see ~~191B~~ 1 Peter 2:2); these may be said to be “under the tongue”, when they have a place in the heart, are the subject of constant meditation, a sweetness is tasted in them; and they are had in readiness to speak of them upon all occasions;

and the smell of thy garments [is] like the smell of Lebanon; the ancients formerly scented their garments; Calypso gave to Ulysses sweet smelling garments^{f269}: such are Christ's robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation, which are said to "smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia"; with which the saints being arrayed, the smell of their raiment is as "the smell of a field the Lord has blessed", and so like the smell of Lebanon, a mountain abounding with odoriferous trees and plants; (see ¹⁹⁵¹⁸Psalm 45:8 ¹⁰⁷⁷⁷Genesis 27:27 ²⁸⁴⁶Hosea 14:6). Or the outward conversation garments of the saints may be designed, the mention of which fitly follows the lips and tongue; for when works go along with words, and practice with profession; when to lips dropping the doctrines of the Gospel, like the honeycomb, are joined the sweet smelling garments of an agreeable life and conversation; the Christian is very much ornamented, and becomes lovely and amiable.

Ver. 12. *A garden enclosed [is] my sister, [my] spouse*, etc.] At a little distance from Bethlehem are pools of water, and below these runs a narrow rocky valley, enclosed on both sides with high mountains which the friars, as Mr. Maundrell says^{f270} will have to be the enclosed garden here alluded to; but it is more likely that the allusion is to a garden near Jerusalem, called the king's garden, Adrichomius^{f271} makes mention of, which was shut up, and only for the king's use and pleasure: to which the church may be compared; for its being distinguished from the world's wide waste, by the sovereign grace of God; and for the smallness of it in comparison of that; and for its pleasantness and fruitfulness, having pleasant and precious plants of great renown; or consisting of persons of different gifts and graces; in whose hearts these are not naturally, or do not grow there of themselves; but are sown or planted and raised up by the Spirit of God, for which the fallow ground of their hearts is thrown up: and that everything may be kept in good order, as in a garden, the plants are watered with the grace of God; the trees of righteousness are pruned by Christ's father, the vinedresser; the fences are kept up, and the whole is watched over night and day; and here Christ, the owner of it, takes his delightful walks, and grants his presence with his people. And the church is like an "enclosed" garden; for distinction, being separated by the grace of God, in election, redemption, effectual calling, etc. and for protection, being encompassed with the power of God, as a wall about it; and for secrecy, being so closely surrounded, that it is not to be seen nor known by the world; and indeed is not accessible to any but to believers in Christ; and

is peculiarly for his use, who is the proprietor of it; (see ^{<2016>}Song of Solomon 4:16 ^{<2018>}Song of Solomon 5:1);

a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; the allusion may be to the sealed fountains great personages reserved for their own use; such as the kings of Persia had, of which the king and his eldest son only might drink^{f272}; and King Solomon might have such a spring and fountain in his garden, either at Jerusalem or at Ethan, where he had pleasant gardens, in which he took great delight, as Josephus^{f273} relates: and near the pools, at some distance from Bethlehem, supposed to be his, is a fountain, which the friars will have to be the sealed fountain here alluded to; and, to confirm which, they pretend a tradition, that Solomon shut up these springs, and kept the door of them sealed with his signet, to preserve the waters for his own drinking; and Mr. Maundrell^{f274}, who saw them, says it was not difficult so to secure them, they rising underground, and having no avenue to them, but by a little hole, like to the mouth of a narrow well. Now the church may be thus compared, because of the abundance of grace in her, and in each of her members, which is as a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life, (^{<2014>}John 4:14); and because of the doctrines of the Gospel, called a fountain, (^{<2018>}Joel 3:18); with which Gospel ministers water the plants in Christ's garden, the members of the church; whereby they are revived, refreshed, and flourish; and their souls become as a watered garden, whose springs fail not. Though some read this clause in connection with the former; "a garden enclosed [art thou], with a spring" or flow of water "shut up, [and] with a fountain sealed"^{f275}; meaning Christ and his fulness; from whence all grace is received by the church and its members; and with which they are supplied, and their souls are watered: and the phrases, "shut up" and "sealed", which, whether applied to the doctrines of grace and truth, in and from Christ, may denote the secrecy and safety of them from the men of the world; or to the grace of Christ, communicated by him to the saints, may denote the security of it, the invisible operations of it, and the sole exercise of it on him: for these phrases denote the inviolable chastity of the church to Christ, in her faith, love, service, and worship; (see ^{<2015>}Proverbs 5:15-18); and are used in the Jewish writings^{f276}, to express the chastity of the bride. Ambrose affirms^{f277}, that what Plato^{f278} says concerning Jove's garden, elsewhere called by him the garden of the mind, is taken out of Solomon's Song.

Ver. 13. *Thy plants [are] an orchard of pomegranates*, etc.] These plants are the members of the church, true converts, believers in Christ; pleasant

plants, plants of renown, planted in the church by Christ's heavenly Father, and shall never be plucked up; or, thy gardens, as it may be rendered^{f279}; particular churches, well taken care of and watered; these make an orchard, or are like one, even a paradise, as the word^{f280} signifies: it is generally thought to be a Persic word; (see ~~4618~~ Nehemiah 2:8); but Hillerus^{f281} derives it from **rrp**, to "separate", it being a garden, separated and enclosed 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 Canaan, hence called a "land of pomegranates", (~~4688~~ Deuteronomy 8:8); many places in it had their names from thence, (~~4652~~ Joshua 15:32 ~~4693~~ Joshua 19:13 ~~4624~~ Joshua 21:24). To which believers in Christ may be compared, for the various sorts of them^{f282}, for their largeness, fruitfulness, and uprightness; saints have gifts and grace, differing from one another as to size, but all pomegranates, trees of righteousness; some are larger, and excel others, are full of all the fruits of righteousness; but all are, more or less, fruitful and upright in heart: and so the saints of the higher class may be here designed, as those of a lower are by other trees and spices after mentioned;

with pleasant fruits; that are valuable, precious, and desirable, of which an enumeration follows:

camphire, with spikenard; or "cypresses", or "cyprusses with nards"^{f283}; both in the plural number: the former may intend cypress trees, so called on account of their berries and fruits growing in clusters; see (~~2014~~ Song of Solomon 1:14); and the latter, because there are different sorts of them, as "nardus Italica", "Indica", and "Celtica": to these saints may be compared, because pleasant and delightful, of a sweet smell, and rare and excellent.

Ver. 14. *Spikenard and saffron*, etc.] The former is the best sort of nard, and therefore mentioned and repeated, to which saints may be compared, because of the graces of the Spirit in them; which, when exercised, give a sweet odour, and are exceeding grateful to Christ; (see ~~2012~~ Song of Solomon 1:12); and the latter, according to Schindler^{f284}, seems to have been read "carcos", the same with "crocus", and is a plant well known by us for its cheering nature; and has its name from the Arabic, "zaffran", because of its yellow or golden colour; but "crocus", from "Corycus"^{f285}, a mountain in Cilicia, where it grew; it is properly joined with spikenard, since itself is a "spica", and is sometimes called "spica Cilissa"^{f286}. Next follow

calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; “calamus” is the sweet cane in (²⁴⁹³Isaiah 43:24); “cinnamon” is the rind or bark of a tree; both grow in India ^{f287} and in Arabia ^{f288}; as also trees of “frankincense”, which are only in Arabia; hence one of the Arabias is called “thurifera” ^{f289}, for they do not grow in all Arabia: the two first were ingredients in the holy anointing oil, and the latter in the holy perfume, (¹³¹³Exodus 30:23, 34);

myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices; Solomon’s gardens might be furnished with all these; and with the above trees, plants, and spices, from Arabia Felix, where, as Appianus ^{f290} says, “cassia” grew in marshy places; myrrh and frankincense were gathered from trees, cinnamon from shrubs, and their meadows naturally produced nard; hence called “aromatifera”, the spicy country ^{f291}: myrrh was also an ingredient in the anointing oil; and aloes, according to the Targum, is the same with lign aloes; (see ¹⁰¹⁶Numbers 24:6); not the herb which has a very bitter juice, but the tree of a sweet odour, which Isidore ^{f292} distinguishes, and is what is meant in (¹⁴¹⁸Psalms 45:8 ¹¹⁷⁷Proverbs 7:17); and were both of a very fragrant smell. Now all these trees, plants, and spices, signify truly precious souls, possessed of the graces of the Spirit; comparable to them for their valuableness and excellency, their sweet smell, and the reviving and refreshing nature of them; which make the subjects of these graces very agreeable to Christ, and to one another. What a garden is the church thus planted!

Ver. 15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*] Some ^{f293} take these words to be the words of Christ continued, speaking still of his church, and explaining and enlarging upon what he had said of her, (²⁰⁴²Song of Solomon 4:12); but they are rather the words of the church; who, upon hearing herself commended, and knowing that all her fruitfulness, and the flourishing condition she was in, were owing to the grace of Christ, breaks forth in these words, and ascribes all to him, saying, “O fountain of gardens, O well of living waters”, etc. for so the words may be rendered in the vocative case ^{f294}. By the “gardens” may be meant particular distinct churches, such as were gathered in the first times of the Gospel, and since, as the churches of Asia, etc. separated from the world, and planted with trees of righteousness, such as are before described: and though there are many gardens or churches, there is but one “fountain” which supplies them all with gifts and grace, and that is Christ, and his fulness, the fountain from whence flow all grace, and the blessings of it: who also is the “well of living waters”; a well deep and large, fathomless

and bottomless, dug by sovereign grace, and full of all grace; signified by “waters”, for the abundance of it; and said to be “living”, because by it dead sinners are quickened, and drooping saints revived; and is ever running^{f295}, ever flowing and overflowing; so that there is always a supply for all Christ’s gardens, and for all believers in all ages; who, with the bucket of faith, draw water with joy out of this well, or wells of salvation, (^{<211B>}Isaiah 12:3); and the flows of grace from hence are like “streams from Lebanon”, because of the abundance of it; the constant and continued supplies of it; the rapidity and force with which it comes, bearing down all obstacles in its way, and for the pleasure it gives, the flows of it being as delightful and grateful as streams of water in hot countries. Respect seems to be had to several places called by these names; there was one, called “the Fountain of Gardens”, which flowed from Lebanon, six miles from Tripoli, and watered all the gardens, whence it had its name, and all the country that lay between these two places^{f296}; and there was another, called “the Well of living Waters”, a little mile to the south of Tyre; it had four fountains, from whence were cut various aqueducts and rivulets, which watered all the plain of Tyre, and all its gardens; which fountains were little more than a bow’s cast from the main sea, and in which space six mills were employed^{f297}: and there is a rupture in Mount Lebanon, as Mr. Maundrell^{f298} says, which runs up it seven hours’ travelling; and which, on both sides, is steep and high, and clothed with fragrant greens from top to bottom; and everywhere refreshed with “fountains”, falling down from the rocks, in pleasant cascades, the ingenious work of nature; and Rauwolff^{f299}, who was on this mountain in 1575, relates;

“we came (says he) into pleasant groves, by delightful “rivulets” that arose from “springs”, that made so sweet a noise, as to be admired by King Solomon, (^{<211C>}Song of Solomon 4:15);”

and these streams gave rise to some rivers, as Jordan, Eleutherus, etc.^{f300} to which the allusion is here. There were two cities, one in the tribe of Judah, and the other in the tribe of Issachar, called Engannim, the fountain of gardens, (^{<1653A>}Joshua 15:34 ^{<1652B>}Joshua 19:21).

Ver. 16. *Awake, O north wind*, etc.] These words, according to some^{f301}, are the words of the church continued, praying for the spirit; to which sense the order and connection of the words seem to incline; though the language suits best with Christ, who has the command of the winds, and a right and property in the garden, the church: nor does it seem so agreeable,

that the church should petition Christ to let loose the north wind upon her, if by that are meant afflictive dispensations of Providence; but agrees well enough with Christ, since these come not without his will and order, and by him made to work together for good; by which he nips the corruptions of his people, tries their graces, and causes them to come forth into exercise: though some^{f302} think this is a command to the north wind to remove, and be gone, and blow no longer, since it was spring, (^{<2111>}Song of Solomon 2:11); and would be harmful to the plants in the garden; and the verb “blow” is singular, and only in construction with the south wind; and, besides, winds diametrically opposite^{f303} cannot blow together in the same horizon, with a continued blast: though others^{f304} are of opinion, that both winds are designed, being both useful to gardens; the one to scatter the clouds, and make the air clear and wholesome, and restrain the luxuriance of the plants; and the other, being moist and warming, of use to bring plants and fruits to maturity; and both may design the Spirit of God, in his different operations and effects, through the law and the terrors of it, and by the Gospel and its comforting doctrines;

and come, thou south, blow upon my garden; the church, Christ’s property, as she asserts in the latter part of the verse: the Spirit of God is intended by the “south”, or south wind; who is compared to the “wind”, because it blows like that, freely, and as he pleases, when, where, and on whom, and imperceptibly, powerfully, and irresistibly, (^{<488>}John 3:8); and to the “south wind”, because it is a warm wind, brings serenity, and makes fruitful with showers of rain: so the Spirit of God warms the cold heart of a sinner; thaws his frozen soul, and comforts with the discoveries of divine love; brings quietness and peace into the conscience; and makes fruitful in grace and good works, by causing the rain of Gospel doctrines to descend and distil upon men. The end to be answered is,

[that] the spices thereof may flow out; the spices in the garden, the odoriferous plants, might emit a fragrant smell; though Virgil^{f305} represents the south wind as harmful to flowers; so it might be in Italy, where it dried them up, as Servius on the place observes; and yet be useful to them in Palestine, where it blew from the sea, and is sometimes so called, (^{<19478>}Psalms 107:3). Spices denote the graces of believers, rare, precious, and odorous; and their “flowing out” the exercise of them, their evidence, increase, and the ripening of them; when they diffuse a sweet odour to Christ and others, and make it delightful to walk in his garden; as it is to walk in one after a delightful shower of rain, and when the wind gently

blows upon it. And hence what is prayed for being granted, the church speaks again, and invites Christ, saying;

let my beloved come into his garden; which “coming” is to be understood, not of Christ’s first, nor of his second coming; but of his spiritual coming, to visit his people, grant his presence, and manifest his love; which is very desirable by them; and, when granted, is reckoned a great favour, and is an instance of the condescending grace of Christ, (⁴⁸⁴²John 14:22); the church is “his garden” by his own choice, his Father’s gift, the purchase of his blood, and the power of his grace: and here he is invited to come,

and eat his pleasant fruits; meaning either the graces of the Spirit, which are his fruits; and called Christ’s, because they come from him, and are exercised on him, and he is the author and finisher of them: or the good works of believers, which are performed by virtue of union to him, and abiding in him; are done in his strength, and designed for his glory: and both are “pleasant”, that is, well pleasing and acceptable to him; the graces of the Spirit, when in exercise, as appears from (²⁷⁴⁹Song of Solomon 4:9,10); and good works, when done in faith, from a principle of love, and to his glory: and he may be said to eat them when he expresses his well pleasedness with them, and acceptance of them.