





A COMMENTARY

ON

THE SONG OF SONGS.

FROM ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOURCES.

BY

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IN DEAR MEMORY

OF

JOHN MASON NEALE.

P R E F A C E.

THE Song of Songs, though for many centuries a favourite theme of the most eminent Saints and Christian writers, either by way of direct comment or of illustrative quotation, has fallen, during these latter times, into comparative neglect. It is rarely made the basis of sermons, or even of devotional treatises, and thus, as may be reasonably inferred, does not occupy any prominent place in private study of Holy Scripture.

Two attempts, both most valuable in their way, to reinstate it in its proper position as an element of religious teaching, and as affording ample subject-matter for practical meditation, have been recently made. The first is the well-known translation of Avrillon's devout book, *L'Année Affective*; the second is the series of *Sermons in a Religious House*, preached by the late Dr. Neale.

But the plan of each of these works excludes completeness of treatment, and leaves much of the ground still uncovered. Nor do any of the commentaries usually accessible supply the defect. The mystical exegesis, which is of the very essence of any true understanding of perhaps the most difficult book in Scripture,

was either quite foreign to the temperament and method of the expositors; or when some genuine feeling of sympathy with patristic theology did manifest itself, as, for example, in the writings of Matthew Henry, the influence of eighteenth-century modes of thought, and the fear of being altogether out of harmony with the readers of their time, cramped and enfeebled their utterance.

It is only seven years since the late Mr. Thrupp endeavoured to revive intelligent interest in the religious study of the Canticles through the means of the devout and scholarly gloss which he published. But, while he admitted the truth of the main outlines of the traditional interpretation, he exhibited much timidity in following up the details, a timidity all the more remarkable when contrasted with the boldness with which he proposed conjectural emendations of the Hebrew text. His volume, therefore, though very useful in its degree to students, does not appear to have succeeded in its higher aim, that of promoting reverent perusal of the Canticles amongst the educated laity.

Nor could this class obtain assistance from foreign sources. Apart from colossal works like those of Ghislerius and Cornelius à Lapide, there is no book which presents in a compendious form the pith of ancient and mediæval exposition on the Song; though there are, no doubt, many, like that of Hamon the Port-Royalist and the briefer composition of S. Francis de Sales, which may be read with interest and profit.

The following Commentary is an attempt to fill this void, at least provisionally, until some more competent hand undertakes the task. Its chief claim to attention is that it is almost exclusively a compilation from

the writings of the Fathers and Schoolmen, with just so much illustration from ascetic writers, hymnodists, and poets, ancient and modern, as seemed to give point to their comments, and to make the continuous perusal of the volume an easier task.

An attempt to bring to bear on the Canticles all the appropriate matter which exists, would simply have been to aim at turning into this one channel all the streams of the devotional theology of the Middle Ages, and would have defeated the intention with which the Commentary was undertaken, that of summarizing in brief and portable compass the results of seventeen centuries of loving meditation on the Book of Divine Love.

This work, therefore, does not aim, like the larger compilations already referred to, at making clerical readers independent of further study on the subject. Rather it is hoped that the extracts from the writings of Origen, S. Bernard, Gilbert of Hoyland, Henry Harphius, and others like-minded, may incite them to fuller perusal. But it does propose to give other students of the Canticles, and especially the inmates of Religious Houses (for whose instruction it was originally projected) a sufficient, though necessarily brief, insight into the treasures which have accumulated, in the course of centuries, around this shrine of sacred mysteries. To further this end, a suggestion made by a critic of the *Commentary on the Psalms*, too late so far as the plan of that work was concerned, has been here adopted, namely, the addition of English versions to the Greek and Latin quotations which occur in the course of the work. As these have been somewhat hastily executed, they

are consequently not a little rugged, and aim merely at giving the sense approximately, without pretending to any literary excellence.

It would have been most desirable if a Commentary such as this, not designed for critical purposes, but of a purely devotional character, could have been kept absolutely free from polemical matter, yet, as the spiritual character of the Canticles has been freely impeached in our day, it has been necessary to make some protest against the method and arguments of its impugnors; but this has been excluded so far as possible from the text, and relegated to the Introduction, in which a few of the literary problems connected with the Song of Songs are briefly discussed.

It remains only to request a lenient judgment on this tentative execution of a most difficult task, and to ask for such assistance at the hands of readers as may make a future edition, should it be required, less defective.

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Nativity of Our Lady, 1869.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE exceptional position occupied by the Song of Songs among the books of Holy Writ, standing as it does apart from Law and Prophets, Histories and didactic compositions, and having obviously on the surface but very faint relations to the remaining Scriptural Canticles, has naturally concentrated much attention upon it, and given rise to no little variety of comment on all the particulars connected with its external form and history, and its internal signification. One fact alone remains undisputed, that of its inclusion within the Canon, both Jewish and Christian, from the earliest times of which we have any record. Its place in the Septuagint testifies to its recognition as a sacred book by the Jews two centuries before the Christian era, and the language used concerning it by Rabbinical authorities puts it on a very different level from that accorded by them to the Deutero-Canonical Books. They classed it as one of the five *Megilloth* of the Bible, along with Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther, and ranked it first among them, reading it at the Passover, the most solemn festival of the year. Fully in accordance with this position is the remark of Rabbi Akiba, a contemporary of the Emperor Hadrian, saying, "The entire history of the world does not present an epoch like the day when the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for though all the Hagiographa are holy, yet the Song of Songs is most holy." The corollary from these premises is that the Canticles have been regarded

Canonicity
of the Song.

Rabbinical
estimate
of it.

all along as the work of an inspired writer, and as instinct with a spiritual meaning; both which views are explicitly asserted by the Targum, which begins its paraphrase with the words: "The songs and praises which Solomon the Prophet, king of Israel, spake by the HOLY GHOST, before the LORD the Creator of the universe."

First objection to mystical view

It has been objected in modern times against the alleged admission by the ancient Jews of a mystical import underlying the letter, that they prohibited the perusal of the Canticles by all persons below thirty years of age, whence it has been argued either that the book was given in vain so far as all who died in youth were concerned, or that the very fact of withholding it establishes the denial of its spiritual character. This objection, apart from its failing to settle whether the Jews were right or wrong in their discipline on this head, falls to the ground for two reasons; first, that the Rabbins extended the same prohibition to the beginning of Genesis and the earliest and latest chapters of Ezekiel, without any impeachment of their inspiration; and secondly, that the Eastern Church, like the Church of England, while avowedly upholding the mystical sense, refrains, on grounds of expediency, from public reading of the Canticles in divine worship, though the place of the book in the Old Testament Canon, as received by Christians, has been acknowledged ever since the earliest known list was drawn up by Melito, Bishop of Sardis, about A.D. 170.

refuted.

Date and authorship.

II. The questions of date and authorship have both been hotly contested. The prevalent opinion amongst Jews and Christians until comparatively recent times, agreed with that of the Targum and Septuagint, and other ancient versions, in ascribing the Song to Solomon, son of David. There were, however, some exceptions. Some Talmudists assigned it to Hezekiah, R. Kimchi and a few others to Isaiah. On the other hand, the received tradition is supported by some important arguments. Apart from the title, which may of course have been added by a later hand (as is doubtless the case with several of the Psalms,) and

from direct references to Solomon as a living person, which might be only poetical, there are two items of internal evidence which fix the date with tolerable accuracy. First is the passage in chap. vi. 4, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem." Tirzah, as the capital of the Northern kingdom under Jeroboam I. and his successors until the building of Samaria, (1 Kings xiv. 17; xv. 21; xvi. 8, 23,) would never have been coupled with Jerusalem, the head of the Davidic and Aaronic polity, by a poet of either Israel or Judah after the revolt of the ten tribes, owing to the political and religious hostility which immediately arose between the two realms, just as no poem before the union of the English and Scottish crowns praises both London and Edinburgh. Thus the furthest possible limit of date is the outbreak of war between Abijah and Jeroboam in B.C. 958. Another passage narrows the period much more. The eighth verse of the same chapter tells us of Solomon's harem, "There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines." But in 1 Kings xi. 3, we read, "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." Wherefore we conclude that the Song was not only written in Solomon's life-time, but at a comparatively early period of his reign, before he had fallen into the extravagant excesses of his old age. The plea which would deny the authenticity of the passage of the Book of Kings, treating it as a mere exaggeration of later times, to be corrected by the more reasonable estimate of the Canticles, may be dismissed at once, apart from any question of inspiration, as neither justified by what we know of the manners of Eastern sovereigns nor by the treatment which two equally compatible statements would receive if found in the pages of a secular historian. So far as style and diction are concerned, the chief modern critics are agreed in attributing the Song of Songs to the Solomonic age, in opposition to a somewhat earlier school, which post-dated it considerably, on grounds now admitted to be insufficient.

In the absence of direct internal evidence and of

Probability
of Solomon's
authorship,

from the
title;

from author-
ship of other
songs;

historical testimony at all coeval with the date of the composition, it is impossible to lay down as a certainty that Solomon was author of the Song. But there is, at the very least, quite as much to be said in favour of the earliest known tradition as can be urged against it. The title goes for something, for it establishes that at the very remote period when it was affixed,—earlier at any rate than the LXX. version—no rival claimant had been effectually set up. Those who deny the Solomonic authorship urge that such an epithet as “Song of Songs” makes against the claim, because no author would venture on such a panegyric of his own work. The reply to this is twofold. The critics must either accept the inscription as synchronous with the poem, or reject it. If they accept the genuineness of the name “Song of Songs,” they must take the remainder of the title into account also, and admit Solomon’s claim. If they reject the whole inscription as a later interpolation, then Solomon is not to be charged with having qualified his poem with any epithet at all, and the count fails. And this without taking into account a further consideration, that of the inspired character of the book; since, if Solomon was divinely instructed what to write, there can be no more personal vanity in his using the title “Song of Songs” than there is blasphemy in a Prophet beginning a sentence with “Thus saith the LORD.” There would be, at the outset, something unaccountable in the total loss of the most copious class of writings of the wisest and most powerful of Hebrew kings. Most copious, because the thousand and five songs attributed to him in 1 Kings iv. 32, must have necessarily exceeded in bulk those three thousand proverbs, of which such important remains exist. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the great majority of these poems were of merely passing and secular interest, but it is difficult to conjecture why utter oblivion should have come on them all, as the negation of his authorship in this case requires its supporters to maintain. This difficulty, no light one in face of the preservation of so many songs of David

and Asaph, is more readily solved by acceptance of the traditional view than by any other means.

The next plea in Solomon's favour is of small weight independently, but not without importance in a cumulative argument. He is praised, in the same passage which mentions the number of his writings, for his great skill in natural history: "And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." (1 Kings iv. 33.) There is no book of Scripture which dwells so much as the Canticles upon natural imagery, or which mentions so many names of animals and plants in terms implying familiarity with their habits. The only reply which has been suggested to this plea is that other people may have known these things as well as Solomon. No doubt; but the real point at issue, that the internal evidence is so far perfectly consistent with the traditional authorship, is not in the least weakened by such a demurrer. The like may be said of the analogies of idea and diction, admittedly existing between Proverbs and Canticles.¹ They do not fix with certainty the parts of the Book of Proverbs which are due to Solomon's pen, nor do they give any clue to the priority of date in either case. But allowing, as all do, that Solomon is author of part of the Proverbs, the coincidences lend additional weight to the traditional view, and, as must never be forgotten in discussions of the kind, make the burden of disproof heavier for the contesters of the claim in possession.

from love of
natural
history;

and from
analogies
with Pro-
verbs.

Two other pleas are urged against Solomon from opposite sides. Those who allow the spiritual interpretation of the Song maintain that Solomon was not morally fitted to be the instrument of such teaching, while those who adhere to the newest modern literal

Further
objections.

¹ Cant. i. 11—Prov. xxv. 11; Cant. iv. 5—Prov. v. 19; Cant. iv. 9—Prov. i. 9; Cant. iv. 11—Prov. v. 3, xvi. 24; Cant. iv. 12—Prov. v. 15; Cant. v. 1—Prov. ix. 5; Cant. v. 2—

Prov. xx. 13; Cant. v. 6—Prov. i. 28; Cant. vii. 1—Prov. xxv. 12; Cant. vii. 9—Prov. xxiii. 31; Cant. viii. 7—Prov. vi. 31—35, &c.

view regard the poem as in some degree a satire against him, and therefore certainly not from his pen. The second of these objections will be considered later, while it is enough to say of the first one that it loses sight on the one hand of the admitted discrepancy between the youth and age of Solomon, to the former of which the Song may more probably be ascribed; and on the other of the frequent instrumentality of sinners in working out the designs of GOD, of which the prophecy of Balaam and the apostolate of Judas are sufficient examples.

Methods of Interpretation.

Traditional view.

Allegorical view.

Literalist view.

Arguments for traditional view,

III. The third question, and that which has been most eagerly contested of all, concerns the interpretation of the Song, whether it is to be mystical, allegorical, or literal, and in each of these cases what is the method to be followed. As before, there is a traditional view in possession, which has the pleas of remote antiquity, continuous tenure, and perfect consistency with itself in its favour. This view, common to the Talmud and Targum and to all Christian writers (with a brief exception to be noticed presently) for sixteen centuries, is that the poem is wholly mystical, with no historical basis whatsoever, and that it denotes the relations between GOD and His Church, albeit there is much variety of detail in setting forth the particulars of this relation. An intermediate view supposes an historical foundation for the Song, preferably the bridal of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, and holds that a superstructure of religious allegory has been raised on this basis, as in that other case of the Exodus, so frequently used as a type of spiritual deliverance from sin. And a third view, almost exclusively modern, denies all inner meaning to the poem, save of the most incidental kind, and maintains a literal exposition. The mystical interpretation, which forms the subject-matter of the commentary in this volume, and which traces the history of the Divine dealings with man under the Law and the Gospel, has in its favour a cumulative mass of evidence of a very cogent nature. In the first place, the relationship of marriage is very frequently used in Scripture to denote the union be-

tween GOD and the chosen people, the ornaments of a bride and abundant progeny are the promised rewards of devotion and obedience, barrenness and divorce are the threatened punishments of spiritual adultery. There is thus no antecedent improbability, as has been alleged, in the nuptial imagery of the Song having a mystical signification. This comes out most clearly in that Book which has most obviously approached, if not actually borrowed, the language of the Canticles, namely, the prophecy of Hosea, in which the marriage of GOD to Israel, and her sins against the nuptial bond, are steadily dwelt upon. A further illustration is afforded by the language of the forty-fifth Psalm, which represents a King, who is styled LORD and GOD, as the Spouse of a Virgin Bride, and which is directly applied to CHRIST in the Epistle to the Hebrews. As the structure of this Psalm, like that of the seventy-second, absolutely forbids its literal application to any mere human sovereign, save at the hands of those who are resolved to see no Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, be the evidence what it may, it contributes a most important item of proof to the tenability of the traditional view. This is further borne out by the Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, and the Revelation. The Baptist speaks of CHRIST as the Bridegroom, and of himself as the Bridegroom's friend; while the SAVIOUR, in defending His disciples from the charge of religious laxity, applies the name Bridegroom to Himself, and that of "children of the bridechamber" to His followers. S. Paul illustrates the metaphor further by declaring that he has "espoused" his converts "as a chaste virgin, to CHRIST," and that earthly marriage is only a type of a heavenly mystery. The Apocalypse, with its description of the heavenly Jerusalem as the Bride of the Lamb, and of the final triumph of the redeemed as His marriage feast, completes the chain of Scriptural evidence; and if the mystical interpretation of the Canticles be set aside, it becomes exceedingly difficult to explain the use of this peculiar imagery, which cannot be traced to any other source.

from the
language of
Scripture;

The plea that not marriage, but courtship, which

leads to marriage, is the scope of the Song, has been urged against the Catholic view, but vainly in the face of the recurrent phrase "the Virgin of Israel" in the Old Testament, and the clear statement of the New that the marriage has not yet come, and only the betrothal has taken place. The next argument of weight is that which serves to repel the *à priori* objections taken to the form and diction of the poem as a vehicle for spiritual ideas. If it could be shown that the Song, if mystically explained, is an isolated phenomenon, having no parallel in any literature, very much would be done towards discrediting the ancient view. But such is not the case. The Arab nation, which in blood and language is most nearly allied to the Hebrews, has preserved to the present day the custom of chanting in public worship songs in which the religious meaning is veiled under the ordinary terms of earthly love. The service at which these are recited is called a *Zikr*, the poems themselves (usually in honour of Mohammed) *muweshshah*. On this, Mr. Lane, in his *Modern Egyptians*, chap. xxiv. writes as follows: "He pointed out the following poem as one of those most common at Zikrs, and as one which was sung at the Zikr which I have begun to describe. I translate it verse for verse, and imitate the measure and system of rhyme of the original, with this difference only, that the first, third, and fifth lines of each stanza rhyme with each other in the original, but not in my translation.

from parallels in Arabic and Persian literature;

Songs at Zikrs.

With love my heart is troubled ;
 And mine eye-lid hind'reth sleep ;
 My vitals are dissevered ;
 While with streaming tears I weep.
 My union seems far distant :
 Will my love ever meet mine eye ?
 Alas ! did not estrangement
 Draw my tears, I would not sigh.

By dreary nights I'm wasted :
 Absence makes my hopes expire :
 My tears, like pearls, are dropping ;
 And my heart is wrapped in fire.

Whose is like my condition ?
 Scarcely know I remedy,
 Alas ! did not estrangement
 Draw my tears, I would not sigh.

O turtle-dove ! acquaint me
 Wherefore thus dost thou lament ?
 Art thou so stung by absence ?
 Of thy wings deprived, and pent ?
 He saith, ' Our griefs are equal ;
 Worn away with love I lie.'
 Alas ! did not estrangement
 Draw my tears, I would not sigh.

O First and sole Eternal !
 Show Thy favour yet to me.
 Thy slave, Ahmad El-Bekree,
 Hath no LORD excepting Thee.
 By Tá-Há, the Great Prophet,
 Do not Thou his wish deny.
 Alas ! did not estrangement
 Draw my tears, I would not sigh.

I must translate a few more lines, to show more strongly the similarity of these songs to that of Solomon ; and lest it should be thought that I have varied the expressions, I shall not attempt to render them into verse. In the same collection of poems sung at Zikrs is one which begins with these lines :

O gazelle from among the gazelles of El-Yemen !
 I am thy slave without cost :
 O thou small of age and fresh of skin !
 O thou who art scarce past the time of drinking milk !

In the first of these verses we have a comparison exactly agreeing with that in the concluding verse of Solomon's Song ; for the word which, in our Bible, is translated ' a roe,' is used in Arabic as synonymous with ' ghazál' (or a gazelle,) and the mountains of El-Yemen are the ' mountains of spices.' This poem ends with the following lines :

The phantom of thy form visited me in my slumber :
 I said, ' O phantom of slumber ! who sent thee ?'
 He said, ' He sent me whom thou knowest ;
 He whose love occupies thee.'

The beloved of my heart visited me in the darkness of night ;
 I stood, to show him honour, until he sat down.
 I said, 'O thou my petition, and all my desire !
 Hast thou come at midnight, and not feared the watchmen ?'
 He said to me, 'I feared, but, however, love
 Had taken from me my soul and my breath.'

Compare the above with the second and five following verses of the fifth chapter of Solomon's Song. Finding that songs of this description are extremely numerous, and almost the only poems sung at Zikrs ; that they are composed for this purpose, and intended only to have a spiritual sense (though certainly not understood in such a sense by the generality of the vulgar ;) I cannot entertain any doubt as to the design of Solomon's Song. The specimens which I have just given of the religious love-songs of the Moslems have not been selected in preference to others as most agreeing with that of Solomon, but as being in frequent use." To this may be added the statement of Major Scott Waring as to a kindred custom in Persia, "The Persians insist that we shall give them the merit of understanding their own language, that all the odes of their celebrated poets are mystical, and breathe a fervent spirit of adoration to the Supreme Being. They maintain that the Soofees profess eager desire with no carnal affection, and circulate the cup, but no material goblet, since all things are spiritual in their sect ; all is mystery within mystery." And finally, European literature contributes its quota of parallel in the *Vita Nuova* of Dante.

Attempted
 reply, from
 absence of
 sacred
 names ;

A twofold reply, of but little cogency, has been attempted to this proof that there is no inherent unlikelihood in the mystical interpretation. It is alleged, firstly, that the Song of Solomon contains no hint, no key, no direct reference to holy names and ideas, such as is certainly found in the first quotation from Arabic sources given above, and such as may possibly be found in the full text of the remainder, and that we are therefore not at liberty to interpret it otherwise than literally. This loses sight of a very important and familiar canon of composition, that an

allegory, in order to be perfect, ought *not* to contain its own key. So far as it does, or as any obtrusive clue is given, it is defective in structure. The beast-fables of Bidpai, Æsop, and Krilof, supply familiar examples. Any distinct intimation of the purport in the body of the fable is simply destructive, and even an application tagged on is more than superfluous, ranking with the too audible stage-explanations in the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. This charge against the Song of Solomon, then, merely proves its high literary excellence, and the skill with which the author avoided the defect into which the Arab poet has fallen. The only reason which would excuse deviation from this rule would be the imperative need of warning persons against being led astray by the literal sense; but as a fact, in the whole literary history of the Canticles for nearly nineteen hundred years, there is scarcely an example on record of the literal sense having held its ground anywhere for a moment. Surely, if the mystical exposition be so unnatural and far-fetched as some declare, this would not and could not be so, as we may learn from the total failure of the Alexandrine critics to establish their allegorical interpretation of the Iliad. Another objection, that urged by an American literalist, Professor Noyes, is more philosophical in tone, but not more convincing. It is that the fundamental differences between the pantheistic system of the Sufis and the religion of the Jews, and the great interval of time which lies between Solomon and Hafiz, (even if it be conceded that the odes of the latter are religious poems at all) make it absolutely impossible to institute any parallel between them. This argument loses sight of the original question, which is not whether there is any close likeness between Sufism and Judaism, which might crop up in literary forms, but whether there is the least antecedent improbability in the human mind selecting amatory language to express devotional thoughts. The allegation that it is most unlikely to do so is disposed of by the parallels adduced, and the cogency of the argument would be unaffected by the broadest divergency of race and creed,

untenable
on abstract
grounds.

Objection
from dissi-
milarity of
race and re-
ligion, and
from dis-
tance of
time;

inadequate
as disproof.

as all students of comparative mythology know full well. But, not to dwell on the constant intercourse between Canaan and Persia, from the days when Abraham met Chedorlaomer till those when John of Persepolis came with Macarius of Jerusalem to the Council of Nicæa, which allowed ample opportunity for Iranian ideas to enter Palestine, the proof from the kindred race and religion of Arabia remains unmoved by any exception based on the plea of diversity, weak as even that is. Still less weight can be attached to objections drawn from the anthropomorphic language of the Song, which has been declared inappropriate in the highest degree to such august themes as those which the traditional interpretation finds in it. For this, again, is a mere *à priori* plea, and therefore of no logical force whatsoever, failing, besides, to take account of the manner in which the shadow of the coming Incarnation is cast over the Old Testament, occasioning, nay, necessitating such language in order to prepare the minds of the Jewish nation for the reception of the full Messianic idea of a GOD-MAN, which is gradually unfolded with advancing clearness as the prophetic series draws near its close. And as regards the question of the abstract fitness or unfitness of the language, it may be briefly observed that the "verifying faculty" of seventeen Christian centuries, exercised amongst others by men of such keen intellect, spiritual insight, and moral purity as Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Alcuin, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, and Gerson, may well be set against the conflicting opinions of the last hundred years in a matter of the kind.

Anthropomorphic language of the Song.

Main difficulty of the literalist view.

This portion of the controversy leads up directly to what is, after all, the main difficulty in the way of literalists, a difficulty which they have not hitherto even plausibly seemed to overcome. It is that of accounting for the presence of the Song, assuming it to be a mere love-poem, in the Canon of Scripture at all, whether as originally admitted by the Jews or subsequently adopted by the Christians. It would stand apart from all the rest of Scripture as alone without

a directly religious signification, and be necessarily degraded into a secondary rank, if not altogether excluded from the list of inspired writings. The only semblance of answer to this plea is the allegation that the Song does not stand alone in this respect, because the Book of Esther belongs to the same category, being alike without those sacred names and phrases which mark all other portions of the Bible.

Isolation of the Song from the rest of the Bible.

But this phantom argument vanishes at a touch. The Book of Esther does stand in a very clear and definite relation to all the other historical books, because it gives the details of a most important crisis in the national life of the Hebrew people, serving as the chief link between the Captivity and the restoration of Israel. And further, though holy words are carefully excluded from the book (possibly through reserve in a writing designed for circulation amongst Gentiles,) yet the fast proclaimed by Esther and Mordecai points at once to a time of prayer to that Being Whose Name is left unspoken, and the Feast of Purim, celebrated by Jews everywhere for the twenty-three centuries which have since elapsed, testifies to the national sense of a deliverance scarcely second to that of the Exodus. The Song, however, cannot be so connected with other parts of Scripture on a literalist theory, but must remain as a startling and inexplicable anomaly.

The Book of Esther not a parallel case.

IV. The sense that this is so has prompted, at different eras, various tentative solutions of the difficulty. The earliest of these was propounded by Theodore of Mopsuestia in the first quarter of the fifth century, and represented the Song as merely an epithalamium on the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter or with Abishag the Shunammite. This theory, after being condemned in express and forcible terms in the Fifth General Council, disappeared completely for more than eight hundred years, when it was reproduced for a moment by Gregory Abulfaraj. It rested again till revived by Grotius, who allowed it, nevertheless, to include an allegory; and it was finally developed into a very elaborate form by the celebrated

Solutions proposed for this difficulty.

Bossuet, in 1690, whose genius gave it a measure of popularity amongst scholars till the early part of the present century, when the ingenious criticisms of Dr. Mason Good (some of which had been anticipated long before by Natalis Alexander,) established the utter incongruity of the language of the Song with the circumstances of a State alliance and with the national surroundings of an Egyptian princess, to whom the pastoral character of the Bride could in no wise be accommodated. The eloquent words in which Theodoret expresses the mind of the Church in his day against the views ascribed to Theodore of Mopsuestia merit citation. In the preface to his commentary on the

Rejoinder of
Theodoret.

Canticles, he says: "Since the majority of those who slander the Song of Songs and deny it to be a spiritual book, weave fables unworthy of crazy old women, some of them saying that Solomon the Wise wrote it concerning himself and Pharaoh's daughter; a few authors of the same stamp alleging that Abishag the Shunammite is the Bride, and not Pharaoh's daughter; while others, taking a somewhat more philosophical view, call it the Royal Speech, so as to understand the people by the Bride and the King by the Bridegroom; we think that we shall be well employed in refuting at the outset of our exposition these false and mischievous theories, and then will proceed to set forth the true and clear meaning of the author. And yet these men ought to know that the holy Fathers, much their superiors in wisdom and spiritual insight, were they who placed this Book amongst the divine Scriptures, and approving it as full of the SPIRIT, pronounced it worthy of the Church. For had they thought otherwise, they would never have included a work whose subject was passion and desire in the number of Holy Writ. . . . Not only Eusebius of Palestine, and Origen the Egyptian, and Cyprian of Carthage, crowned with the diadem of martyrdom, and men earlier than they were and nearer to the Apostles, but also those who were afterwards famous in the Churches, Basil the Great in his exposition of the beginning of Proverbs, and the two Gregories, allied to Basil, one by blood

and the other by friendship, and that valiant champion of religion Diodorus, and John, who to this day waters the whole earth with the streams of his teaching, and they who came still later, all pronounced this Book to be spiritual. Seeing that this is so, let us consider whether it be reasonable for us to follow our own theories, paying no attention to so many eminent men, and despising the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, by not listening to him who says so well: 'The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain,' (Wisd. ix. 14,) and blessed Paul saying of certain persons, 'They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,' (Rom. i. 21.) But let us cry thus with blessed Peter, 'We ought to obey GOD rather than man,' (Acts v. 29.) Let us also say to them, 'Whether it be right in the sight of GOD to hearken unto you more than unto GOD, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard by the HOLY GHOST.' . . . Coming then from the old to the new Bride, let us in this wise interpret the Song of Songs, and rejecting false and mischievous theories, let us follow the holy Fathers, and recognize one Bride conversing with one Bridegroom; and learn from the holy Apostles who that Bridegroom and Bride may be. For the inspired Paul teaches us that, writing thus, 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to CHRIST,' (2 Cor. xi. 2.) He calls her a Bride who is made up of many. For he does not say, 'I have betrothed *thee*,' but *you*, that is, holy souls, perfected in virtue. For Divine Scripture understands the Church by the Bride, and calls CHRIST the Bridegroom."

It is needless to heap up testimonies of the same kind from other Patristic writers, since their own comments on the Song will speak for them in due time. But it is worth while to dwell for a moment on one point of the citation just given. It has been alleged by some modern critics that the dazzling powers of Origen gave the tone to the traditional interpretation which has held its ground ever since his day, and that he drew it from Talmudic sources, being the first to

Origen not
the author
of the mys-
tical view.

introduce it into the Church. Considering how embittered the opposition to Origen became even in his own life-time, this is not very probable in itself, but it is refuted by the contemporaneous language of S. Cyprian, who was not influenced by Origen's works, and also by Theodoret's incidental mention of an earlier and consentaneous tradition ascending much nearer to primitive times. Of this tradition but one written fragment has come down to us, a solitary note on Cant. iii. 9, by S. Theophilus of Antioch, who died between A.D. 178 and 189, a few years before Origen was born. But the fragment is decisive as to the method followed in the second century, and materially lessens the probability of Talmudic influence having affected a pre-existing literalism.

Omitting the various phases through which the literalist theory has passed since its revival in the sixteenth century by Castellio (who went to the length of rejecting the Canticles altogether) it will suffice to state briefly the view now in fashion, but soon to be discredited by its own supporters on the ground of its glaring improbability and self-contradiction, possessing, as it does, no shred of external evidence or internal plausibility. According to this hypothesis, invented by Jacobi in 1771, and accepted with further developments by the majority of subsequent literalists, the Song represents the adventures of a newly-wedded or betrothed Hebrew shepherdess, who is accidentally seen by Solomon in one of his progresses, is vainly solicited and tempted by him, and even carried off as a prisoner to the royal harem, whence she finally escapes with her beloved shepherd back to the scenes of her former life. The witnesses called in defence of this theory, like the elders who testified against Susannah, are agreed in the main outline of their story, but are so irreconcilably at variance with one another on points of detail essential to consistency, as to be destructive of each other's credit. For if anything might be fairly expected to be most unmistakably prominent, were the theory true, it would be the distinction between the language of

Modern hypothesis.

Disagreement of its supporters.

the genuine affection of the shepherd-husband, and that of the seductive wiles of the royal tempter. But Ginsburg and Renan, Meier and Hitzig, are utterly at variance on this head, and interchange the speeches in the most bewildering manner. Can any one suppose, were the stage directions in Shakespeare absent, that there could be the least doubt in assigning their several parts with accuracy to Othello and Iago, to Postumus and Iachimo? Further, if the poem be intended, as has been suggested, as a satire upon Solomon, the difficulty is very much increased by the elaborate way in which the censure is concealed, so that the lapse of about two thousand eight hundred years has been necessary for its discovery. If a poet of the northern kingdom had written it with this intent, there is no conceivable reason why he should not have been more plain-spoken, because the fiercer his invective, the better would the kings of Ephraim have been pleased. And if he was a total stranger to the Aaronic worship, the men of the Great Synagogue, with whom Mosaic orthodoxy and loyalty to the House of David were first principles, would never have included his work in their Canon. If, on the other hand, a southern bard (and, by the hypothesis, an inspired one,) were the writer, there is at once a startling dissimilarity between the extreme caution employed, (worthy of a courtier epigrammatist under Domitian or Louis XIV.,) and the bold denunciations of royal guilt such as we know to have been the wont of Hebrew prophets, a Nathan, an Elijah, a Micah, or a Jeremiah.

As this commentary is not designed for critical, but for devotional purposes, it is beside its aim to go into the further disproof of this theory at length; but two items of the moral argument against it may be given, one from the pen of a favourer of it, and the other from that of an opponent. "Wherever," observes Dr. Davidson, "the doctrinal interest prevails, scientific exegesis declines in proportion, because it is overridden. The genuine spirit of interpretation is always favourable to the literal sense. For the same reason Hofman and Delitzsch have recourse to the typical. Though

The Song
not a satire
upon Solo-
mon.

Moral ar-
gument
against
literalism.

they do not recognise the validity of the allegorical method, they are too much led by doctrinal prepossessions to embrace the literal, and are therefore fain to adopt a kindred mode of explanation." If for "doctrinal interest" we substitute the equivalent term "religious belief," the meaning of this sentence will be unaltered, but a little clearer, and it is in fact an admission that in exact proportion as men accept the tenets of Christianity, they will recede from "the letter that killeth" and draw near to "the spirit that giveth life." The other remark is that of Hengstenberg, who has said with biting truth: "The literal interpretation of this Book gained its honours in the age of Rationalism, when the Church was degraded to its lowest level, and when it was bare and void of sound ecclesiastical judgment, and of holy taste and tact." He might have gone further, had his position allowed it, and have pointed out that the Lutheran body, true to the animal and earthly instincts of its celebrated founder, has always been nearer the ground than any other large Christian community, and less capable of lofty spiritual views. The whole sect, in its three centuries of existence, though prolific in respectability, has not given birth to one man in whom the common consent of other men has recognized the marks of a saintly character, such as have not infrequently illustrated the members of other Communion, nor has it produced any book (with the possible exception of Gerhard's Meditations) which has been permanently added to the list of those devotional works that have really enriched religious literature. In the field of the outer letter of Biblical study, in textual and grammatical criticism, in historical elucidation, it has laboured in a spirit of diligence and zeal beyond all praise, yet as

the least erected spirit that fell
 From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
 Were always downward bent, admiring more
 The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
 Than aught divine or holy else, enjoyed
 In vision beatific.

Consequently, from being thus always engaged with the outer shell, the inner sense and the religious aroma have always escaped it. It has expended much care and science on Holy Writ, but its spiritual chemistry has invariably been of the kind which turns the most lustrous diamonds into black and worthless lumps of carbon, never of that higher constructive type which makes the light of jewels flash on our eyes from the dark places of the Bible.

The necessity, after the gradual manufacture of the reigning literalist theory, for discovering some ground for the retention of the Canticles in the Canon, has led to the assertion that its design is to teach a higher morality with regard to love and marriage than that prevalent amongst the Jews of the Solomonic age, and in particular, to be a protest against polygamy and its attendant evils. There is a very sensible rule in English law-courts to the effect that whatever may be the apparent grammatical meaning of an old statute, the only rule which can guide a judge is the interpretation put on its wording by his predecessors in their decisions. If it can be shown by a series of precedents, that the meaning contended for was never so much as urged, not to say recognized and allowed by the Courts, the plea breaks down at once. So it is in this case. There is not the faintest hint in any writer, Jewish or Christian, before the nineteenth century, that such a lesson is inculcated by the Song of Songs, there is no trace of any influence having been exerted by it in this direction.

Conversely, the rule holds good that a series of decisions in agreement with one another, however little they may seem at first sight to outsiders to be logically deducible from the premises, are declaratory of the true force of a statute. Here, then, is a book which has exerted an exceedingly marked influence in Christendom ever since a Christian literature arose; which has materially affected the whole range of ascetic theology; which has powerfully contributed to the formation of that religious ideal which moulded ten centuries of Christian history; which continues to maintain its

The Song
not a treatise on wed-
lock.

hold upon many thousands of believers, directly or indirectly. For all practical purposes, and for all philosophic investigation into the spiritual records of the world, no method is of any value save the mystical one, for no other has ever passed into the stage of energy, or has contributed anything to the religious consciousness of mankind. If the truth of Jacobi's hypothesis could be set beyond a doubt by the discovery of coeval documents, there would be at best but the same kind of languid antiquarian interest aroused which greets each fresh alleged Biblical testimony found in cuneiform inscriptions, because the theory has always been utterly barren and dead; and the graver problem would remain unsolved, how a literature so peculiarly limpid and emphatic in its utterance on moral and social questions should have suddenly changed its whole method, and have approached the question of marriage by a path so indirect, obscure, and enigmatic, as to be wholly inaccessible to all for whom the teaching was intended, and to owe its first survey to the chance guess of a stray traveller, eighteen centuries after another road had been opened, involving the total disuse of the older one. There have been many rival theories as to the road by which Hannibal's army crossed the Alps, but no one has yet conjectured that it came over the summit of Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, much less that there was no other path for ordinary traffic till the Simplon was made practicable. And, it may be added, the upholders of this theory have shown by their own conduct how little they value the lesson they profess to have found. The marriage law of Prussia, under which most of them live, is perhaps the very laxest and least moral in the civilized world; only slightly, if at all, raised above the level of that of Imperial Rome in the days of Juvenal. Yet it does not appear to have elicited any protest based upon the Canticles, or, indeed, upon anything else, from the critics.

Form and
unity of the
Song.

V. With regard to the form and unity of the Canticles, there have also been conflicting theories, but the earliest Christian view has, curiously enough, been reinstated by modern critics in both these respects, for

they admit on the one hand that the poem is essentially one, and not a mere collection of odes loosely strung together, and on the other that its truest designation is that of a dramatic idyll. There is, however, the utmost disagreement amongst them as to the portions into which the Song is to be divided. Magnus, for example, makes twenty strophes of it; De Wette and Heiligstedt twelve, though disagreeing as to the points of division; Hitzig finds nine, Weissbach six, and several others five. There is a similar, though much slighter, discrepancy between the pauses recognized by the mystical interpreters (for in truth these pauses are, with but one or two exceptions, very indistinctly marked,) but there is a very great difference between the result of these contradictions in the two cases. The mystics, acknowledging the Song to be a drama only in the modified sense of a dialogue carried on between three speakers,—the Bridegroom, the Bride, and the leader of their friends,—during a certain change of action, of entrances and exits, are little disturbed by any difficulty in adjustment of the divisions, because the sense is quite unaffected thereby. But the literalists, who profess to see a regular plot evolved in accordance with the rules and the spirit of modern melodrama, are put out of court if they cannot agree amongst themselves as to the progress of the action, and few things in criticism are more instructive than the elaborate stage-directions and lavish creation of additional *dramatis personæ* to which Hitzig has been driven in order to harmonize the contradictions of their theory. The accepted Christian view, which acknowledges only one masculine speaker in the Song, that Solomon who is depicted as at once Shepherd and King, finds confirmation from the juxtaposition of these two ideas in relation to the same person more than once in the Old Testament, as thus in Ezek. xxxiv. 23, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and be their Shepherd. And I the LORD will be their GOD, and My servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it." Again, in Micah v. 2, 4, the

The Bridegroom, King and Shepherd.

"Ruler in Israel" Who is to come out of Bethlehem, is to "feed in the strength of the LORD." Accordingly, it is natural enough to find CHRIST claiming as His own the titles of Shepherd and King, and the Lamb of the Apocalypse crowned, and yet leading the redeemed to pastures and fountains, so that this portion of the imagery is as closely in accord with the teaching of the New Testament as that concerning the bridal relation was shown to be a little while back.

The Bride of
the Can-
ticles ;
threefold.

In the following Commentary the Bride is usually depicted as the Church, whether Jewish or Gentile, or as the holy soul which is the microcosm of the Church. The Blessed Virgin, as the holiest of all elect souls, and as thus the most perfect type of the Church of GOD, is also given frequent prominence, in accordance with the teaching of the great mediæval divines. But a certain weight must be allowed to the twofold objection urged against absolute identification of her with the Bride throughout; namely, that the Bridegroom stands to her in the relation of Son, not of Husband; and further, that it is not till the twelfth century that any very large share is allotted her by the commentators. As a fact, Rupert of Deutz, and Honorius of Autun, who were the first to make her the leading figure in the Canticles, are frequently compelled to desert their path and return to the earlier track, and the four commentators, Denys à Rykel, Delrio, Ghislerius, and Cornelius à Lapide, who have professed to devote a section on each verse to her, are constantly obliged either to mere repetition of what they had already said concerning the holy soul, merely strengthening the epithets, or to pass over the paragraph with a few conventional phrases. Therefore, in the following pages no attempt has been made to pursue the formal tripartite division, and the Bride is presented under each aspect solely in proportion to what the text will reasonably bear, and to the really telling expositions of the Schoolmen.

Catena of
Authors.

VI. It remains now only to speak briefly of the authors whose works have been employed in the compilation of this volume, and at the outset it should be observed that one very marked difference is noticeable

between the Commentaries on the Psalter and those on the Canticles. On the Psalter, possibly from its greater prominence in the Western Church, the Latin Fathers far surpass the Greek in beauty, depth, and fervour of exposition. In treating the Canticles, the case is reversed. No Latin writer on this book, not even S. Bernard, approaches Origen; S. Gregory the Great is inferior to Philo of Carpasia; Aponius ranks below Theodoret; Rupert beneath S. Gregory Nyssen. To counterbalance this advantage, the Canticles have suffered very heavy losses, positive and negative. Negatively, they have never been treated by some of those whose genius was most adapted to such a task. Neither S. Albert the Great nor S. Bonaventura, for example, have included it in their labours. Positively, the losses have been much more serious. Of the great commentary of Origen but a few scanty fragments remain, breaking off before the close of the second chapter. S. Gregory Nyssen's work remains imperfect too, and Michael Psellus, who paraphrases him, is compelled to break off in consequence. Death seized S. Bernard while he was engaged in the composition of his wonderful sermons on the Song of Songs, when he was but a fourth of the way through his task, and the like destiny took away his continuator, Gilbert of Hoyland, before he had completed the fifth chapter. Some of the ancient commentators, as Eusebius and Polychronius, are reduced to the merest fragments; others have perished all but the name. Yet, after all such deductions, the quantity of material existing down to the close of the sixteenth century is very great, of considerable interest and value, and singularly homogeneous, apart from the open borrowing or recasting usual in commentaries of successive generations. Since that time the number of writings on the book has vastly increased in number, but not by any means in spiritual value, and the list subjoined, therefore, makes no pretence to be an exhaustive catalogue, but merely indicates the volumes which have actually been laid under contribution, or examined with that end, even if unsuccessfully.

Greek and
Latin Com-
mentators.

Third
Century.

1. First in order, though perhaps not in actual date of present condition, comes the Targum on Canticles, valuable as exhibiting the current of Jewish tradition, and often illustrating remarkably the views of Christian theology. I cite it usually from Walton's Polyglot.

2. Origen, (+ 253) whose splendid genius and profound devotional instinct shone so conspicuously in his Biblical writings, left a commentary of great length on the Canticles, of which S. Jerome, a most competent judge, observed that whereas he had surpassed every one else in his other commentaries, he had surpassed himself in this. Only a few brief passages remain, carrying on the exposition to Cant. ii. 15.

Fourth
Century.

3. Still more unfortunate has been Eusebius of Cæsarea (+ 340,) of whose commentary only the merest fragments exist, which were published by Meursius at Lyons in 1617.

4. S. Gregory Nyssen (+ 370) has left a commentary carried on as far as Cant. vi. 9. Its distinguishing peculiarity is that he represents the Bride throughout as the soul of man, and pays but little attention to the more usual theory. His defects of obscurity and involution are by no means absent from the work.

5. A Catena, known as that of the Three Fathers, SS. Nilus, Maximus, and Gregory Nyssen, drawn up at an early period, is of considerable value, and is one of the chief authorities for the tropological interpretation.

6. S. Epiphanius, the famous Bishop of Constantia (+ 403,) wrote a commentary on the Canticles, long supposed to be utterly lost, and not therefore cited by any of the chief compilers. It was translated, however, into Latin by his namesake Epiphanius the Scholastic, about a century after his death, and after lying neglected in manuscript for twelve hundred years, was at last published at Rome by Foggini in 1750. It is very terse, and not of much importance, because, for the one part, it follows Origen pretty closely; and for the other, it is followed in turn and happily expanded by the subject of the next notice. The Abbé Migne's edition, though professing to give all the works, genuine and spurious, of each Epiphanius, omits this commentary.

7. Philo, Bishop of Carpasia in Cyprus (+ 374,) the pupil and friend of S. Epiphanius, to whom he owed his see, has left one of the most valuable of the early commentaries on the Song of Songs. It is of considerable length, and contains many passages of great beauty, probably enshrining for us much of the teaching of Origen, and undoubtedly much of that of S. Epiphanius. It is noteworthy for another reason also, that S. Gregory the Great borrowed freely from it in his commentary, a circumstance which has led Cornelius à Lapide to allege that Philo must have been largely interpolated, rather than admit that the great Western Doctor could stoop to draw materials from the East.

8. S. Ambrose (+ 397) though not formally a commentator on Canticles, has, in fact, gone over nearly the whole ground in one or other of his books, and often with great beauty of illustration. A certain Abbat Guilielmus of S. Thierry at Rheims (+ circ. 1160) was at the pains to collect these scattered notices into a single volume.

9. Polychronius (+ 427,) Bishop of Apamea, has left a few fragments on the Song, in full agreement with the traditional interpretation, and noteworthy on that account, because he was brother of its first impugner, Theodore of Mopsuestia. They were published, along with those of Eusebius, by Meursius. Fifth
Century.

10. Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus (+ 430,) is one of the most important and able of the early expositors, and the calm judgment of his language adds much weight to his opinion.

11. S. Justus of Urgel (+ 540,) is the earliest extant Latin commentator, and, while following in the track of his Eastern predecessors, often adds a pithy remark of his own, which exhibits the germ of that kind of mystical exposition which culminated in the twelfth century. Sixth
Century.

12. Next follows the commentary ascribed to Casiodorus (+ 562,) though its authorship is disputed. The truth seems to be that it is his, though interpolated to some extent. Whoever the author may be,

the work is marked with great good sense and unquestionable piety.

Seventh
Century.

13. S. Gregory the Great (+ 604,) has not sustained his usual level in his Commentary on the Canticles. That there are devout and beautiful passages in it, besides those drawn from Philo, is unquestionable, but it does not reach the standard of his *Morals on the Book of Job*.

14. S. Isidore of Seville (+ 636,) has compiled a very brief gloss on the Canticles, containing no fresh matter, and it may accordingly be passed over by students.

15. Aponius, an author of somewhat uncertain date, but probably about 680, wrote one of the very best of the early Latin comments. It is unfortunately imperfect, but an epitome of the missing portion, by Lucas, Abbat of Mount S. Cornelius, is extant, and in a great degree supplies the loss.

Eighth
Century.

16. The Venerable Bede (+ 735) follows Cassiodorus almost invariably, but often expands his thought and adds some fresh touches which give additional vigour and fervency.

17. Alcuin of York (+ 750,) like S. Isidore of Seville, brings nothing new to the exposition of the Song, and may be safely omitted.

Ninth
Century.

18. Angelomus of Luxeuil (+ 850,) compiled at the desire of the Emperor Hlothar I. a commentary in which he mainly follows Aponius and S. Gregory the Great, but not infrequently adds a few touches of his own, which have their value.

19. Haymo, Bishop of Halberstadt (+ 853,) a contemporary of Angelomus, has also compiled a terse gloss drawn from his predecessors, and selected with much judgment. It contains, however, very little original matter.

20. To the same period, about the middle of the ninth century, belongs the Ordinary Gloss, first drawn up by Strabo of Fulda, and gradually augmented. It will be found cited a few times in the following commentary.

21. The tenth century is an entire blank, so far as

expositions of the Canticles go, and the first book of the kind which meets us in the eleventh century is a mere epitome of S. Gregory the Great by S. Radulphus of Fontenelle, first Abbat of S. Vandrille (+ 1047.) His learned Augustinian editor, Hommey, retorts the charge which Cornelius à Lapede brings against Philo, for he claims for him the original authorship as against S. Gregory, but on very insufficient grounds.

Eleventh
Century.

22. Michael Psellus, a Greek physician and senator, (+ 1105,) wrote, about 1050, a metrical paraphrase of the Canticles in accentual iambic verse, based on the commentary of S. Gregory Nyssen, but occasionally introducing new matter of his own.

23. S. Anselm of Laon, the "Scholastic Doctor," (+ 1103,) is supposed to be the true author of a commentary of much interest which was originally printed under the name of his more eminent namesake and contemporary, S. Anselm of Canterbury. It has also been attributed to Hervé of Dol, and will be found often cited in the succeeding pages.

Twelfth
Century.

24. Marbod of Rennes, who died at a very great age in 1123, has left, like Psellus, a metrical paraphrase of the Song, executed in hexameters. Its closeness to the Vulgate text, however, and tolerable neatness of execution, are its chief merits, for it does not add anything to the exegesis.

25. S. Bruno of Aste, (+ circ. 1120,) is the author of a compilation on the Canticles, which contains scarcely a trace of new matter, and may therefore be passed over.

26. The wonderful sermons on the Canticles by S. Bernard, (+ 1130,) all too few, though eighty-six in number, do not quite complete the exposition of the first and second chapters. Their eloquence and fervour are far more conspicuous than the actual amount of direct illustration which they yield, though it is by no means scanty, and they not merely deserve, but compel perusal.

27. Honorius of Autun, the author of the famous *Gemma Animæ*, (+ circ. 1130,) has left two independent commentaries, one of them entitled *Sigillum B.*

Mariæ, both of them containing many beautiful, though fanciful passages.

28. Richard of S. Victor, (+ 1130,) has commented on portions only of the Canticles, and is not quite continuous in his work. What he has done is, however worthy of his great reputation as a mystical divine, and he will be found often cited.

29. Rupert, Abbat of Deutz, (+ 1135,) one of the very greatest of mediæval commentators on Scripture, has produced a gloss of considerable length, whose main feature is the presentment of the Blessed Virgin as the Bride, a rule only occasionally departed from throughout his work, and that under great stress.

30. The same holds of the Gloss by Philip Harveng, Abbat of Bona Spes, in Hainault, (+ 1150,) a celebrated mystic, but it is far inferior to that of Rupert in beauty and value, and will be rarely found referred to.

31. The sermons of Gilbert of Hoyland, (+ 1175,) on the Canticles, written in avowed continuation of S. Bernard, and approaching more nearly than any others to the beauty and fervour of his style, are well deserving of study, and have supplied many paragraphs to this book.

32. Irimbert, Abbat of Ambden, and previously of S. Michael at Bamberg, (+ 1177,) commented at some length on detached portions of the Canticles, and sometimes happily enough. His work was first published by the learned Bernard Pez in his *Thesaurus Anecdotorum*.

Thirteenth
Century.

33. Alanus de Insulis, the Universal Doctor, (+ 1203,) has followed in the steps of Rupert, but not without leaving traces of his own marked individuality on his work.

34. William Little, of Newbury, or Guilielmus Parvus, (+ 1208,) the author of a well-known and sensible History of England, also wrote a commentary on the Canticles, now lost, but which Delrio, who saw it in MS. at Louvain about 1600, has largely cited. All quotations from this source are therefore at second-hand.

35. Thomas, Canon of S. Victor, and first Abbat of S. Andrew's at Verceil, (+ 1226,) wrote a mystical

comment on the Canticles, based on the Hierarchies of the Pseudo-Dionysius, for the most part difficult of comprehension by the uninitiated reader, but with occasional passages which are really suggestive and clear. It was published by Pez in the same volume as Irimbert.

36. John Hailgrin, Archbishop of Besançon, and Cardinal of S. Sabina, (+ 1237,) is author of a Gloss belonging to the same school as those of Rupert and Alan of Lille, but not, on the whole, of remarkable merit.

37. A more famous Cardinal, occupying the same title of S. Sabina, Hugo of S. Cher, (+ 1250,) is next to follow. His great work on the whole Bible includes the Canticles, and though mainly aiming at condensing and systematizing the patristic comments, often adds much of value to the older matter.

38. A Catena, passing under the famous name of S. Thomas Aquinas, (+ 1274,) but of more than doubtful authenticity, succeeds in order. It adds so very little to what had been done four centuries earlier by Haymo of Halberstadt, that it may be altogether pretermitted.

39. Nicolas de Lyra, a converted Jew, of Norman birth, and afterwards an ornament of the Franciscan Order, (+ 1340,) is the author of valuable Postils on the Bible, in which his knowledge of Hebrew is made to bear on the exegesis. The distinguishing peculiarity of his useful treatise on the Canticles is the renewed prominence into which he brings the forgotten thought of the spiritual identity between the Jewish and Christian Churches, thus striking at the root of that alleged severance of the Song from all relations to the Old Testament which has been charged by modern literalists against the mystical exposition.

Fourteenth
Century.

40. The Emperor Matthew Cantacuzene, (+ circ. 1360,) who, after a year's partnership of the Byzantine throne with his father John V., retired to a monastery on Mount Athos, wrote in his monastic state a commentary containing many beautiful passages, and noticeable as the only Greek one which depicts the Blessed Virgin as the Bride.

Fifteenth
Century.

41. John Gerson, the "Most Christian Doctor," (+ 1429,) has directly treated the Song in his *Symphonia in Canticum*, and indirectly in his more celebrated Treatise on the Magnificat. But his writings, though full of piety and fervour, contribute scarcely anything to the exposition.

42. Far different is the case with the beautiful comment of the Ecstatic Doctor, Dionysius Leewis à Rykel, better known as Dionysius the Carthusian (+ 1450.) He is the first to divide each chapter under three formal heads, according as he treats of the Church, or *Sponsa Universalis*, of the holy soul, or *Sponsa particularis*, or of the Blessed Virgin, or *Sponsa singularis*, a method which found several followers at a later time. I am not sure that this work does not rank above even his lovely exposition of the Psalms.

43. Contemporary with this is the work of Nicolas Kempf of Strasburg, Prior of the Carthusians at Gaming in Austria, and known as Nicolaus de Argentina, (+ 1450,) published by Pez, in the two closing volumes of the *Bibliotheca Ascetica*. Though mainly drawn from SS. Gregory the Great and Bernard, it is full of beautiful passages due to the compiler himself, and will amply repay examination.

44. The celebrated mystic, Henry Harphius, (+ 1478,) has left a treatise on the spiritual life, entitled *Theologia Mystica*, consisting of long expositions or meditations on detached verses of the Song, perfectly crowded with beauties, though not always available for separate citation. No edition after 1580 is trustworthy, as the book was tampered with by its later editors.

Sixteenth
Century.

45. Jacob Perez de Valentia, Bishop of Christopolis, (+ 1507,) has treated the Canticles in a gloss which, though of little originality or power, contains not a few suggestive passages.

46. Francis Titelmann, a Franciscan, (+ circ. 1547,) a man of great learning and no mean critical skill, has written usefully on the Song, though not contributing much to the mystical exposition.

47. S. Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valencia, (+ 1555,) was cut off by death after having merely

outlined his intended Commentary on the Song, and when but three chapters had been sketched. The patristic spirit shines, however, in the fragment, and causes regret at the incompleteness of the undertaking.

48. Martin Delrio, a learned Jesuit, (+ 1608,) is the first on the list of those commentators of the seventeenth century who began a twofold treatment of the books they discussed, first giving a literal and textual comment, and then a catena of earlier expositions. His own original matter is not striking, but he has collected much valuable material together.

49. Michael Ghislerius, a Clerk Regular, (+ circ. 1615,) is the most ponderous of writers on the Canticles. He has bequeathed to us an enormous folio of nearly a thousand pages in double columns and small type, wherein he discusses every verse in five different ways; textually, taking the Church, the holy soul, and the Blessed Virgin, severally as the Bride, and closing with a long catena of ancient expositors, which is by far the most valuable part of his work, though even it is by no means exhaustive.

50. Henry Ainsworth, an English Independent (+ 1622,) is deserving of consultation, for the Rabbinical learning and the apt parallelisms from other books of Scripture which he has brought to bear upon the Song.

51. Luis de la Puente, or De Ponte, (+ 1624,) composed a huge volume of Sermons on the Canticles, intended for the use of Religious, but heavy and lifeless in treatment, and quite below his reputation.

52. It is unnecessary to do more than name the well-known commentary of Cornelius à Lapide (+ 1637) since its character is sufficiently well known to make criticism superfluous.

53. John Cocceius, a German Protestant theologian of enormous learning and diligence, and of great piety, (+ 1669,) of whom it was said, that "Grotius sees CHRIST nowhere, but Cocceius sees Him everywhere," recalls the spirit of the best mediævalists by his remarkable gift of mystical appreciation. His Commentary on the Canticles is injured by its exclusive reference to

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the literal history of the Christian Church, and by occasional outbreaks of controversy, but it may be consulted with much profit.

With this author closes the period formally embraced in the following commentary, which does not profess to deal with the exegesis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, properly beginning with Bossuet's commentary in 1690. But as textual criticism often throws new and valuable light on mystical interpretation, later writers have been freely consulted, and it will suffice to enumerate, amongst others, Harmer, Percy, Mason Good, Rosenmüller, Heiligstedt, Hitzig, Hengstenberg, Weissbach, and Thrupp. It would have been easy to have extended the catalogue largely, but at the sacrifice of unity of plan; and besides, the omitted authors are for the most part readily accessible and familiarly known, whereas the majority of those quoted in the succeeding pages have been hitherto practically confined to a very narrow circle of readers.

A COMMENTARY

ON

THE SONG OF SONGS.

CHAPTER I.

1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

Song of songs. “As we have been taught by Moses Origen. that there are not only holy places, but a Holy of holies, that there are not only other Sabbaths, but Sabbaths of sabbaths; so now we are taught, by the pen of Solomon, that there are not only songs, but a Song of songs. Blessed, truly, is he who enters into the holy place, but more blessed he who enters the Holy of holies. Blessed is he who keepeth the Sabbath, but more blessed who keepeth the Sabbath of sabbaths. So, too, blessed is he who understands songs, and sings them, for no one does sing save on high festivals, but much more blessed is he who sings the Song of songs. And as he, who enters into the holy place, still needs much ere he is able to proceed into the Holy of holies, and as he who keeps the sabbath enjoined on the people by the LORD, wants many things that he may keep the Sabbath of sabbaths, so too he who traverses all the songs of Holy Writ, finds it no easy thing to ascend to the Song of songs. Thou must needs go out of Egypt, and, issued thence, cross the Red Sea, that thou mayest sing the first song, saying, ‘I will sing unto the LORD, Exod. xv. 1. for He hath triumphed gloriously.’ And even though thou mayest have sung this first song, thou art still far from the Song of songs. Pass spiritually through

- the wilderness, till thou comest to the well, which the princes dug, that thou mayest there sing the second song. Afterwards approach the borders of the Holy Land, and, standing on Jordan's banks, sing the song of Moses, 'Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.' Yet again, thou needest soldiers, and the inheritance of the Holy Land, and that a bee should prophesy to thee and judge thee—for Deborah is, by interpretation, a bee—that thou mayest utter that hymn also, which is contained in the Book of Judges. Ascending to the record of the Kings, come to the song when David escaped from the hands of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul, and said, 'The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.' Thence thou must reach Isaiah, that thou mayest say with him, 'I will sing to my Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard.' And when thou hast traversed all these, go up yet higher, that thou mayest with pure soul cry unto the Bridegroom this song of songs." The Targum counts up ten songs, adding to Origen's list those of Adam, sung after his fall and pardon; Joshua's at Ajalon; and a tenth, never yet uttered, to be sung by the people of God at the end of their long captivity, to which applies that prophecy, "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept." This one, however, is the *Song of songs*, because as CHRIST our LORD, as Man, surpassing all Apostles, Patriarchs, Prophets, and heavenly powers, is King of kings, and LORD of lords, so this song, since entirely concerning Him and His Bride, excels, and includes in itself, all the hymns of victory, of thanksgiving, of instruction, and of lamentation in Holy Writ, just as the bridal feast surpasses all others, and since no blessing which other songs commemorate can be compared with the Incarnation. And as the Apostle tells his hearers to speak to themselves "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," we understand that psalms, accompanied by an instrument, denote the active life of charity, and hymns the contemplative life, and songs, embracing these two, are the life of the righteous, who give soul and body to God; while the *Song of songs*, that holy secret which only God's unction can teach, only spiritual experience can make clear, is the life of the perfect. The Song is Solomon's, the third in order of his books, following Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, to teach us that after the
- Numb. xxi. 17.
- Deut. xxxii. 1.
- Judg. v. 1.
- 2 Sam. xxii. 2.
- Isa. v. 1.
- Targum.
- Isa. xxx. 29.
- Aponius.
- Ricard. Vic-
torin.
- Rupert.
- Theodoret.
- Eph. v. 19.
- Nicol.
Argent.
- Honor. Aug.
- S. Greg.
Magn.
- S. Bernard.

have passed the purgative way, by following the moral precepts of the first of these; and the illuminative way, by learning in the second that all earthly things are vanity, and GOD alone to be desired; we attain in the third place to the unitive way, and by it make our entrance into the Holy of holies, where the High Priest, our Bridegroom, stands, that we may there learn and sing the song of perfect love,—there only, for “how shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?” It is *Solomon’s*, for Solomon means Peaceful, and CHRIST, to Whom it in truth appertains, is “our Peace,” having been “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

S. Greg. M.

Origen.

Nic. Argent.

Ps. cxxxvii.

4.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Eph. ii. 14.

1 Cor. i. 30.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

First, say the Fathers in general, it is the cry of the Synagogue, GOD’s ancient Church, yearning for the Incarnation of CHRIST, and desiring that GOD would no more speak to her only by the voices of angels and prophets, but face to face. I care not, she says, to hear Moses, who is slow of speech to me, the lips of Isaiah are unclean, Jeremiah cannot speak, for he is a child, and all the Prophets are tongueless. Let Him of Whom they speak, Himself speak, *let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*. And His answer is set down for us by the Apostle: “GOD, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON.” She asks for His *kiss*, because as two separate bodies unite in the act of kissing, so CHRIST, by His becoming flesh, united GOD and man together, two natures in One Person. And as a kiss denotes peace and reconciliation, it is the fit greeting of Him, our peaceful Solomon, Who came to us as GOD and SAVIOUR. It is also the cry of the Gentile world, yearning for the teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT, for as the breath of one that kisses is felt by the one that is kissed, so by the kiss of CHRIST, we understand the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST Whom He hath sent. Next, the words belong to every faithful soul which desires the presence of its LORD. See, exclaims a Saint, how sudden is the opening of her address. Asking a great thing from a mighty Person, she uses no customary flattery, she takes no indirect

Omn. Patr.

S. Bernard.

Dion. Carth.

Heb. i. 1.

The Gloss.

S. Justus

Orgel.

Hen. Harph.

S. Ambros.

S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.

Serm. vii. in

Cant.

- way to that which she longs for. She makes no preface, she seeks not to conciliate good-will, but breaking out from the abundance of her heart, says, in plainest and boldest words, *Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth. His mouth.* Yes, but it is not every one who dares ask this, but only such as have already received the pledge of love, and desire it again. For us sinners it is fitter to fall down trembling at the feet of our righteous LORD, like the publican, not daring to look up, but like the sinful woman, content to kiss His feet, and to bathe them with our tears. Then, when He hath said, "Thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to thee," we may dare to rise a little, and kiss the Hand which has cleansed and lifted us, giving Him the homage and glory which are His due. At last, after many tears and prayers, we may, in fear and trembling, lift our heads to His glorious mouth, not merely to gaze upon it, but to kiss it. To Thee, O LORD JESU, to Thee has my heart fitly said, Thy Face, LORD, will I seek. For Thou madest me to hear of Thy mercy betimes in the morning, when, as I lay in the dust, kissing Thy sacred footsteps, Thou forgavest me the sins of my life. Then, as the day grew on, Thou madest glad the soul of Thy servant, bestowing on me the grace of holy living in the kiss of Thy Hand. And now what remains, O gracious LORD, save that in the fulness of light, in the fervour of the Spirit, Thou, mercifully admitting me to the kiss of Thy mouth also, wouldst fill me with joy with Thy countenance? Note, too, how it is said *Let Him kiss me*, with no name particularized, no context to explain who is meant. And that because to the Bride there can be but One to think of, because her word ever is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth I desire in comparison of Thee." She asks, too, not for a single kiss, but for *kisses*, for those seven great gifts of the SPIRIT which CHRIST bestows, and for other graces besides. And He gives them in four ways, by His Incarnation, by His conversation amongst men as their Teacher, by mystical incorporation with us for our redemption, and by the final glory which He promises. Peace with GOD in CHRIST, is then the scope of the Bride's longings, as she prays for illumination, for love, for perfect union with Him of Whom she says, "Full of grace are Thy lips, wherefore GOD hath blessed Thee for ever." His lips, which give
- S. Bernard.
Serm. viii.
- S. John v.
14.
- Hugo Card.
- Ps. lxxiii. 24.
- De Ponte.
- Parez.
- S. Greg.
Nyss.
- Ps. xlv. 3.

the kiss, are His truth and sweetness, hers, which receive it, are her understanding and affection. And He has heard the cry of His Bride, and answered it, giving her more than she asked, giving her Himself again and again in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. "The soul," observes an ancient writer, "sees herself cleansed from all her sins, and fitted to approach the Altar of CHRIST. She sees the wondrous Sacrament and saith, *Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*, let CHRIST Himself impress His kiss on me." And Simeon Metaphrastes, in that hymn which the Eastern Church puts in the mouth of her children before Communion, speaks of the kiss which the penitent soul offers in turn to her LORD in that sacred rite :

Henr.
Harph.

Pseudo-
Ambros.
de Sacr. 2.

More than the harlot I have erred, who, learning Thine abode,
Made purchase of the precious nard, and boldly took her road
To seek and to anoint Thy feet, O CHRIST, my GOD and LORD,
And, as she came with love to greet, was not by Thee abhorred.
So, WORD of GOD, calm Thou my fears, and give me, not despised,
Thy feet to clasp, and kiss, and wash with tears, that nard unpriced.

Σόνουσιτ.

The soul may kiss her LORD also by acts of love and compassion towards His poor, and will be rewarded by Him therefor with that last kiss which He will give at the Doom, saying, "Come, ye blessed." But they who have not so kissed Him here, shall see His face no more, for He will turn His back upon them. And that which is true of the Church, and true of every believing soul, is especially true of her who is the Church's fairest ornament, the purest and most blessed of Saints, the Virgin Mother of GOD. The words are her prayer to GOD the FATHER, that by the breath of His mouth, which is the HOLY GHOST, He may give her that ineffable kiss, His Only-begotten SON. When the Angel brought her the marvellous tidings of her true betrothal, then by her answer, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word," she did in truth say, *Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*. And after His nativity, the prayer was yet more literally answered, when the tender Mother hung over her infant LORD, and clasped Him to her breast. And His love so endured that even at the last moment of life He bent to offer His kiss. "He bowed His head to His Mother," says a holy writer, "and to all mankind, as though bidding His last farewell, and

Nic. Argent.

Rupert.

S. Luke i.
38.

Corn. à Lap.

Tauler, de
Pass. Dom.

offering the kiss of peace. See here, O faithful soul, the unspeakable love of thy GOD, that He loved us unto the end." And we learn hereby the pain as well as the sweetness of His kiss.

Kebile, *Lyra Innocent.* Three Saints of old their lips upon the Incarnate SAVIOUR laid ;
 And each with death or agony for the high rapture paid.
 His Mother's holy kisses of the coming sword gave sign,
 And Simeon's hymn full closely did with his last breath entwine.
 And Magdalen's first tearful touch prepared her but to greet
 With homage of a broken heart His pierced and lifeless feet.

Theodoret.
 S. Greg. M. *For Thy love is better than wine.* The change from the third person to the second, from speaking of the Bridegroom to speaking to Him, denotes, some Fathers say, His swift appearing in fulfilment of His Bride's desire, coming even before He is actually called ; showing how more than ready GOD ever is to answer our prayer, according to that saying of the Prophet, " Before they call, I will answer : and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." The LXX. and Vulgate have *Thy breasts*. And some tell us that the gentle teaching of CHRIST, drawn from the secret treasures of His wisdom and knowledge, is meant thereby, milk fitted for babes, *better than the wine* of human wisdom or even of the old Law. Philo of Carpasia and several others see in the *breasts* the two Testaments, both given by CHRIST, whence the sincere milk of the Word, refreshing, and not hurtful like wine, is granted to mankind. And a kindred explanation is found in those writers who will have the Apostles and Doctors of the Church to be meant here. The ancient exposition of the Three Fathers interprets the words of the hidden grace of the Holy Eucharist, with which agrees well that passage of S. Chrysostom : " See ye not with what eagerness infants seize the breast, with what pressure they fix their lips upon the teats ? Let us approach with no less desire to this Table, and to the spiritual breast of this Chalice, nay, with yet greater longing, let us, as sucking children, drink in the grace of the SPIRIT ; let it be our one sorrow, our one grief, if we be stinted of this spiritual food." Some of the interpretations, however, bring us back to the true meaning of the literal Hebrew, *Thy loves*. Thus S. Bernard bids us see here the long-suffering of CHRIST in bearing with sinners, and His loving-kindness in receiving

Isa. lxxv. 24.
 Origen.
 S. Greg. Nyss.
 Haymo.
 Philo Carp.
 Cassiodorus.
 Beda.
 S. Just. Org.
 S. Greg. M.
 S. Greg. Nyss.
 S. Nilus.
 S. Maximus.
 Hom. in Mat. 83.
 Serm. ix.

them when they return to Him. S. Gregory speaks of the love of GOD and of our neighbour as supplying that stream of charity which is the necessary food of the soul. And we may take it also of that sweetness of CHRIST, which is the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, given in twofold manner, for the remission of sin and for the increase of grace. However it be explained, we come back to the one thought of union with Him Whose loving kiss is beyond all earthly blessedness.

S. Greg. M.
Rupert.

*Νέκταρ ἔην τὸ φίλημα· τὸ γὰρ στόμα νέκταρος ἔπει,
Νῦν μεθύω τὸ φίλημα, πολὺν τὸν ἔρωτα πεπωκώς.*

Anthol.
Græc. v. 305.

Nectar to me was the kiss, for the mouth was breathing of nectar,
Now am I drunk with the kiss, having quaffed off love in abundance.

They inquire at much length, too, (unnecessarily so far as the Hebrew is concerned,) why the Bridegroom's breasts are commended, while we should expect such praise to be given only to the Bride. And the happiest answers are, first, that CHRIST, Himself the source of all true and pure love, unites in His own Person a mother's affection for us with a father's, whence the Book of Sirach, speaking of the Eternal Wisdom, says, "I am the mother of fair love;" and secondly, that as mothers feed their babes from their own bodies, so CHRIST feeds His children, and poured forth, like the fabled pelican, His very Blood for our refreshment as He hung upon the Cross.

Corn. à Lap.

Eccclus.
xxiv. 18.

S. Chrysost.

*Et nunquam sine lacte charitas,
Lac non uberat, uberat cruorem.*

And never without milk is charity,
It is not milk it yields for us, but blood.

The Bride sums up the fruits of that kiss in a four-fold manner. She has obtained from it the sweetness of milk, the warmth of wine, the fragrance of odour, and the gladness of unction. She is refreshed by the first, which is light to her understanding; she is inflamed by the second, which is heat to her affection; she is excited to appetite by the third, which is the foretaste of glory to her longing; she is consecrated by the last, which is joy of spirit in the Passion.

S. Thomas
à Villanová.

3 Because of the savour of thy good oint-

ments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

The first clause here does not exactly represent the existing Hebrew text, nor yet any of the chief versions. The true rendering is, *Pleasant for odour are Thine ointments*. The LXX. reads, *The perfume of Thine ointments is above all spices*. And the Vulgate, connecting the words with the previous verse, has [*Thy breasts are*] *fragrant with the best ointments*. The

Origen. The Bride, observes Origen, had already some acquaintance with spices, to wit, the words of the Law and the Prophets, wherewith, before the Bridegroom's coming, she was partially instructed and trained for the service of GOD, as still in her early youth, and under tutors and governors, for "the Law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto CHRIST." All these were spices, wherewith she seems to have been nourished and made ready for her Bridegroom. But when the fulness of time was come, and she came of age, and when the FATHER sent His Only-begotten into the world, anointed by the HOLY GHOST, the Bride, smelling the fragrance of the divine unction, and perceiving that all those spices which she had been hitherto using were far inferior compared with the sweetness of this new and heavenly ointment, saith, *The perfume of Thine ointments is above all spices*. Of this anointing the costly unguent wherewith Aaron was consecrated is but an earthly type, as inferior as the earthly High Priest is to the heavenly one, yet having a mystical reference to it.

Gal. iii. 24. And note, that the Bride speaks of *ointments*, in the plural, as confessing the many gifts and graces which come from CHRIST as their one source. And thus is said in another place touching this same unction:

Theodoret. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, wherefore, O God, Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. All Thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." The Latin Fathers, following the Vulgate, explain the passage somewhat differently. As they often speak of the Apostles and Doctors of the Church as the breasts of CHRIST, so they call them here *fragrant*, because eminent for miracles and holiness, so that the perfume of their righteousness came abroad, giving delight and refreshment to their hearers. And in this sense we may take the words of S. Paul: "Now thanks be unto

Ps. xlv. 8.

S. Just. Org.

GOD, which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST, 2 Cor. ii. 14. and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto GOD a sweet savour of CHRIST." S. Bernard, who supposes the breasts to be of the Bride as well as of the Bridegroom, tells us that she is fragrant with the triple unction of contrition, devotion, and of piety; the first pungent, causing pain, the second lenitive, soothing pain, the third healing, and even expelling disease. The first is made by the soul breaking and grinding her sins in the mortar of conscience, and then distilling them within the crucible of a glowing heart with the fire of penitence and grief, that she may say, "My heart was hot within me, and while I was thus musing, the fire kindled." Serm. x. That is the ointment wherewith the sinner anointed the feet of CHRIST. The second ointment is not to be found on earth, but has to be sought afar. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," and the unguent of devotion is formed of the blessings which the Divine bounty has bestowed on man, pondered in the vessel of the heart, heated with the fire of longing, and blended with the oil of gladness. With this we anoint not the feet of CHRIST, but His head. Ps. xxxix. 4. The third ointment, of piety, or lovingkindness, is made from the sufferings of others, from the wants of the poor, the burdens of the oppressed, the troubles of the sad, the errors of the sinful, blended with the oil of mercy, heated with the fire of love. This is the ointment which we must buy, as Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome did, and anoint therewith the whole Body of JESUS, by helping every suffering member of It. S. James i. 17. Returning to the truer sense of the passage, we see how true of the holy soul which desires CHRIST is that saying of the Wise Man, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart." And this Serm. xii. twofold gladdening is set forth by S. Peter, saying, Prov. xxvii. 9. "GOD anointed JESUS of Nazareth with the HOLY Acts x. 38. GHOST and with power," and He in turn gives us these same blessings, "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," giving that consolation which earthly wisdom cannot bestow, and that healing which human physicians know not. Rupert. And Rupert, dwelling in his wonted manner on the graces of the Mother of GOD, does not fail to point out the correspondence of the Angel's words to her with those of S. Peter spoken

S. Luke i. 35. of her SON: "The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," so that she was truly the house filled with the odour of the ointment, and, rejoicing in the fragrance of that perfume granted to her, might say, "I yield a pleasant odour like the best myrrh, as galbanum, and onyx, and sweet storax, and as the fume of frankincense in the tabernacle."

Didymus. *Thy Name is as ointment poured forth.* Before the coming of CHRIST the Name of GOD was inclosed, as in a vial, amongst the Hebrew people alone, as it is written, "In Jewry is GOD known, His Name is great in Israel." But now we can more fitly say, "O LORD our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world." "That ointment," says S. Ambrose, "existed eternally, but it was with the FATHER, in the FATHER. Its perfume was known to Angels and Archangels above, as inclosed within the vase of heaven. The FATHER said, 'I will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.' The SON came down, and all things were filled with the new fragrance. . . . The SON of GOD kept that fragrance at first in His Body, as though in a vase, biding His time, as He saith Himself, 'The LORD GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season.' The time came, He opened His mouth, and the ointment was poured forth when power went out of Him. This ointment was poured forth upon the Jews, and gathered up by the Gentiles, was poured forth in Judæa and perfumed all lands." Origen, pressing the exact meaning of the LXX. version, *emptied out*, reminds us how "CHRIST JESUS emptied (*ἐκένωσε*) Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant." "He Who is full," exclaims S. Gregory Nazianzen, "is emptied, drained of His glory for a short time, that I might be partaker of His fulness."

But it is not merely the knowledge of GOD which is so poured forth, but His Name. What name? And first they answer that it is the Name of CHRIST, itself denoting "anointed," which is poured forth, not only by being widely preached, but because it is poured on all the faithful in the waters of Baptism, wherein they are given the title of Christians. And this is what the Prophet foretold, saying, "I will pour out My SPIRIT upon all flesh." *Pour* out, not *drop* out, for "GOD giveth not the SPIRIT by measure." Poured forth,

Orat. de Nativ. Ensebius. S. Just. Org. Theodoret. Beda. Joel ii. 28. S. John iii. 34.

adds S. Gregory the Great, because whoso are Christians in truth as well as in name, abound with the streams of holy charity, which soften them, and make them fit for kindling, so that they break forth in the flames of good example; and, as another expositor remarks, also with that love for the Creator kindled in the creature when CHRIST died for us. He was known but little before His Passion, says one more Greek Father, but when His life was poured forth upon the Cross, when the alabaster shrine of His most sacred Body was broken, the Apostles, filled with the perfume of that sweet ointment, traversed sea and land, filling the whole world with its fragrance. S. Augustine calls Jerusalem the vase wherein that ointment, which he takes to be GOD'S mercy, was first shut up, but when the rebellious city was broken and destroyed, then the unguent pervaded all nations. And, as when the precious oil which has been in a vase is poured forth, we can only guess at its nature by the few remaining drops and the perfume, so the Name of GOD is mysterious, and no title which divines can invent discloses His nature and excellence. We conjecture Him only by the effects of His working, by the fragrance which He diffuses, and therefore He is like *ointment poured forth*. But the Name of CHRIST, royal, priestly, holy though it be, is yet only a title of office, by which all His servants may address their King. His Bride must have some dearer, closer, more personal name by which to call Him. "If you write," says she in the words of S. Bernard, "it has no savour for me unless I read JESUS there. If you argue or discuss, it has no savour for me, unless the sound of JESUS be there. JESUS is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, gladness in the heart. And it is medicine too. Is any of you sad? Let JESUS come into his heart, and thence leap into his mouth, and lo, as the Name of Light issues forth, every cloud disperses, and the clear sky returns. Does any fall into sin, and hasten thence in despair to the snare of death? If he invoke the Name of Life, will he not breathe again to life? Who ever found hardness of heart, torpor of sloth, rancour of soul, languor of indifference, able to stand before the face of that saving Name? Who is there, whose fountain of tears has chanced to dry up, that does not burst forth more plentifully and flow more gently into weeping, when he invokes JESUS? Who

S. Greg. M.

Philo Carp.

Theodoret.
Tauler.S. August.
in Ps. xxx.S. Greg.
Nyss.

Serm. xv.

is there, quivering and trembling in peril, to whom that Name of Might invoked has not straightway given confidence and banished fear? Who, I ask, swaying and wavering in doubt, has not at once seen certainty shine forth at the invocation of that Name of Renown? Who, fearing in adversity and already fainting, has ever lacked strength if the Name of Help has sounded? These are all diseases and weaknesses of the soul, and that is their medicine. And you may prove it. 'Call upon Me in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me.' " That Name is truly oil poured forth, for it refreshes the weary, heals the sick, lightens the blind, and floats high above all other names, for "God hath given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."

Ps. l. 15.

Nic. Argent.

Phil. ii. 9.

The Hymn,
Gloriosi Salvatoris.

Name of gladness, Name of pleasure,
By the tongue ineffable,
Name of sweetness passing measure,
To the ear delectable ;
'Tis our safeguard and our treasure,
'Tis our help 'gainst sin and hell.

'Tis the Name for adoration,
'Tis the Name of victory,
'Tis the Name for meditation
In the vale of misery :
'Tis the Name for veneration
By the citizens on high.

Targum.

Therefore do the virgins love Thee. The earliest of all comments on this Song, the Chaldee paraphrase, explains these words in full accordance with the spirit of Christian writers, as denoting the righteous who follow after the goodness of God. And first it is to be noted that the Hebrew word *תַּיִם* *alamoth* implies not only virginity, but youth, and accordingly the LXX. gives *νεάνιδες*, and the Vulgate *adolescentulæ*. What then are these *young damsels* who love the Bridegroom? They answer, in the first place, that they are souls newly born in Baptism, having put off the old man and the wrinkles of sin, and renewed their youth as an eagle. And they are well called *damsels*, because the Saints, conscious of their own weakness, love all the more for that reason CHRIST their strength. Others, dwelling yet more on the admission of fragility, see here souls yet imperfectly taught, and only beginning

S. Greg. M.
S. Ambros.
Ps. ciii. 5.
Cassiodorus.

Aponius.
S. Anselm.
Laudan.

to run their course, being still weak in the faith. Whereupon Rupert aptly remarks, "Had not the ointment been poured forth, had not the WORD been made flesh, imperfect souls never would have dared to love GOD, nor even to hear Him, as they said, when it had not yet been poured forth, 'Let not GOD speak with us, lest we die.'" And S. Thomas of Villanova bids us remark further, that the Bride saith that the virgins love Him because His Name is as oil poured out, because their fire of devotion is but newly kindled, and needs this fuel. She does not say this of herself, because her fire has long since been kindled to a clear flame, and she loves Him for Himself alone, and even when He gives no oil. They want Thine, she cries to Him, I want Thee. And some extend the meaning yet further, to newly planted Churches, not as yet fully established, but zealous in their first love. Others again, looking rather to the idea of purity than of weakness, prefer to see here the holiest and most perfect Churches and souls. Martyrs who have attained their crown, says one Father. All healthy and vigorous souls, says another, neither in their infancy, too young to understand love, nor in their dotage, too old to retain it, but in the mid flower of their spiritual life and beauty, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And thus the words tell us of the early zeal of the Christian Church, when the memory of the Apostles was still fresh in the minds of the faithful, and the crown of martyrdom was often sought and won. Wherefore the Apostle saith, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to CHRIST." "Literally, too," notes the Ecstatic Doctor, "it means the consecrated virgins, those elect maidens, those virtuous damsels, many of whom, for Thy sake, despised not only the riches of the whole world, its delights, its honours, and all its outward pomp, its vanity and lightness: but most manfully endured the cruelest deaths, and happily triumphed; as the holy Katharine, the famous Ursula, and countless others like them, who served Thee most constantly in virginity of soul and body, and to the present day unnumbered others, abandoning in their youth this evil world with all its deceit, enter convents and holy retirements, wherein abiding always inclosed, they give themselves up to Thy pure embraces in the spirit." And of such we may cite the words of a great

Rupert.

Exod. xx.
19.S. Thomas
à Villanova.

S. Just. Org.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.Corn. à Lap.
2 Cor. xi. 2.

Dion. Carth.

S. Cyprian.
De Hab.
Virg. 1.

Saint and Martyr in the early Church: "The flower of the Church's bud, the glory and ornament of spiritual grace, the joyous disposition, the perfect and untarnished work of honour and praise, the image of God answering to the holiness of the LORD, the more illustrious portion of the flock of CHRIST. The glorious fruitfulness of our Mother the Church exults through them, and abundantly blossoms in them, and by how much the more the great band of virgins adds to its own number, so much does it increase its Mother's joy."

4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

Cassiodorus.
Beda.
Haymo.

Draw me. They say, some of them, that the speaker is now changed, that whereas the Synagogue expressed in the former verses her longing for CHRIST'S Advent, now we have the Gentile Church eager to come to Him. But it is far better to hold here by the view which recognizes the substantial identity of the Jewish and Christian Churches, and sees but the one Bride throughout, at first expecting, and then receiving, her Spouse. She says *draw me*, because she knows herself to be too weak to reach Him of herself, for He hath said, "No man can come to Me, except the FATHER Which hath sent Me draw him." *Draw me* to Thy Cross, whereof Thou hast said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." *Draw me* yet further, after Thee in Thine Ascension, that I may not be left desolate here on earth, but rest and be with Thee evermore. And so the hymn:

Lyranus.

S. John vi.
44.

S. John xii.
32.
S. Bruno
Ast.

Santolius
Victorinus,
The Hymn,
Nobis,
Olympo.

O CHRIST, Who hast prepared a place
For us beside Thy throne of grace,
Draw us, we pray, with cords of love,
From exile to our home above.

S. Bernard.
Serm. in
Cant. 21.

But why *draw*? Does the Bride need to be drawn after the Bridegroom, as though she followed Him unwillingly? Nay, it denotes no reluctance, any more than an invalid feels in being drawn to his bath or to his food, though a criminal may well need being drawn to judgment or to execution. She longs to be drawn, and therefore prays for it, which she would not do were she able to follow her Beloved at her will. But why can she not?

Are we to call her at once weak and the Bride? If one of the virgins complained of weakness and asked to be drawn, we should not marvel, but does it not seem strange that the Bride, who ought to seem able to draw others, as being strong and perfect, should herself need, as weak and feeble, to be drawn? But it is that she may follow the steps of His conversation, imitating His example, learning His discipline. And to do all this she needs His aid, that she may renounce herself, take up her Cross, and follow CHRIST. What marvel if she need to be drawn, who runs behind a Giant, who seeks to overtake Him Who "cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills?" For, she saith, "His WORD runneth very swiftly." She cannot run at an equal pace, nor rival His swiftness "Who rejoiceth as a giant to run His race:" her strength is insufficient, and she prays to be drawn. I am weary, she saith, I faint, leave me not, but *draw me after Thee*, lest I should wander after other lovers, lest I should run uncertainly. *Draw me*, for it is better for me that Thou shouldst use any force against me, awing me with threats, chastening with scourges, than, sparing me, leave me perilously secure in my sloth. *Draw me*, even if I be unwilling, to make me fain, draw me when slothful, to make me run. "Behold, O Heavenly Bridegroom, O sweetest JESU," exclaims a true servant of His, "my spirit strives to cling faithfully unto Thee, to rest in Thee, to give itself up to Thee alone in loving contemplation, but a thousand hindrances draw me back, delay me, stop my way. My understanding is wavering, my reason weak, my will inclined to vain and evil things, sensuality drags me down, the needs of daily life keep me busy with earthly and tangible cares, the temptations of the senses beset me, the world and the hosts of evil spirits attack us on every side, and I walk in the midst of snares, in the thick of grievous perils, and, besides, the weight of my sinful flesh depresses me. What then am I to do save fly to Thy most gracious help, and with the deepest longing of my heart pray, *Draw me after Thee*, evermore hold, bedew, enlighten, aid, and comfort my heart. For Thou hast said in Hosea the Prophet, 'I drew thee with cords of a man, with bands of love;' and in Jeremiah, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.'" And in this drawing, which

Cant. ii. 8.

Ps. cxlvii.
15.

Ps. xix. 6.

Dion. Carth.

Hos. xi. 4.

Jer. xxxi. 3.

consists in leading the human will into union with the Divine will, as the magnet draws the iron to itself, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity co-operate, the FATHER drawing by His power, the SON by His wisdom, the HOLY GHOST by His goodness, a threefold cord which is not quickly broken. "And even to be drawn by your will is but little," says the Doctor of Grace, "you are drawn by pleasure also. What is to be drawn by pleasure? 'Delight thou in the LORD, and He will give thee thy heart's desire.' There is a pleasure of the heart to which that heavenly Bread is sweet. And if the poet could say,

Henr.
Harphius.

Ecc. iv. 12.
S. Aug. in
S. Johan.
xxxvi. 4.
Ps. xxxvii. 4.

Virg. Eclog.
i. 65.

—Trahit sua quemque voluptas,

not necessity, but pleasure; not compulsion, but delight; how much more forcibly may we say that a man is drawn to CHRIST, when he delights in truth, delights in blessedness, delights in righteousness, delights in everlasting life, all which is CHRIST?" The LXX. reading, *They have drawn Thee*, referring to the virgins who love CHRIST, comes in fact to the same thing, for they do not draw till they have first been drawn. And an ancient writer compares this drawing of God towards us to men in a ship pulling at a rope which is attached to a rock. They seem to draw the rock to them, but they are in fact drawing themselves to it.

Theodoret.
Pseudo-
Dionys. de
Div. Nom. 3.

Serm. xxi.

Beda.

Corn. & Lap.

We will run after Thee. And first it is to be noted how the address changes. Draw *me*, and *we* will run. Why does the Bride thus speak? It is, answers S. Bernard, because *drawing* tells of weakness, of trial, of suffering, all which the Bride prefers to bear alone, as better able to endure them than the tender virgins. She is willing that they should partake of the consolations which are implied in *running*, that they should share her joy, but not her sorrow. But this is forced and poor compared with the simpler explanation of an older writer, who says that the Church uses the singular form at first, as denoting her unity, and then the plural, because she is made up of many faithful, nay, of many ranks and degrees of the faithful. *Draw me*, then, she says, in my corporate character, draw my prelates and pastors, that they may in their turn draw on the virgins, the tender flock committed to their charge. Secondly, whereas the Bride's weakness made it needful for her to be drawn, her confidence in the strength to be given her is such that she does not say,

"We will follow," nor "We will walk," but "We will run," and therein she is like the Apostle, who said to his children, "So run, that ye may obtain." Origen.
S. Greg. M.
1 Cor. ix. 24.

The LXX. and Vulgate here add some words not in the Hebrew, and read the whole sentence thus: *Draw me after Thee, we will run for the odour of Thine ointments.* When we think on those gifts of grace, faith, hope, and charity, which all come from CHRIST, and strive to imitate the examples of His Saints and Martyrs, who displayed them in their lives, we are running, says an ancient Father, *after the odour of His ointments.* Philo Carp.

When those same gifts are vouchsafed to ourselves, notes another, we do not thereby cease to run, rather we are kindled with longing for the Beatific Vision, and haste eagerly towards the source of the fragrance which delights us. Angelomus
Luxov.

And in this sense S. Augustine takes it: "Let us love and copy Him. Let us run after His ointments; for He came and gave forth perfume, and His fragrance filled the whole world. Whence was that fragrance? From heaven. Follow Him then to heaven, if thou givest no false answer to those words, 'Lift up your hearts,' lift up your thoughts, lift up your love, lift up your hope." In Ps. xc.

"If His Name alone can do all this," exclaims Origen, "if its perfume so cause and strengthen the virgins to run, what will be the virtue and height they shall attain when they reach His very self, incomprehensible, ineffable? I think if they do so attain, they will walk no more, nor run, but cling closely to Him, bound with the cords of love, that no more removal shall be possible, but they may be one with Him." Origen.

And they inquire further what are these various ointments of His which draw eager souls, like gallant hounds, upon His track. S. Bernard replies by quoting the Apostle, "CHRIST JESUS, Who of GOD is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and shows how different Saints ran for each of these, as Nicodemus, seeking to learn the deep things of GOD, desired wisdom; Mary Magdalene and S. Peter in their penitence, seeking righteousness; S. Paul and those who like him had left all, that they might be like unto CHRIST, sought for sanctification; and the Martyrs, eager to share in the Passion of CHRIST, yearned for that redemption which was paid upon the Cross. Akin to this is another interpretation, which names the ointments as three. First, CHRIST's preaching, giving Hugo Card.

Serm. 22 in Cant.
1 Cor. i. 30.

Nic. Argent.

light and healing error, after which Saints run wisely. Secondly, CHRIST's conversation, kindling affection, and healing our moral nature, for which one needs to run sweetly. Thirdly, CHRIST's miraculous working, which strengthens, and keeps in the course of good works, and this makes us to run mightily. And as GOD led the Hebrews in the wilderness after the Ark of the Covenant, fragrant with incense, so CHRIST, the True Ark of the LORD, goes before us in the desert of this world, perfumed with holiness and power, and we can do no less than follow Him. Or you may take the words in a more literal sense, referring them to the various anointings used in the Church, as in Baptism, whereby we are made CHRIST's soldiers, and begin to run our race; in Confirmation, when we receive additional strength, that we faint not in our course; in Ordination, when priests and prelates are given especial charge to follow close upon CHRIST, and to draw the people after them in the same way by setting them a holy and fragrant example. Thus, quaintly observes S. Basil, pigeon-fanciers catch doves, by sending out a dove smeared with perfume, which attracts others to it by the fragrance, and allures them into the dove-cot.

The King hath brought me into His chambers. Here is the first explanation of who that *He* is Whose kisses the Bride desires. The Bride does not yet call Him her Bridegroom, nor her Beloved, but her *King*, that she may glory in His power and riches. He, like David, is Shepherd and King, and appears in both characters in the Song. *Into His chambers.* Doubtless royal ones, as befits a king, and heaped with riches. The words used by the LXX. and Vulgate (*ταμείον, cellaria,*) denote a store-room, or place where treasures or provisions are kept. And much of the traditional interpretation is in accordance with this view. The Targum, which sees throughout the Song a history of GOD's dealings with Israel, explains this passage of the people being brought to the foot of Sinai, there to be given the Law out of the Treasury of the Most High. And most of the Christian Fathers see here the revelation of GOD's mysteries to the Church, or to the faithful soul, differing, however, as to the exact meaning of the *chambers*. Some take them of Holy Writ, the storehouse of GOD's oracles. S. Bernard and Cardinal Hugo, accepting this view, amplify it by dwelling on the four senses of Scripture, as separate chambers

Parez.

Corn. à Lap.

Ep. 175, ad
Julittam.Phillipp.
Harveng.

Origen.

Targum.

S. Hieron.
Theodoret.
S. Greg. M.
S. Just. Org.
Hugo Card.

with various stores. The first chamber is the Historical sense, containing the coarser food intended for the slaves and cattle. Secondly, comes the Tropological, with its three compartments, severally containing oil and wine for refreshment, balms and spices for delight, and ointments for healing. The third chamber is Allegory, wherein are the arms of the warriors, the golden shields, and the spears of Solomon, to wit, the mysteries of CHRIST and the Church Militant. Fourth is Anagoge, wherein is nought but pure gold and precious stones, that is, whatever belongeth to everlasting life. Others will have it that the foretaste of the joys of heaven, granted to certain Saints by faith or by direct revelation, is intended. S. Ambrose takes it of the mystery of the Atonement, revealed to the Bride after the Passion and Resurrection of CHRIST, by the preaching of the Apostles; and in another place, of the visions and joys granted in contemplation or trance, as to S. Paul, when he was caught up to the third heaven; and in yet a third passage, of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Philo stands alone in understanding the chamber to be that human Body of CHRIST wherein the Eternal WORD tabernacled. And note, that whereas it is said, "*We will run after thee,*" here we read, "*The King hath brought me in,*" implying that He withdrew her for a time from the virgins which be her fellows, and that she now returns to tell them what great things He had done for her, wherein they rejoice. All run, but only one is perfect, who so runs as to obtain, and alone receives the palm, and becomes a Queen. Here they tell us not only, as before, of the unity of the Church, and of the rarity of perfect souls, but point out how there is one in especial of whom the words are most true, even her to whom the King gave Himself as a Son, and who, entering into the house of Elizabeth, was greeted by her cousin and the unborn babe, saying, in effect, *We will rejoice and be glad in thee.* Whether these latter words be addressed by the Bride to CHRIST, or by the virgins to Him or her, they are alike thanksgivings and not boastings. If they be addressed to the Bridegroom, they are the joint voices of the Spouse and her companions, she for what she has already obtained, they because of that promise, "*The virgins which be her fellows . . . with joy and gladness shall they be brought, and enter into the King's palace.*" If they be congratulations to the

Cassiodorus.
Aponius.
Beda.
S. Ans. Laud.
S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.
Lib. de
Isaac.
2 Cor. xii.

Philo Carp.

Origen.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Bernard.

Origen.

Rupert.

Philipp.
Harveng.

Cassiodorus.
S. Greg. M.
V. Beda.
Origen.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Bernard.
Ps. xiv. 15,
16.

- S. Ans. Laud. Bride, they are, observes S. Anselm of Laon, a promise on their part to make themselves ready in body and spirit for her fellowship, that they may enter in also.
- Origen. *We will remember thy love more than wine.* Here again they differ as to whether these words are spoken to the Bridegroom or to the Bride. Taking the former view, we note first that it is said, "*We will remember.*" It is a promise for the future, on the part of those who have not yet attained so high a spiritual level as to care little for earthly wine. Here too, as in the second
- Cassiodor. S. Greg. M. verse, the A. V. reading *love*, appears in the LXX. and Vulgate as *breasts*. As before, too, it is explained of the lowly and gentle teaching of CHRIST, contrasted with the austerity of the Law, and S. Gregory the Great dwells here on the tender love which CHRIST showed the Church when He hung dying on the Cross. If the words be addressed to the Bride, then it is the voice of her children, saying, Because thou hast loved the breasts of CHRIST above the wine of pleasure and of worldly wisdom, we too will love thy teaching, because the *Righteous loveth thee*. Two of the Fathers allegorize the passage of S. John the Divine, who leant on the breast of JESUS at the Last Supper. *The upright love thee*. Here they all dwell on the intimate and necessary connection between true holiness of life and the love of CHRIST, showing that the latter never can be in any great measure in the soul which does not aim at the former. The *upright*, not those who always stand, for "the just man falleth seven times," but those whose intention is right, even when their performance is imperfect. *Upright*, because they stand looking up to their Creator, not bowed down to the creature. S. Bernard dwells at some length on the form of the human body as enforcing this thought, but does not in effect say more than a heathen poet had said before him :

Ovid.
Metaph.
i. 84.

Pronaque quum spectent animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit: cœlumque videre
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

While other creatures downward look on earth,
He gave to man a towering face, and bade
Him lift his upward gaze to sky and stars.

Alanus.

Right, also, because they keep to the middle of the King's highway, never swerving aside, but journeying

straight on towards heaven, and seeking God for His own dear sake.

5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

The Targum takes this of the fall and rising again of Israel, when the golden calf was made, whereby the chosen people became as *black* as the Æthiopians in idolatry, but afterwards, repenting, became *comely* once more, and returned to the service of God, making *curtains* for His tabernacle. And similarly many Christian writers see in it the Church, or the penitent soul, speaking of her past sins and present conversion to God. S. Gregory the Great recognizes here the conflict of the higher and lower wills in the soul. She is *black*, not only by reason of past sins, but of present ones, and yet *comely*, because she is striving after that righteousness of which she is conscious within. It is the soul of a catechumen, says Origen, already comely through repentance, but not yet white, because not admitted to the cleansing of Baptism. Or again, black by nature, comely by grace. Yet once more, the Church is black with suffering and persecution, and nevertheless comely in holiness and in reward, nay, adds S. Bernard, even more comely because of that blackness. The address to the *daughters of Jerusalem* has led more than one Father to see here the Gentile Church, confessing her lowly and heathen origin, and yet asserting the truth of her calling in CHRIST, and therefore claiming acknowledgment from the Synagogue, or even from the Jewish Christians, just as the Æthiopian wife of Moses made good her claim against Aaron and Miriam. Not very dissimilar is the view of those Greek Fathers who, taking the words of the whole Church, see in the blackness the Gentile element, and in the comeliness the Hebrew. Akin to this in spirit is the interpretation that the mixed character of the Church, as made up of saints and sinners, is implied. And finally, Rupert reminds us how Our Lady's purity was doubted, when she was found to be with child, so that she was blackened by injurious thoughts, while comely indeed, as full of grace, the tabernacle of our true Solomon. Black, too, as the Mother of Sorrows, when she stood by the Cross, despised

Targum.

Origen.
S. Hieron.
ad Eustoch.
22.
S. Bernard.

S. Greg. M.

Origen.

S. August.
de Verb.
Dom. 201.
Cassiodor.
S. Ans. Laud.
Hugo Vict.
Monast.
Instit. 84.
S. Athanas.
Theodoret.

Numb. xii.

S. Nilus.
Philo Carp.
Theodoret.S. August.
Doct. Christ.
iii. 32.
S. Eucher.
Beda.

Rupert.

Guilelm.
Parv.

- Honorius. with her Son, comely in the joy of His Resurrection.
 Origen. *Daughters of Jerusalem.* Which Jerusalem, that which now is, and is in bondage with her children, or that which is above, and free, the mother of us all? Origen takes the former view, and makes it a call to the Jewish nation. Cardinal Hugo and others refer it to the Angels and spirits made perfect, the appeal of the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant.
- Hugo Card. *As the tents of Kedar.* The tents of the Ishmaelites, formed of coarse goats' hair, and black, or dark, as *Kedar* means, are taken as the types of sin, of suffering, or of Gentilism, and contrasted with the costly hangings, or *curtains of Solomon*, made for the adornment of the temple, or, following the Arabic Version, the monarch's own *pavilions* of state. And so the Church is despised outwardly by her persecutors, yet is glorious and adorned within. Even Kedar, as descending from Abraham, was not altogether without a share in the Divine blessing, and Solomon inherited the sure mercies of David, therefore, O daughters of Jerusalem, despise not me, says the Gentile Church, who am that *Æthiopian woman* whom Moses took as his wife. Others, remembering that it is written, "Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar," take these *tents* to be the sojourn of the soul in the pilgrimage and wars of the body, while the *curtains* speak to us of that temple of which it is written that he which entereth in shall go no more out. The Church, says another, most deeply, is like the *tents of Kedar*, for she shelters under her wings penitents stained with their sins. She is like the *curtains of Solomon*, as surrounding wise, and peaceful, and holy Saints. *Curtains of Solomon.* The Body of CHRIST, touchingly notes the Gloss, is truly called a curtain, because it was stretched out upon the Cross to shelter us. For *curtains* the LXX. and Vulgate have *skins*. And that, says Cassiodorus, because as tabernacles are made from the skins of dead animals, so the Church, which is GOD'S tabernacle, is framed of those who have mortified themselves with the affections and lusts. Yet again, the verse tells us of the hardships and repulsiveness of the higher Christian life, as it appears to the world, rough, sombre, and uncomely, whereas those who are within see round them, not the black goats' hair of the tent of warfare, but the purple, gemmed,
- Origen. Philo Carp.
- Beda.
- Origen.
- Hugo Card.
- Ps. cxx. 4.
- S. Greg. M.
S. Bernard.
Rev. iii. 12.
- Aponius.
- Gloss.
- Cassiodor.
- Gal. v. 24.

and golden tapestry of the Prince of Peace, into Whose chambers of the celestial life they have entered. Honorius.

6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

They take the first clauses in various senses, according as they explain the *sun* to be the heat of temptation and of suffering, or the warmth of CHRIST. Wonder not that I am black, though not created so, because the fire of evil temptation hath scorched me, and dried up that once green germ in me which lacked root. Marvel not at the persecutions which I have to endure, and "faint not at my tribulations, which is your glory," for those very trials have given me patience and constancy. And just as bodies which habitually rest in the shade wither up in the broad glare of day, whereas those which move about and labour in the light scarcely feel the effects of heat, so those toilsome ones who prepare themselves for struggles and temptations, overcome the world, and win that blessing, "The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night." If the sun be CHRIST, then the words may denote that the sufferings which the Church endures at the hand of her enemies are for His sake, Who is the Sun of Righteousness; or again, that burning zeal for His house hath eaten her up, or longing for Himself hath consumed her. Or you may take it with S. Gregory, that Saints, whatever progress they may seem to make in holiness, and however they may be looked on by men as burning and shining lights, yet feel themselves to be utter blackness when compared with the perfect righteousness of CHRIST, for the nearer we draw towards grace, the more we learn our sin. And there are not wanting those who apply the words to CHRIST Himself, despised and rejected in His Passion, so that He was "as a root out of a dry ground; He hath no form nor comeliness."

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Aponius.

Beda.

Eph. iii. 13.

S. Hieron.
in Amos, iii.

Ps. cxxi. 6.

S. Ans. Laud.

S. Bernard.

S. Greg. M.

Angelomus
Luxov.

Irimbert.

Isa. liii. 2.

Origen.
Beda.
S. Bernard.
Gloss.

My mother's children were angry with me. They take it first of the trials of the Primitive Church, oppressed by Jewish persecutors, once headed by S. Paul, and children of the Church's mother, the Synagogue,

- but not her brethren. And next, of the Judaizing party within the Church herself, who endeavoured to impose the ceremonial Law on the Gentile converts. And they dwell on the forcible wording of the LXX. and Vulgate, which translate thus: *They fought against me*. It was true also of those heretics and evil Christians who arose in later days in the bosom of the Church, the Arians and schismatics, and evil rulers, especially unworthy Bishops, who rend instead of guarding the flock. And, taking the words of the soul, instead of the Church, we may see here either the strife carried on against it by its own passions and desires, akin as these are to its higher and better aspirations; or, more generally, the resistance of lax and worldly Christians to those who strive to serve God more perfectly, and that especially in the Religious life; for those who are without resist the vocation of such as feel themselves called thereto, and those within but too often war against such as would recall them to the full strictness of their rule, as many a reformer, like S. Gregory VII. or S. Teresa, has proved. And therefore it is written in another place, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, even an alien unto my mother's children." We may, however, take the words in a good sense also, of those wise teachers, Apostles and others, who seek to war against the sins of Christians, and who give them a charge to keep.
- They made me the keeper of the vineyards.* In their very attempt to crush the infant Church, the Jews were the involuntary cause of its rapid spread beyond the limits of Palestine into every part of the Gentile world; but, adds the Church, *mine own vineyard have I not kept*, because I have been forced to abandon the Jews to their own devices. And so the Apostles, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
- There are some who see here the story of Adam's fall. Made by God the keeper of the garden of Eden, he was fought against by the serpent and by Eve, and kept not his vineyard. Others explain it of the great peril of high office in the Church, lest, when men are set, not merely to labour in this vineyard, but to oversee other labourers, and to prevent the incursions of robbers, they neglect the care of their own souls, and,
- S. Ambros. 2, in Ps. cxix.
S. Just. Org.
Dion. Carth.
Aponius.
Corn. à Lap.
Nic. Argent.
Ps. lxxix. 8.
Origen. Philo Carp. S. Bernard.
Cassiodor.
Lyranus.
Cassiodor.
Acts xiii. 46.
S. Greg. Nyssen.
S. Bernard. Ghislerius.

after preaching to others, become castaways. There is another sense, however, in which the words may be taken, of that Good Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep, and was not careful of Himself, so long as His peril might be the salvation of others, and Who, because He thus gave up His own vineyard, was made keeper of all others. And so speaks the aged Apostle, in the very strongest sense: "I could wish that myself were accursed from CHRIST for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." S. Ambrose, referring the vineyard to the state of consecrated virginity, warns the brides of CHRIST lest they should suffer any Ahab or Jezebel to turn their vineyard from a place wherein sweet fruits grow, into a mere garden of pot-herbs, into a secular form of life, good in its degree, but not comparable to the better way. And if so, much more does it befit Religious to beware lest when their LORD comes, He should say, "I went by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all overgrown with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof."

Irimbert.

Rom. ix. 3.

Exhort. ad
Virg.Prov. xxiv.
30.

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

Thou whom my soul loveth. "So I call Thee, for Thy Name surpasseth all thought and understanding, nor could all creation reach so high as to express or comprehend it. Thy Name, then, that by which Thy goodness is known, is the affection of my soul to Thee, for how should I not love Thee, Who so lovedst me, even when I was so black, as to lay down Thy life for Thy sheep, which Thou feedest. For greater love than this cannot enter into thought, that Thou boughtest my salvation with Thine own life." *Where Thou feedest.* Not Thyself, but Thy sheep. And where is it save in that Sacrament of the Altar, in which Thou givest the nourishment of Thy Passion and the fountain streaming from Thy side to all devout souls? *To rest at noon.* They take it in many ways. And first, let us see here, with the old Cypriote Bishop, that mysterious time when JESUS, wearied with His long journey of thirty-three years, and its last blood-printed

S. Greg.
Nyssen.
Hom. ii.

Idem.

Philo Carp.

footsteps along the Way of Sorrows, sat thus on the Well of our salvation, and it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness until the ninth hour.

The Hymn,
Patris
Sapientia.

He upon that Cross at Sext for our sake was mounted;
By the passers-by reviled, with transgressors counted:
Vinegar and gall they give to His thirst to slake it,
Which, when He had tasted of, He refused to take it.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

Again, *noon*, as the time of greatest warmth, fitly denotes especial seasons of trial and persecution in the Church, urging her to call on her LORD to be a shadow from the heat, lest she faint therein. S. Gregory applies it rather to the fiery assaults of sin, when the Bride seeks the coolness of sanctifying grace. Once more, the Bride would fain see the full glory of her Beloved, would see Him in the clear light of faith and love, undimmed by any darkness. "I ask not," she says, "as to other times, where Thou feedest at evening, or morning, or at sunset. I ask of that time when, in the flower of the day, Thou art in the fullest light clothed in the splendour of Thy Majesty." Others will have it that the Church, in her clear brightness as the light of the world, is intended by the noon-day. For as she preaches the doctrine of CHRIST everywhere throughout the world, and is therefore fitly styled Catholic, contrasting with the dark heretical sects which lurk in the corners of single nations, she is like the noon spread over the heavens. And, because it is noon when the sun is in mid-sky, so as CHRIST, the Sun of Righteousness, is the Head of the Church, directly over her, giving her light and warmth, the epithet suits her well. And if it be objected that she is not yet all clear and bright, that dark spots of sin mar the beauty of her face, yet the words hold good of her Saints. "They," says the Father last cited, "who have received Thee as the Author of salvation, are in the noon-day. Thou shinest on them, Thy grace, as the noon, warms them. Thou hast become the noon of them who feed on Thy riches, and trust in Thee." And another tells us that these especial sheep of CHRIST, whom He keeps with Himself in the noon-day warmth of His love, whom He does not merely guide with His staff, but cherishes in His bosom, are those virginal souls which have given themselves to Him alone, forsaking earthly ties for Him. Yet again, you may take the passage, with two great mystical writers, to denote the

S. Greg. M.

Origen.
Hom. 1.

Theodoret.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

Idem.

Aponius.

two chief divisions of spiritual life, the active being typified by the feeding of the Bridegroom, and the contemplative by His rest. At *noon*, too, because there are three hours of contemplation. The first is thought, like the early morning, having but little radiance or heat. Of this is written, "Early in the morning I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." The second period is meditation, like the third hour, when the sun begins to get high, and to glow. Whence the Psalm, "While I was thus musing the fire kindled." The third time is foretaste, like the noon-day, "when it parcheth the country." This, the true fervour of contemplation, is the place where the Beloved resteth at noon-day. "O place of true repose, not unfitting the name of bed, where God is seen, not in His wrath, nor as though wrapped in His providential love, but as a Will altogether merciful, loving, and perfect. This vision affrights not, but soothes; calms all anxious restlessness; arouses not, wearies not, but tranquillizes. The tranquillity of God makes all things tranquil, and to look upon His rest, is rest itself." Another most striking interpretation is that of Irimbert, who sees in the *rest*, the descent of CHRIST into the grave, when He made the place of darkness bright with the glorious rays of His Divinity, and fed the hungering flock of Patriarchs which had waited so long in Hades for the coming of its Shepherd, till—

Lumen clarum tenebrarum
Sedibus resplenduit.

Splendour lighted the benighted
Seats of darkness with its ray.

S. Pet. Ven.
The Hymn,
*Mortis
portis.*

And Cardinal Hugo, with scarcely less beauty, applies the words to that noonday of the Church, when the Pentecostal fires descended on the Apostles, enlightening them with all the radiance of the HOLY GHOST, after the night of the Passion, the dawn of the Resurrection, and the first warmth of the Ascension had all passed over the young Bride of CHRIST. Lastly, we may take the question to be that of the Church Militant, feeling that her portion here, though sweet, is insufficient for her cravings, and desiring the full fruition of CHRIST in that Land

Where no cloud nor passing vapour
Dims the brightness of the air,

The Hymn,
*Jerusalem
luminosa.*

Hugo Vic-
torin.
Henr.
Harphius.

Ps. v. 3.

Ps. xxxix. 4.

Eccus.
xliii. 3.

Henr.
Harph.

Irimbert.

Hugo Card.

Endless noonday, glorious noonday,
 From the Sun of suns is there,
 There no night brings rest from labour,
 All unknown are toil and care.

Serm. 33.

And on this let us hear S. Bernard: "O true noonday, fulness of glow and light, abiding of the sun, dispeller of shades, drier up of marshes, ejector of evil odours! O perennial solstice, when the day shall no more go down! O noontide glory! O vernal mildness! O summer beauty! O autumnal plenty, and lest aught should be lacking to my tale, O rest and festival of winter! Or, if thou wouldst rather have it so, winter alone is over and gone. Show me, says the Bride, the place of such love and peace, and fulness, that as Jacob, yet abiding in the flesh, saw God face to face, and his life was spared, so I too may look on Thee in Thy light and glory, by contemplation in trance of soul, as Thou feedest more abundantly, and retest more securely. For here too Thou feedest, but not in security, nor canst Thou rest, but Thou must needs stand and watch, because of the terrors of the night. Alas! here is no clear light, nor full refreshment, nor safe dwelling, and therefore tell me where Thou feedest, where Thou retest at noon. Thou callest me blessed when I hunger and thirst after righteousness. What is that to their happiness who are filled with the good things of Thy house, who feast and rejoice before God, and are merry and joyful? When wilt Thou fill me with joy with Thy countenance? Thy Face, LORD, will I seek. Thy Face is the noon. Tell me where Thou feedest, where Thou retest at noon. I know well where Thou feedest, but retest not, tell me where Thou dost both rest and feed." There will be, even in the noonday radiance of Heaven, cool waters and green pastures for the flock of the Good Shepherd, and so the type of heathen poetry shall be fulfilled:

Gen. xxxii.
30.

Ps. xxiii. 2.

Virgil.
Culex, 103.

Et jam compellente vagæ pastore capellæ
 Ima susurrantis repetebant ad vada lymphæ,
 Quæ subter viridem residebant cærula muscum.
 Jam medias operum partes evectus erat sol,
 Quum densas pastor pecudes cogebat in umbras.

The roaming she-goats, at their herdsman's will,
 Resought the low fords of the whispering stream,
 Which rested blue beneath the verdant moss.
 And now the sun had reached his midmost toils,
 When to the thick shade drove the swain his flock.

For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions? This is the reason, say they all, assigned by the Bride for her question. It is not merely for herself, that she may find her Beloved, that she asks Him to tell her His abiding-place, but for His sake too, lest He should lose her. And they agree in the main, also, to interpret the second clause of bodies other than the One Church, but bearing a specious resemblance to it. *Turneth aside*. The Vulgate reads, *Lest I begin to wander*. The LXX., agreeing with the margin of A. V., and with most modern critics, has *As one that is wrapped up, or veiled*.¹ Of this there are various expositions. First and most probably, we may take it of the customary veiling of harlots. Why should I, the Virgin Bride, by wandering near other shepherds than Thee, appear as though a shameless courtesan? Again, it may be, Why should I, who look on Thee face to face, and have felt Thy kiss, be compelled to veil myself in modest bashfulness, lest any eyes save Thine should see me? If Thou tell me where Thou restest, I can come at once to Thee, unveiled, but if Thou tell me not, I must needs cover my face while I am seeking Thee among strangers. Or, why should I, missing Thee, be forced to put on the garments of mourning, and appear as a widow instead of a bride? Origen, who gives various explanations of the passage, remarks that several of the philosophical schools and sects assumed the title of *Veiled*, implying thereby their possession of hidden truth, and that the Church here beseeches that she may know and teach the truth openly, so as not to appear like one of them; nor, adds S. Augustine in the same sense, like the obscure and localized communities of heretics. And last, we may take *veiled* as practically coming to the same thing as the *wandering* of the Vulgate, understanding it to mean putting on the walking-dress of the East over the attire worn within doors. *Thy companions*. Origen says that the *companions* of CHRIST are the Angels placed in charge of the various Gentile nations of the earth, those

Gen. xxxviii.
14.

Vatablus.

Origen.
S. Hieron.
ad Eustoch.

Corn. à Lap.

Origen.

S. August.
Ep. ad Vin.
cent. 48.S. Greg.
Nyss.
Cassiod.
S. Bernard.

Origen.

¹ The root $\tau\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$, *teit*, whence $\tau\epsilon\chi\epsilon\iota$, the word in the original, is derived, includes the idea of circular motion, as a garment is wrapped about the person,

and thence may be transferred to the notion of wandering round and round a place. Hence Symmachus translates, in this sense, $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \beta\epsilon\mu\beta\omicron\mu\epsilon\tau\eta$.

S. John x. 16. "other sheep" which are not yet of CHRIST's fold. But the great majority of commentators see in the *flocks of the companions* the sects of heretical Christians. They are called CHRIST's *companions*, though they are not His friends, because they assume the Christian name, and profess to teach the same truths as the Church, and promise the like blessings. And as *companions* is the special Eastern title for those who feast at the same table, so these profess to feed their disciples with the same banquet of Sacraments and Holy Writ, though they poison it by perverting its sense, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." S. Gregory extends the application of the words to all false brethren, all evil Christians, who are in a sense CHRIST's companions, as having a place in His Church and a share in His Sacraments, but are not truly His elect. Rupert stands alone in seeing here a reference to the Scribes and Pharisees, and therefore a petition of the Church to be guarded from Judaizing. Another, not very dissimilarly, applies the passage to the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament, *companions* indeed of CHRIST, as loving and following Him as far as they knew, but still wandering uncertainly, and with no clear noontide revelation. S. Bernard takes the words, very singularly, of the evil spirits, transforming themselves into angels of light, and pretending to be CHRIST's servants and friends in order to deceive the soul which seeks Him.

8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

If thou know not. The simple meaning of these words has been obscured by the LXX. and Vulgate, which endeavour to reproduce the pleonastic Hebrew idiom, and read *If thou knowest not thyself*, and nearly all the ancient commentators have interpreted this of self-ignorance. And thus S. Justus of Urgel, taking the words in close connection with those that follow, observes, that CHRIST thus addresses the Church, If thou know not that thou art *fairest* amongst all Christian bodies, since all except thee have lost their purity, then go forth to seek Me; but if thou truly knowest what thou art, and with what grace I have dowered

Theodoret.
S. Just. Org.
Cassiod.

S. August.
de Verb.
Dom. 50.
Aponius.

2 Tim. iii. 5.

S. Greg. M.

Rupert.

Irimbert.

S. Just. Org.

S. Athanas.
Philo Carp.

thee, then look within thyself, and thou wilt find Me there. S. Bernard, also taking the words as those of the Bridegroom, interprets them in a far sterner sense, as a rebuke to the Bride who, ignorant that she is yet but in the body, and merely *fairest among women*, (that is, amongst secular and carnal souls, having no true vigour or constancy,) yet dares to ask GOD to show her the place of His glory. She is therefore recalled to herself, and convinced of her ignorance, and chastised for her boldness, and to teach her humility, she is commanded to go forth out of the sanctuary of her heart, away from holy contemplation, and to busy herself again in the lower service of external cares. And not dissimilarly S. Jerome, addressing the Abbess S. Eustochium, explains the passage, "Though thou be fair, and thy beauty be loved by Me thy Bridegroom more than that of all other women, yet, unless thou know thyself, and keep thy heart with all watchfulness, unless thou fly from the glances of youth, thou shalt go forth from My chamber to feed the goats, which are to stand on My left." Yes, adds S. Augustine, carrying on the same argument, to feed them not as Peter feeds My sheep, not to be in My fold, Who am the One Shepherd, but by the tents of other shepherds, not of unity but of division. A second view puts the words into the mouths of the Bride's virgin friends, as though of encouragement to her, lest she should be too much cast down with thoughts of her marred beauty, and not knowing herself to be fairest, doubt of retaining her Spouse's love. *By the footsteps of the flock*. That is, observes one, follow up all the traces of those Saints of the Old Covenant who belonged in faith to the New, lead on, and *feed thy kids*, thy weak and sinful members, by the *tents of the shepherds*, the Churches of the Apostles, that there they may be healed. And this is, in fact, the Christian view of the old Jewish gloss, which says here, "The Holy and Blessed One spake to Moses the Prophet: Thou askest that their exile may be ended. Let the Synagogue, which is compared to a most beautiful virgin, and whom My soul loveth, walk in the paths of the just, and direct its prayer in the mouths of its rulers, and lead its generations and lead its sons, (who are compared to kids of the goats,) to walk in the house of the congregation, and in the house of doctrine, and because of that good deed they shall be supported

S. Bernard.
Serm. 38.

S. Hieron.
Epist. 22.

Serm. 50, de
Verb. Dom.
Cf. Origen.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Theodoret.

Targum.

in their captivity, till I send them Messiah the King, Who shall lead them into rest to their own tabernacle, which is that House of Sanctuary which David and Solomon, Shepherds of Israel, shall build for it." Aponius, too, takes the words as spoken by CHRIST to the Synagogue, urging her to come to the knowledge of the truth. The common view sees in the *flocks*, *kids*, and *shepherds*, the heretical, sinful, and schismatic companionship into which a Church or a soul which does not strive after self-knowledge is certain to fall. There is not wanting, however, a nobler and more cheering interpretation, which is, in fact, the truest meaning of the passage. When the LORD asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" and was answered, "LORD, Thou knowest that I love Thee;" His further speech was, "Feed My sheep." So, the way for the Church or the soul to find CHRIST is to go forth from herself, to follow the traces of the straying flocks, to feed more especially the *kids*, weak and sinful servants of His, and so to reach the tents of the shepherds, the wise and holy teachers to whom He intrusts His sheep. And again, the *kids* may well denote the petulant and unrestrained desires of the heart, which need to be checked, ruled, and fed, not in the tabernacles of the body, but in those of the spirit, whereof is written, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel."

9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

The obvious reference here is to the Egyptian breed of horses, chiefly esteemed in Solomon's time, as we read in Scripture; and the Church, or the faithful soul, is compared to a gallant steed, first, because of the swiftness of her running after CHRIST; next, because of her ready obedience and submission to His yoke; thirdly, because of her bearing the Gospel chariot into all lands; and lastly, because of her fruitfulness, bringing forth young abundantly by preaching. And much in this same sense the Greek Fathers understand it, explaining, as they do, that CHRIST compares the Gentile Church, in its zeal and holiness, to His great steeds the Apostles, who drew Him in *Pharaoh's chariots*, that is, amongst all the nations of the earth. And so a Saint has said, "Those swift-limbed steeds,

Aponius.
Parez.
Beda.
S. Brun. Ast.
Cassiod.

S. John xxi.
16.

Dion. Carth.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac et
Anim. 4.

Numb. xxiv.
5.

1 Kings x.
28.
2 Chron. ix.
28.

Theodoret.
S. Ambros.
Serm. 2, in
Ps. cxix.
Id. de
Isaac. 4.

Tres Patr.
Philo Carp.

the Apostles, from Sion as from their starting-point, went forth into the whole world." S. Chrysos. in Ps. xlix. 1.

O Guider of Thy chariot fleet, mount, LORD, these steeds of fire, And make a pathway for their feet through our hearts' deepest mire; The Sequence, *Regnum tuum.*

That we, borne safely in this car from out the troubled sea, May reach our country's haven far, and ever dwell with Thee. Hab. iii. 15.

Origen, dwelling on the word *Pharaoh* as the Scriptural type of evil, comments thus: "As in Egypt, when Pharaoh, pursuing after the children of Israel, went forth with horses and chariots, *My* (LXX. and Vulg.) chivalry far surpassed and excelled Pharaoh's chariots, in that it overcame them and drowned them in the sea, so thou, My Love and Bride, excellest all women, and art made like to My chivalry, which, compared with the chariots of Pharaoh, proved stronger and more glorious." He further proceeds to remind us what that chivalry of GOD is, by citing the vision at Dothan, when Elisha's servant saw the "mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about." And thus the sense would be, I have matched thee against the horses and chariots of Pharaoh. I have set thee, My Church, to war against the chief priests and scribes who denied Me. I have set thee to fight against all the darkness and idolatry of the spiritual Egypt. Others would turn it, I have likened thee, who wast once in Pharaoh's chariots, in bondage and misery, to My own chivalry, for I have brought thee through the Red Sea of Baptism, and made thee clean and free. A yet deeper mystical sense, seeing in the white horse of the Apocalypse, on which He Who is Faithful and True rides, the Manhood of CHRIST bearing His Godhead as Its Ruler,—finds here the manner in which CHRIST makes His Bride like Himself, in that He "will change our vile Body that it may be like unto His glorious Body." And this He will do, when He makes us go up, as He did, "with a merry noise, and the sound of the trump;" when we are "caught up to meet our LORD in the air;" caught up, as Elijah was, by the fiery "chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof;" which are those cherubim on which He rides, "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them also, who shall be heirs of salvation;" horses terrible to Pharaoh's chariots in the battles of the soul, going on to meet the armed men, mocking at fear, and turning

Origen.

2 Kings vi.

17.

S. Bernard.

Aponius.

Beda.

Haymo.

Ricard. Victor. in Apoc. xix.

Theodoret.

Philip. lii. 21.

Irimbert.

Ps. xlvii. 5.

1 Thess. iv.

17.

2 Kings ii.

12.

Ps. xviii. 10.

Heb. i. 14.

Job xxxix.

21.

S. Thom. à
Villanov.

not back from the sword. Yet another view is that God makes His Saints like His chivalry the Angels, even while He suffers them to be driven by Pharaoh in his chariot; that is to say, that He gives them grace whereby they lead a life of angelic purity and holiness even while in the prison of the flesh, and sorely tried by temptations of the evil one. "And you will not marvel," adds S. Bernard, "that one soul is here compared not to one horse only, but to a *company of horses*, if you remark how many armies of virtues there are in a single soul which is holy, what orderly array in affections, what discipline in habits, what equipment in prayer, what vigour in action, what dreadfulness in resolution, what steadiness in fight, what aggregate of triumphs." That matching against Pharaoh is no light struggle, as the Saint goes on to say: "There Israel is brought out of Egypt, here man out of the world, there Pharaoh is routed, here the evil one; there Pharaoh's chariots are overwhelmed, here the carnal and secular desires which war against the soul; those went down in waves, these in weepings. And I believe that now the demons, if they encounter such a soul, cry out, 'Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fighteth for him.'"

S. Bernard.
Serm. 39.

Exod. xiv.
25.

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

This rendering is sufficiently close to the Hebrew text, save that the word "pearls" might perhaps be well substituted for "gold." The simile of the horse continues, and now the costly trappings with which the swift and docile steed is decked are described. First comes the headstall, to which the bit and bridle are attached, and this is said to be made with *rows* תורים *torim*, a word akin to *Torah*, the Law, and denoting orderly arrangement. Thus, the first adornments of the Church of God are the precepts and statutes by which He guides her, because "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," and when "the LORD of Hosts hath visited His flock, and hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle," He adorns the neck which bears His yoke with those additional instructions of which is written in another place, "They shall be an ornament of grace unto thine head, and chains about thy neck." So too the Targum explains it;

Ps. cxi. 10.
Zech. x. 3.

Prov. i. 9.

and we have in Ezekiel a fuller enumeration of this adorning: "I decked thee with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck: and I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head: thus wast thou decked with gold and silver." But the LXX., Arabic, and Vulgate, taking the word *torim* in its frequent sense of *turtle-doves*, translate here, *Thy cheeks are comely as those of a turtle*. The words are spoken by the Bridegroom, says Origen, to comfort the Bride, deeply blushing at the rebuke she has just received. And he explains the *cheeks*, as the seat of modesty, to be those members of the Church who are eminent for purity and shamefastness. They are cheeks of a *dove*, because of the faithfulness of those birds to one another when they have paired; and so the Church keeps herself faithful to her one Beloved, and mourns for Him when He is absent from her. Of a *dove*, says another, because CHRIST is Himself that Dove, and those Doctors of the Church who are eminent for holiness, are her *cheeks*, and are like Him. Again, they lay stress on the well known habit of the turtle-dove of dwelling in retired and shady places, to point out the need of solitary retirement for the holy soul. And thus S. Bernard: "It is far above one's own power to be plighted to the LORD of Angels. Is it not beyond thee to cling to GOD, and to be one spirit with Him? Sit then solitary like the turtle, have nothing to do with crowds and multitudes, forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty. . . . Withdraw, then, but in soul, in resolve, in devotion, in spirit, not in body." The unvarying note of the turtle suggests to the Greek Fathers the grave and steadfast discourse of true Christians, as distinguished from the frivolous loquacity of the heathen world. And others dwell on its mournful sound, as typifying the tears of pity and intercession flowing down from the contemplative Saints, called the *cheeks* of the Church, because close to the *eyes*, which are the enlightening gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT. *Thy neck as collars*. If of "pearl," as suggested above, then the points of likeness will be three, roundness, whiteness, and orderly arrangement, typifying the Religious Life, *round*, in the vow of poverty, because as a sphere touches other bodies at one point only, so the profes-

Ezek. xvi.
11.

Origen.

Theodoret.

S. Greg. M.
S. Bernard.
Rupert, &c.

Aponius.

Serm. 40.

Tres Patr.

Nic. Argent.

sion of poverty detaches Religious almost completely from earthly things; *white*, in the profession of chastity; and *regular*, in the pledge of obedience to rule. The flexibility of the neck too, as also denoting obedience, has been dwelt on by several expositors, and, as some add, it is therefore said, "as a necklace," because of the pliancy of that ornament. And, S. Ambrose observes, the law of GOD is not a bond or a yoke upon the obedient neck, but a collar, which even dumb animals take pride in wearing. Most early commentators, however, explain the *neck* to mean the chief Doctors and preachers of the Church, because, as the throat is the passage for food from the head to the stomach, and is also the channel of speech, so they communicate the doctrine of CHRIST to the people, and utter it in their discourse. S. Anselm of Laon adds another reason, that they are the link of union between CHRIST the Head, and the faithful laity of His Body. And as a necklace goes all round the neck, so true obedience embraces all the actions of the Christian life, especially amongst Religious. Again, as necklaces are made of jewels set in gold, so the true adornments of Saints are good works undertaken in wisdom. Once more, as jewelled collars are made of many separate parts, all united in one flexible band, so the decoration of the Bride of CHRIST is made up of many virtues, twined with humility. And it is not to be forgotten that in ancient days the jewelled necklace was not merely the ornament of virgins (wherefore a Saint says, addressing women, "Let your collar and chains be modesty and shamefastness,") but also the especial prize of conspicuous valour,

Theodoret.
S. Hieron. in
Esaïam.
Tres Patr.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

Cassiod.
Beda
S. Ans. Laud.

S. Greg. M.

Tres Patr.

S. Clem.
Alex.
Pædag. iii. 1.

Juv. Sat.
xvi. 59.

Ut qui fortis erit sit felicissimus idem,
Ut læti phaleris omnes et torquibus omnes.

That whoso valiant is in fight, the same may richest be,
And all be glad with costly gauds and collars fair to see.

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

We will make. First they ask, Who are these that speak? And the answer of the Targum is the best, that it is the same Who said in the beginning, "Let us make man in our image;" to wit, the Most Holy Trinity, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. The Chaldee paraphrast thus continues, "Then was it said unto Moses,

Targum.
Gen. i. 26.
Irimbert.

Get thee up into the mount, and I will give thee two tables of stone, cut from the sapphire throne of My glory, shining as the finest gold, ruled with lines traced by My finger, wherein are written ten sayings, purified more than silver which has been purified seven times, and I will give them by thy hand to the people of the house of Israel." But this sense, beautiful as it is, refers to the past, long before the time of the Canticles. It is not *We have made*, but *We will make*, and is therefore a promise to the Bride of some good things she has not yet obtained. So then we may compare the similar promise in another place: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold," and are led on from the harsh, stern dictates of the Law to the grace and truth of the Gospel, according to that saying of the Prophet, "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver." We may see here in the word *border*, a reference to Him Who standeth "round about His people for evermore," and then, as it is written, "A word fitly spoken is as apples of gold in pictures of silver," the gold may denote the Godhead of the WORD, the pictures or studs of silver the pure Manhood of CHRIST. Several of the Fathers agree with the general spirit of the Chaldee interpretation, and take the golden borders to denote the knowledge of Holy Scripture, intertwined with silver threads of types, prophecies, counsels, and the like, or even with the human eloquence of devout preachers; silver, as pure and holy, but not golden with direct inspiration. They vary, however, in attributing the words to the Bridegroom or to His friends. Origen, taking the latter view, and following the LXX. rendering, which is *similitudes of gold with spots of silver*, holds that the speakers are the Angels, who ordained the Law in the hand of a Mediator, and the Prophets who expound that Law. *While the King is in His lying down*, and has not yet come to deck His Bride Himself, they desire to do something for her adornment. They have no gold, because of "the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," and therefore they can give only *similitudes of gold*, the Ark of the Covenant, the altar of incense, the shew-bread, and the like, mere types of future mysteries. They have *silver*, the

Ps. lxxviii. 13.

Ainsworth.

Isa. lx. 17.

Ps. cxxv. 2.

S. August.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Theodoret.

Aponius.

Beda.

Origen.

S. August.

de Trin. l. 8.

Gal. iii. 19.

Heb. x. 1.

moral precepts and counsels to guide man's life, but only in very small quantity, so that they can bestow merely *spots* of it, unlike the true Solomon, of whom it is written, "And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones." Others, agreeing with Origen in taking the clause *While the King is in His lying down* with the present sentence, explain it of the current dispensation, to end when He arises to judgment, and they interpret the *similitudes of gold* and the *spots of silver* to be the imperfect foretaste of eternal joys granted to the Church Militant on earth. Again, they take the golden ornaments to signify the cleansing of the Church by fiery persecutions, and in this sense one commentator declares that the Martyrs are the golden jewels of the Church, marked with silver spots denoting the torments and sufferings they endured, as the Apostle writes, "I bear about in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS."

The Vulgate rendering, *necklets (murenulas*, literally, *little eels*, named from their flexibility and cylindrical form) *damascened (vermiculatas) with silver*, has given rise to much comment from the Latin Fathers. Thus S. Gregory observes, "The eel is a fish which, when taken, twists itself into a circle, in resemblance of which an ear-ring is made, called *murenula*, by which is denoted preaching, which hangs to the ears, and enters them. Collars (*monilia*) are fastened to the neck with *murenulæ*, just as wisdom and religion are united by preachers with Holy Writ. For by these necklets we understand Holy Writ to be meant. It is well said to be damascened with gold and silver, because it shines with wisdom, and is heard, by clear preaching, throughout the world." Another Saint, looking to the twinings of the eel, says that the golden necklets denote the more involved and difficult sayings and doctrines of Scriptures, and the silver threadings the expositions of the Saints thereon. Not very dissimilarly, another holy writer sees in the gold the contemplation of Divine mysteries, and in the silver the created channels through which we are here obliged to make that contemplation. Or, as yet another puts it, the gold is CHRIST's benefits of love: the silver, the good works and wisdom with which we carry them out. After these explanations, that of Parez seems poor, who takes the golden necklaces to be the spiritual graces of the Church, the silver threadings her temporal endow-

2 Chron. i.
15.

S. Ambros.
Psellus.

Philo Carp.

Gal. vi. 17.

S. Greg. M.

Cassiodor.
S. Bruno
Ast.

Dion. Carth.

Parez.

ments. Lastly, S. Jerome says that gold denotes the Virgin life. Before CHRIST came, the Church had the silver of chaste marriage and widowhood, but the more precious metal of virginity was His gift. And the words therefore point to that especial aureole reserved for maiden brows.

S. Hieron.
cont. Jovin.
1.

They say, who know the life divine,
And upward gaze with eagle eyne,
That by each golden crown on high,
Rich with celestial jewelry,
Which for our LORD's redeemed is set,
There hangs a radiant coronet,
All gemmed with pure and living light,
Too dazzling for a sinner's sight,
Prepared for virgin souls, and them
Who seek the Martyr's diadem.

Keble,
*Christian
Year.*

12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

They assign four principal meanings to this *sitting* of the King, or rather, following the original idiom, and that of the ancient versions, His *lying down*. First; it is taken of the repose of CHRIST's Godhead in heaven. "The lying-down of the King is the Bosom of the FATHER, for the SON is ever in the FATHER. And thou canst not doubt Him to be a merciful King, whose everlasting down-lying is the dwelling of the FATHER's lovingkindness. Fitly does the cry of the lowly ascend to Him, Who is the fount and habitation of gentleness." And this is the sense in which Origen and those other Fathers who attach the words to the previous verse understand them, taking, as they do, the Incarnation of CHRIST to be His *standing up* to help mankind in the battle. But others will have it that the Incarnation itself is here meant, called *lying down* because of the humility with which the LORD emptied Himself of His glory. Thirdly; the Passion and Death of CHRIST, His lying down on the Cross and in the grave, is the view of more than one Saint and Father. And lastly; there is the indwelling of CHRIST in the holy soul. They vary also as to the meaning of the *spikenard*. The older interpretation explains it of CHRIST Himself, "It is no marvel," says Origen, "if CHRIST, as He is the Fountain, and streams of living water proceed out of Him; and as He is the Bread, and gives life; so He is the Spikenard also, and gives odour,

S. Aug. de
Trin. i. 8.
S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 42.

Origen.

Cassiodor.
Beda.
Aponius.

S. Just. Org.
S. Ans. Laud.
Theodoret.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
Tres Patr.

Origen.

Theodoret.

and is the ointment wherewith those who are anointed become Christs, as He saith in the Psalm, 'Touch not My Christs.' And it may be that as the Apostle saith, unto 'those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,' CHRIST adapts Himself for each of the soul's senses. Therefore He is called the True Light, that the soul's eyes may have illumination; therefore He is the WORD, that the ears may hearken; therefore He is the Bread of Life, that the soul's taste may perceive savour. Therefore also He is called spikenard or ointment, that the soul's sense of smell may receive the fragrance of the WORD. Therefore, too, He can be touched and handled with the hand, and the WORD was made flesh, that the hands of the inner soul might handle the Word of Life." Next; the spikenard will denote the lowliness of the Church, or of the soul which draws near GOD. "Good," exclaims S. Bernard, "is that odour of humility which, ascending from the vale of tears, and impregnating all the regions round about, perfumes with grateful sweetness the royal chamber itself. The spikenard is a lowly plant, which they who have carefully studied the properties of herbs state to be of a warm nature, and thus I hold it not unsuitable to understand here that virtue of humility which is hot with the exhalations of holy love." And if it be true of all humble saints, whether of the Old or New Covenant, as they allege, much more is it so of her, the holiest and most exalted of all, in whose hallowed womb the King vouchsafed to lie down. "The King Himself," says a saintly writer, venturing, with holy boldness, to put words into the pure mouth of the Mother of GOD, "Son of the Most Highest King, Himself of no lesser dignity, from His equal throne with the FATHER, from His royal seat, from the secret dwelling of His unapproachable Majesty, where the Angels see and desire His Face evermore, vouchsafed to come hither to earth for the salvation of perishing souls, and rested in my chamber. In my womb, I say, that King gladly laid Himself down, and found nought in me to make His dwelling displeasing to Him. And there lying, He filled me marvellously with His grace: While preserving my virginity, He took away my maiden barrenness, and His forceful fire consumed me as a whole burnt-offering, and filled the entire house with the most fragrant perfume of ointment."

Ps. cv. 15.

Heb. v. 14.

Serm. 42.

Rupert.

Parez.

Dion. Carth.

Phillip.
Harveng.

Only her spacious soul, the blessed Sea,
 Where all those floods of precious things did meet,
 Knew what it comprehended; Glorious, she
 Did taste the relish of each mystic sweet
 In one miraculous instant, and did try
 The various dainties of Divinity.

J. Beaumont,
Psyche, vii.
 98.

And so, too, it was not till He came in the flesh, that the sweet odour of the Church went up to God, filling His house, the earth, and no longer shut up in the narrow casket of Judea. Thirdly; they explain the spikenard of repentance, and here, most naturally, that other Mary, who anointed the feet of JESUS with ointment of spikenard, very precious, when her King sat at table, is taken as the type of all true penitent souls.

Origen.
 Beda.
 Aponius.

In prædulci unctione,
 Nardum ferens pisticum,
 Et unguenti fusione
 Typum gessit mysticum,
 Ut sanetur unctione,
 Unxit ægra Medicum.

The Hymn,
Pange,
lingua,
Magdalena.

She, in that anointing sweetest,
 Bearing spikenard rich and pure,
 In its pouring-out completest,
 Showed us mystic types and sure,
 Sick, she gave that Healer meetest
 What she sought herself for cure.

Next; it is taken to denote the faith of the Church in her Incarnate, suffering, and risen LORD, and her preaching of that faith till its perfume filled the world. Fifthly; it is explained of all good works, especially of prayer. And following this view in connection with that which sees in the *lying down*, the Passion and Burial of CHRIST, we may remember not only the spices with which the Sacred Body was interred, but also those which the holy women brought to the sepulchre, deeming Him to be still there, and may take upon our lips those words of the Holy Eastern Church:

S. Ambros.
 in Ps. cxix.
 S. Just. Org.

Cassiodor.
 Beda.

Let us rise in early morning,
 And instead of ointments, bring
 Hymns of praise unto our Master,
 And His Resurrection sing,
 We shall see the Sun of Justice
 Risen with healing in His wing.

S. Johann.
 Damasc.
The Golden
Canon.

And this especially when we approach the sacred Banquet wherein the King indeed *sitteth at His table*, to feed His guests with His own most precious Body

and Blood. We greet Him, however, not only in His glorious Resurrection, but in His wonderful Ascension, so that the odour of our petitions and holy deeds may be wafted upwards to His feet as He sits on the great white throne. When the fires of Pentecost came down after CHRIST went up and entered His chamber once more, then the words of salvation and the holy examples of the Saints of GOD sent their fragrance over all the earth, because the incense was kindled by the flame of the SPIRIT.

13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

As we had in the *spikenard* the Incarnation of CHRIST, so here we have His Passion set before us in the *myrrh*. And observe, this myrrh is not loose, but in a bundle, tied up. First then, CHRIST is a *bundle* for us, because He was not content to be with us in the Omnipresence of His Godhead, but came to us also bound in human form, and with like passions to ours. He is a bundle, again, because He ties Himself to our souls with the cords of His most tender and unfailling love. And thirdly; because each group of CHRIST's sayings, and each doctrine or miracle of His, is bound up with others, with the cord of truth, and cannot be taken separately. And this is what the Apostle means when he says that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." Next; the bundle is of *myrrh*, because that bitter herb typifies the suffering and death of CHRIST, and also the share in that suffering which must be the lot of all who follow Him. Myrrh, they remind us, was used in the burial of the dead, to preserve the body from corruption.

Prudent.
Cathem. x.
51.

Aspersaque myrrha Sabæo
Corpus medicamine servat.

And myrrh which is sprinkled preserveth
With unguent of Saba the body.

S. John xix.
39.

And therefore the Church, mindful not only of the mixture of myrrh and aloes which Nicodemus brought for the burial of the LORD, but of her own preservation from the rottenness of sin by His dying, dwells in thankful love on the story of His Passion. *He shall lie all night*. The words *all night* are not necessarily implied in the Hebrew, nor are they expressed in the

old versions, but the verb *לָן* *lūn* here used, so often has this sense,¹ that we need not hesitate to apply their mystical import. *All night*, then, in all time of our tribulation, in every sorrow, and throughout the darkness of this world, till the day break, CHRIST shall be with us, closest and dearest. *Betwixt my breasts*. And that because He is *My Well-beloved*. "Just now," says S. Bernard, "He was King, now He is Well-beloved. Just now, He was in His lying down, now betwixt the breasts of His spouse. Great is the might of humility, to which the majesty of Godhead so readily bows itself. The name of reverence is quickly changed into that of love, and He Who was far off, speedily is near. *A bundle of myrrh is my Well-beloved unto me*. Myrrh is a bitter thing, harsh and rough; it denotes tribulation. She, knowing that it awaits her for her Beloved's sake, utters that saying thankfully, trusting that she can valiantly bear it all. 'The disciples departed,' she says, 'from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.'" *Betwixt my breasts*. The metaphor is taken from the Eastern custom of carrying a small posy or bag of myrrh in the bosom, to scent the clothes, and also as a safeguard against infection, and thence it is fitly transferred to them who keep in their heart the memory of CHRIST's death. *My breasts*. Of the Church, the Old and New Testaments, one with its prophecies and types of the Passion, the other with the history and the results of it, between which lies the scarred form of the Man of Sorrows. *My breasts*, of the holy soul, which carries CHRIST between the two great commandments, the love of GOD and the love of one's neighbour. *A bundle of myrrh betwixt the breasts* of His most dear Mother, in His Incarnation, because He preserved her then pure from all taint of her virginity; and again in the hour of His Passion, when the sword passed through her bosom, and she tasted the bitterness of death with Him. And it is because of all these reasons that it has been the delight of Christians for many centuries, and especially of those Virgin souls which are dedicated to their LORD, of whom it is written,

In earum pectore cubat in meridie,
Inter mammas virginum collocans cubiculum;

S. Bernard.
Serm. 43.

Acts v. 41.

Cassiodor.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

Parez.

Rupert.

Dion. Carth.

Godeschal-
cus. The
Sequence,
*Virgines
castæ.*

¹ Gen. xix. 2; Judg. xix. 6, 9; Ruth iii. 13; Job xxix. 19, &c.

He lieth on their bosom in the noontide,
Making His couch betwixt the breasts of the virgins;

to wear the crucifix upon their breasts in memory of
their suffering Bridegroom.

14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of
camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.

- Dion. Carth. And now we have the Resurrection. There is no doubt as to the plant intended here, which is the famous *henna* of the East, worn by the women in posies on their breasts, because of its beautiful and fragrant blossoms, and employed as a dye to give the favourite golden red tinge to their nails. And the word **כַּפְּרִי**
- Corn. à Lap. *copher*, here read in the Hebrew, means also *expiation* or *ransom*, so that we have here a confession from the Bride of the preciousness and fragrance of that Redemption wrought for her, which makes the traces of CHRIST'S Passion appear even in her humblest members. This camphire can be gathered only in the *vineyards*, where the wine of the Passion is produced, vineyards truly of *En-gedi*, the "fountain of the kid," because when the mingled tide flowed from the spear wound on the Cross, then the prophecy was fulfilled, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness," and the waters of Baptism were provided to wash away our guilt. *En-gedi* now, because of the clear sweet waters of the Gospel, but once Hazazon-Tamar, the "pruning of the palm," by reason of the stern precepts of the Law, cutting off, rather than cleansing, the sinner. An ambiguity in the LXX. and Vulgate rendering of **אֵשְׁכֹל הַכַּפְּרִי** *eshcol ha-copher*, which they both turn *botrus Cypri*, has led to much difficulty and variety of exposition amongst both Greek and Latin commentators. With the single exception of Origen, who rightly explains the words of a thickly flowering shrub, (though he prefers, after all, to follow the less correct rendering,) they agree in taking *botrus* to mean a *cluster of grapes*, and the Latins, for the most part, suppose *Cypri* to denote the island of Cyprus, then, as now, famous for its wine, and thus merely an epithet of excellence. Others, nearer to the truth, take it to be the proper name of a *balsam-tree*, resembling the grape in its clusters, and therefore said to grow in *vineyards*.
- Cassiodor.
Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.
S. Bernard.
Zech. xiii. 1.
- Gen. xiv. 7.
2 Chron. xx.
2.

It is not a little curious that the error of rendering *grape* for *cluster* is found not only in those who followed the ambiguous rendering, but in the Chaldee Targum itself. The Greeks generally suppose *Cypri* to denote *blooming* or *flowering*, from the verb *κυπρίζω*, and interpret the whole phrase, *a grape in flower*, i.e., before the fruit is developed. "And this," says Origen, "because those to whom the WORD is the True Vine, do not find Him giving them all at once ripe and sweet grapes; nor does He suddenly become to them that rich wine which makes glad the heart of man, but first He gives them only the pleasant odour of blossoms. This flowering grape is said to be in the vineyards of Engaddi; that its grateful fragrance may at the very beginning be poured into the soul; that she may afterwards endure the bitterness of trials and temptations which beset believers for the sake of the WORD of GOD; and at last He gives them the sweetness of His maturity, till He brings them to the wine-presses, where is poured out the blood of the grape, the blood of the New Testament, which shall be drunk on the festal day above, where the great banquet is prepared . . . And in that this flowering grape is said to be of the *vineyards of Engaddi*: the word Engaddi is interpreted, *the eye of my temptation*.¹ Any one, then, who understands how men's life on earth is a temptation, and who also knows how one is delivered in GOD out of temptation, and who detects the nature of his own special temptation, so that it may be said of him that in all these things he hath not sinned with his lips before GOD: to such a man the WORD of GOD becomes a flowering grape in the vineyards of Engaddi."

Some of the Latin Fathers, remembering the vine-bunch borne on the pole by the spies, see in the *grape of Cyprus* the Crucifixion of CHRIST; and in *Engaddi*, the Scribes and Pharisees who surrounded and tempted

S. Ambros.
Aponius.
S. Just. Org.

¹ This curious rendering may thus be accounted for: *En* or *Ain* is strictly the *eye*, and is merely transferred by metaphor to a *pool* or *fountain*, as an eye of the earth. *Gaddi* is explained, "my temptation," by following the LXX. interpretation of Gen. xlix. 19, where is read, "Gad, a temptation shall tempt him," instead of

our reading, "a troop shall overcome him." From the verb *נָצַח* or *נָצַח*, properly "to press violently on," with the pronominal suffix, comes Origen's view. Another explanation, "my cutting," referred to later, comes from another sense of the same verb, "to prune," or "make an incision."

- Him; but the majority prefer to take it of the Resurrection. And thus, amongst several others, S. Bernard: "If He be well-beloved in myrrh, much more in the sweetness of the grape-bunch. Therefore my LORD JESUS is myrrh to me in His death, a grape-bunch in His Resurrection. He mingled Himself for me as the most healthful of drinks, in tears, in a measure.
- S. Bernard. Sermon. 44.
- Rom. iv. 25. He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification; that dead unto sin, we might live unto righteousness. Therefore, if thou hast mourned for thy sins, thou hast drunk bitterness; but if thou hast revived with holier conversation in hope of life, the bitterness of the myrrh is changed for thee into wine, which maketh glad the heart of man."
- Aponius. Contrariwise, from finding here in the meaning of *Cypri* a reference to the funereal cypress, explains that CHRIST is the *grape of sorrow* to sinners, when He pours the spirit of grief and compunction into their souls, according to His own saying, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." And that in *Engaddi*, because it is the fount of penitential tears which washes the rank-smelling kids. Again; if *Engaddi* be explained *fount of my cutting*, it may be taken of the precious *balsam* for all our hurts, flowing from the wounded side of CHRIST, as balm from the incisions in a tree. They are also careful to dwell on the fact that *En-gedi* was the place whence the choicest balsam came. And thus S. Ambrose, though explaining one word differently: "*Engaddi* is a place in Judæa, where *opobalsam* grows. If you ask its meaning, it is in Latin, *temptation*. In those vineyards is a tree which yields ointment if pierced, and this is the product of that tree. If it be not cut, it is not so fragrant and penetrating in odour, but when it has been skillfully pierced, it drops a tear. So CHRIST, crucified on that Tree of temptation, weeps over His people, to wash away our sins, and from the bowels of His mercy pours ointment upon us, saying, 'FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Then He was pierced with a spear on the Tree, and there came forth from Him blood and water, sweeter than any ointment, a victim acceptable to GOD, pouring the odour of sanctification throughout the world; and as balsam from a tree, so power went forth from His Body." Beda, following up a reference of S. Gregory the Great to the use of balsam in chrisem, tells us that
- S. Mat. v. 4.
- Corn. à Lap. Hortolanus.
- S. Hieron. Trad. in Gen. xiv.
- S. Ambros. in Ps. cxix.
- Beda.

the balsam denotes the graces of the Holy Spirit, and bids us note the collocation of ideas. The Bride first says, that her spikenard yielded its odour while the King was lying down, then she compares Him to a bundle of myrrh; and thirdly, calls Him a grape-cluster of Cyprus; declaring lastly, that He is in the vineyards of Engaddi. And that because a devout woman first anointed the Lord with spikenard when He lay down at supper. After that, the disciples wrapped in fine linen His crucified Body, anointed with myrrh for burial, and after this, He, in the joy of His Resurrection, which came so soon, bestows spiritual gifts on the faithful. And it is said *in the vineyards*, denoting the Churches and faithful souls which rejoice in the redemption bought for her by CHRIST. Nowhere, save in *Engedi*, adds another, for just as many kings tried in vain to transplant the balsams of that place successfully, so there is but the one faith wherein the Bride can find her Beloved, and the life of CHRIST, outside His Church, withers away in the soul.

Philo Carp.

Aponius.
S. Bernard.
Serm. 44.

15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

"This," notes Origen, "is the second address of the Bridegroom to the Bride. In his former speech He invited her to learn to know herself, telling her that she was fairest among women, but that unless she did know herself, she should certainly undergo sufferings. And as she at once hastened in thought and understanding to self-knowledge, He compares her to His horses or chivalry, whereby He overcame Pharaoh's chariots. So too He compares her cheeks to turtle-doves because of her great modesty and her swiftness in action, and her neck to jewelled collars. Now, He declares her to be fair, and not as before, merely fair among women, but as near Himself,¹ and lifts her to a still higher title of praise, and affirms that she is not *fair* merely when near to Him, but *fair* even if He be absent. For this is denoted hereby, that after saying, *Behold thou art fair, My companion*, (A. V. marg.,) He adds after this absolutely, and without any addition, *Behold, thou*

Origen

¹ The LXX. translate תַּרְבִּיבִי, *my neighbour*, ἡ πλησίον μου. The root is תַּרְבִּיב, *he fed*, and the

primary meaning of the word is "one who eats at the same table."

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Psellus.

Origen.

Philo Carp.
Tres. Patr.
Cassiod.
Beda.
S. Just. Org.
S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 45.

Dion. Carth.

Thom.
Vercell.

Hugo Card.

Origen.
Philo Carp.
Cassiod.

art fair." Man, comment other Greek Fathers, is like a mirror, which appears beautiful or hideous according to the object closest to it, which it reflects, and therefore in this life CHRIST'S Bride can be fair only by nearness to Him, that His countenance may shine on and in her, His *companion*. But in the world to come, when the Church is no longer militant, but Triumphant, she will have perfection and beauty, not as now by imitation, but inherently of her own. Others, including some Western expositors, take the words of the double holiness in act and thought, in labour and contemplation, in body and soul, vouchsafed by CHRIST to His Bride. S. Gregory the Great sees here, as in the two breasts of a former verse, the love of GOD and of one's neighbour as the double beauty of the Church; while S. Bernard prefers to find in the words a reference to the grace of penitence, whereby pardon, and thereby renewed beauty, has been won, and that of humility, whereby it is retained. "The repetition," says the Ecstatic Doctor, "is a token of affirmation, of love, of seriousness, and to arouse attention, as though He were saying, Thou, My Bride, My holy and elect Church, for which I gave Myself up to death, thou art fair in soul and in chastity of body. Fair by the gifts of nature, fairer by the blessings of grace. Fair within by the brightness of thy virtues, gifts, and merits: fair without, in thy most lovely ways. Fair in the beauty of the Sacraments, adorned with the manifold divisions of thy ministry, the varied order, station, and ranks of thy prelates, religious, and doctors, decked not only with those supernatural gifts of that grace which maketh us graceful, but of that grace which is given freely." And that, comments another, because the first fairness is of the purgative way, which brings us to know ourselves and love GOD; the other, the illuminative, which makes perfect, because we see GOD as He is. Another explanation, not without some beauty, sees here the twofold Church, Hebrew and Gentile, the first having been long GOD'S *companion*, the other but lately come to Him, but both alike fair in His sight.

Thou hast doves' eyes. First, they take it of the enlightening graces of the HOLY GHOST, granted to the Church and to every faithful soul. Then, of the inner vision of the soul herself, fixed on heavenly things. *Doves' eyes*, not only because of the Dove that came to Jordan, but as the type of meekness and purity,

and conjugal faithfulness. Thus, for the one part, Venerable Bede observes: "CHRIST's love has *doves' eyes*, because every soul which truly loves Him internally, is not fired, like hawks, with greed for things without, nor plans evil against any living things; for it is said to belong to the meek nature of the dove, to look on everything that may happen with simple, gentle, and lowly heart." And for the other view, let us hear S. Gregory: "Her eyes are well said to be *doves' eyes*, because whilst she sighs amidst passing things, and is borne aloft to eternal longings, she guards her senses in simplicity, and abhors fleshly desires. For the dove, when loving, utters sighs instead of songs. Fitly, then, is the holy soul compared to a dove, for whilst the ungodly prate and rejoice in their love of the world, the elect soul pines in her longing for heaven, because she fears to lose that which she loves so long as it is delayed." And Psellus turns it prettily of the virgin life, looking to the Creator and not to the creature:

Ἴδού, φησὶ, καλὴ τυγχάνεις, ὦ παρθένε,
 ἔχεις γὰρ ὄμματα τερπνὰ περιστερῶς παρθένου
 ὁπότεν σοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀπέστρεψας τῆς πλανῆς,
 καὶ πρὸς ἐμὲ τὸν πλαστοουργὸν τὴν σὸν ἐνατενίζεις·
 περιστερῶς δὲ μέμνηται νῦν ὀφθαλμοῦς ὁ λόγος,
 τὸ καθαρὸν τοῦ βλέμματος σημαίνων τῆς παρθένου,
 καὶ γὰρ τοσοῦτον καθαρὸν ἔσχεν ἐκείνη βλέμμα,
 ὥστε κατείδε καθαρῶς τὸν κάλλιστον νυμφίον.

Behold, He saith, O Virgin, thou art fair,
 Thou hast the sweet eyes of a virgin dove,
 When thou hast turned thine eyes from wandering,
 And gazest upon Me, thy fashioner.
 The Word now maketh mention of doves' eyes,
 Noting the pureness of the virgin's mien;
 For she hath just such pureness in her mien
 As she hath purely scanned her fairest Spouse.

Another interpretation sees in the *eyes* of the Church, Aponius. the Prophets and Apostles of earlier times, and the great Doctors and preachers of later days. And thus S. Anselm of Laon: The dove lives beside streams, that when she sees the hawk she may plunge in and escape, she chooses the better grains, she nourishes young ones not her own, she wounds not with her beak; she has no gall, she makes her nest in the holes of the rock, she has a sigh instead of a song. So too, holy preachers dwell beside the streams of the divine Scripture, where-

with their hearts are watered, that by their aid they may escape the devil's assaults; they choose the better grains, that is, the better doctrines, not those of heretics; they nourish the young of others, that is, they train with precept and example men who were formerly aliens from CHRIST and children of the evil one. They do not rend with their beak, that is, they do not, like heretics, pervert and rend sound doctrines; they are free from gall, that is, unreasonable anger. They build in the clefts of the rock, that is, they make their nest in the death-wounds of CHRIST, Who is the firmest of all rocks. They have sighing for singing, because as others delight in song, so do they in tribulation. Besides, the dove flies in flocks, and so the Church strives to draw many with her to the joys of heaven. Finally, they expound this whole verse of the Blessed Virgin, *fair* in her purity, *fair* in her lowliness, *fair* in the beauty of her earthly body, *fairer* in the loveliness of her stainless soul, *fair* in her virginity, *fair* in her childbearing, and, as she was full of grace, and especially dowered by the HOLY GHOST, she has *doves' eyes*.

S. Bernard.
Hugo Vict.
Rupert.
Dion. Carth.

The Hymn,
Regina misericordiae.

Tu columba nubilis,
Turtur subarrhata,
Tu domus eburnea,
Civitas murata;
Tu sic dicta viola,
Quod inviolata,
Ager, rosa, liliū,
Mater, uxor, nata.

Mary, thou art bridal dove,
Thou art turtle dowered,
Ivory abode of love,
City strongly towered;

Thou, inviolate by stain,
Name of violet bearest,
Rose-bud, lily-flower, plain,
Child, spouse, mother fairest.

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

It is now the Bride who speaks in answer to the praises which the Bridegroom has just uttered to her. And here at once arises the question so much debated in the Early Church, as to the physical aspect of CHRIST. The Eastern Fathers, almost universally,

press the literal sense of such texts as that in Isaiah. "He hath no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." But the Western doctors, with more than equal unanimity, explain these and the like phrases as denoting only the lowliness and suffering of His earthly life. Who yet was "fairer than the children of men." The Bride, remarks Origen, now that she is gifted with the spiritual insight of doves' eyes, recognises the beauty of her Spouse, namely, the Godhead hidden under the veil of Humanity. *Thou*, she says, *art fair*. She does not qualify the words as He did, by adding *among men*, for she knows of none other beauty save His, not even her own, as she ascribes it all to Him. "To us who now believe," exclaims S. Augustine, "the Bridegroom ever seems fair. Fair was GOD the WORD with GOD, fair in the Virgin's womb, where He lost not His Divinity and took on Him Manhood. Fair was the WORD born an Infant, for when He was an Infant, when He sucked, and was carried in arms, the Heavens spake, and the Angels uttered praise. A star guided the wise men, and the Food of the meek was worshipped in the manger. Fair was He then in heaven, fair on earth, fair in the womb, fair in His parents' arms, fair in His miracles, fair in His scourges, fair inviting us to life, fair recking not of death, fair laying down His life, fair taking it again, fair upon the Tree, fair in the tomb, fair in heaven, fair unto the thought."

He is not *fair* only, but *pleasant*, a yet stronger word, denoting, as they say, far more than mere beauty of feature, that winning grace in expression, voice, gesture, and act, which attracts affection even as harmonious regularity of countenance compels admiration. And they delight in finding twin sources of beauty in the Redeemer in the most various ways. First, and most obviously, we may take it of the two Natures in His one Person, the first being *fair* by reason of its Divine essence, the second *pleasant* for its tender pardoning grace. "How fair art Thou unto Thine Angels, O LORD JESU," cries a Saint, "in the form of GOD, in Thine eternal day, in the splendour of the Saints, Thou splendour and image of the FATHER'S substance, begotten before the morning star, Thou truly everlasting and undimmed radiance of unending life! How pleasant art Thou to me, my LORD, in the very

Isa. liii. 2.

Ps. xlv. 3.

Origen.
Theodoret.
Tres Patr.S. Greg.
Nyss.
Angelomus.S. August.
in Ps. xlv.

Ghislerius.

S. Greg. M.
Beda.S. Bernard.
Serm. 45.

seat of this pleasantness of Thine! For where Thou didst empty Thyself, where Thou didst strip Thine unwaning light of its natural rays, there Thy loving-kindness shone forth the more, there Thy charity blazed out more brightly, there Thy grace shed its rays further. How bright to me is Thine arising, O Star out of Jacob; how gleaming is Thy coming up, O Flower of Jesse's Root; how joyous is Thy light, visiting me in darkness, O Dayspring from on high! How fascinating and wondrous is Thine heavenly might, in Thy conception by the HOLY GHOST, in Thy Virgin-birth, in Thy stainless life, in Thy streams of doctrine, in the flashings of Thy miracles, in the revelations of Thy Sacraments! How brilliantly, O Sun of righteousness, dost Thou arise from the heart of the earth after Thy setting, how beautiful in Thine apparel! At last, O King of Glory, Thou ascendest to the highest heavens. Wherefore then should not

Ps. xxxv.
10.

Philo Carp.

Aponius.

all my bones say, 'LORD, who is like unto Thee?' " He was *fair*, observes an Eastern Father, in the Prophets, but *pleasant* in the Apostles; *fair* in keeping those good things which He gave under the Law, *pleasant* in the abundant promises of better things in the Gospel. *Fair* in His pure Body, *pleasant* in His stainless human soul.

Also our bed is green. This, the true sense of the Hebrew, is not found either in LXX. or Vulgate. The former has two readings, each adopted by certain expositors. *Our bed is shady*, and *Thou art a shadow to our bed.* The Vulgate has, *Our bed is flowery.* Origen, taking the first reading, explains that the Bride says *our bed*, because her members are CHRIST's members, and adds that it is *shady* because of His promise, "The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night," and *shady* too because of the thick growth of good works from souls watered by His grace, and not parched up with spiritual dryness, under which shade we may avoid the hot breath of sin. Theodoret, who takes the same reading, expounds the *bed* to be the divine Scriptures, *shady* because guarded by the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, and sheltered from the heat of wickedness. The other LXX. reading, which is the received one, is followed by several Eastern Fathers, but they do not take it, as might be expected, in the sense of those words, "He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt

Origen.

Ps. cxxi. 6.

S. Ambros.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Tres Patr.
Ps. xci. 4.

be safe under His feathers," but of the Human Nature of CHRIST, mercifully shading from our eyes the dazzling glory of His Godhead, on which man cannot look and live. The Latin commentators, for the most part, expound the *bed* of the tranquillity of the Church, *flowery* with the many virtues of the Saints. Beda, reproducing in a Christian form the explanation of the Targum, adds that the Church is flowery not only with good works, but with the abundant offspring of faithful, produced to GOD from water and the SPIRIT, and blooming with the flower of faith. And it is to be noted, continues he, that throughout this book the Bride always expresses a desire to be with her Spouse in the house, on the bed, or any other inner place, whereas the Bridegroom is always summoning His love to outer tasks, to the labours of the vineyards or of the gardens. And that because Holy Church, if it might be, would ever gladly converse with her LORD in the quiet of earthly peace, and bring forth and train up for Him a heavenly progeny. But He ordains her to be tried by constant sufferings in the present life, that she may arrive, all the purer, at everlasting blessings, and lest, if all temporal things should be too prosperous, she might take pleasure in her exile, and sigh less after the Heavenly Country. Another sees in the flowery bed that hallowed womb where the Incarnate LORD rested for nine months, and the same idea, substituting the overshadowing trees (denoting darkness and mystery) for the blossoming flowers of beauty and lowliness, is seen in the way in which the Greek Fathers explain the LXX. reading of Habakkuk ii. 3: "GOD shall come from Teman, and the Holy from the thick and shady mountain of Paran." Thus in the Eastern Office for Christmas Day :

Rod of the Root of Jesse,
 Thou, Flower of Mary born,
 From that thick shady mountain
 Cam'st glorious forth this morn:
 Of her, the Ever-Virgin,
 Incarnate wast Thou made,
 The immaterial Essence,
 The GOD by all obeyed!

S. Cosmas.

Rupert.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 46.

"I think," observes S. Bernard, "that the Church's *bed*, whereon one may rest, means cloisters and convents, where one lives free from the cares of the world

and the anxieties of life. And it is declared to be flowery, when the conversation and life of the brethren are beautified with the examples and precepts of the Fathers, as though with fragrant flowers." And note, that this bed is flowery, rather than made of cedars and firs, for another reason, that as cut flowers fade quickly, and need to be renewed daily, so it is needful for Religious constantly to renew the vows and resolutions of their profession, so as to offer them fresh and sweet to God. Two other writers see here, by a somewhat forced interpretation, the tomb in which CHRIST lay down, called *flowery* by reason of the fragrant myrrh and spices used at His burial. Far more beautiful is the view of Nicolaus de Argentina, who dwells on the Vulgate diminutive *lectulus*, "little bed," in the text here, and bids us remember that hard and narrow bed of the Cross, which was the bridal couch of CHRIST and His Church. And precisely in this sense runs the hymn :

Vieyra.
Serm. do
S. Francisco
Xavier.

Aponius.
Angelomus.

Hugo Card.

Nic. Argent.

The Hymn,
*Huc ad ju-
gum Cal-
varia.*

The fox hath where to lay his head,
Her nest receives the sparrow :
Thy Monarch, for His latest bed,
One plank hath, hard and narrow.

Isa. xxviii.
20.

Of it the Prophet spake, saying, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it." It was once dry and leafless, but now, because of the Resurrection, it is the delight of the Western Church to represent it as fleury or pommée, breaking out into blossom and fruit. And so in the great Passiontide hymn :

Venantius
Fortunatus.
The Hymn,
*Pange
lingua.*

Faithful Cross, above all other
One and only noble Tree,
None in foliage, none in blossom,
None in fruit thy peer may be.

Heb. iv. 9.

And lastly, as this is not our rest, we may take the green or flowery bed of those pastures of heaven, where the Sabbath remaineth for the people of God when they have ended their weary pilgrimage and warfare.

Francis
Baker.

Thy vineyards and thine orchards are
Most beautiful and fair,
Full furnished with trees and fruits
Exceeding rich and rare.

Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
Continually are green ;
There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers
As nowhere else are seen.

Jerusalem ! my happy home !
Would GOD I were in thee,
Would GOD my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see !

17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

The first inquiry here is, Who is the speaker? All save Origen, who varies from himself on this head, agree that the Bride still speaks. Next, What is the *house* (LXX. and Vulg. *houses*) thus described? The more usual interpretation is that the local Churches on earth are the joint dwelling-place of CHRIST and of the elect soul. Theodoret, however, explains it of Holy Scripture, incorrupt as *cedar*, perfumed as *cypress* (LXX. and Vulg.,) and several Fathers say that the soul itself is the house intended. Taking the common exposition, they tell us that the *beams*, the most important part of the Church's building, are her Prelates and great preachers, *cedar* because of their incorruptness, and that the *rafters* or *fretted ceilings* (LXX. *φαινώματα*, Vulg. *laquearia*) denote the clergy in general, or else the faithful laity, resting, as Beda reminds us, upon the beams, and lifted high from earthly things by their precept and example. Another interpretation sees in the *beams* the great dogmas on which the Church's structure rests, and in the *panels* the practical virtues with which the Saints who rest on these doctrines adorn their dwelling. Not remote from either of these is the view of Honorius, who takes the *houses* to be the cloisters, whose *beams* are the Abbats and other superiors, and whose *panels* are the Religious; of *cypress*, because that tree does not revive when cut down, and was therefore borne anciently before the bier of the dead, and thus typifies the death to the world of those who seek to be hidden in the tabernacle of GOD. Yet again, taking the *house* to be the soul wherein CHRIST dwells, its *beams*, they tell us, are the inner virtues, its main strength and support; the *panels*, less important, but more ornamental, the outward beauty of a devout life. It is to be noted, fur-

Theodoret.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Just. Org.
S. Bernard.

Beda.

Tres Patr.

Hon. Aug.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

S. Bernard.

1 Kings vi.
15; vii. 2, 7.

Hengsten-
berg.

Targum.

Dion. Carth.
Parez.

Eccclus. xxiv.
13.

The Hymn,
*Regina cle-
mentia.*

ther, that both the Temple and palace of Solomon were built of cedar and fir or cypress, and that a reference to that fact is intended here. But, whereas they were framed with beams and planks cut from the wood, and therefore dead, here, on the other hand, the Hebrew implies that whole trees, living evergreens, *cedars* and *firs*, formed the house and shadowed the bed of the Bridegroom, which was therefore more beautiful and enduring than the former temple and palace. And so the Targum: "Solomon the Prophet said, How fair is this house of the sanctuary of the LORD, which is builded by my hands, of cedar wood! But fairer shall be the house of the sanctuary which shall be builded in the days of Messiah the King, the beams whereof shall be of the cedars of the garden of Eden." And what was that cedar shrine and palace, incorrupt, repelling all evil, save the most pure womb of His immaculate Mother? *Cedar*, in her utter purity, *cypress* in her sorrows by the Cross of her Son; wherefore it is written, "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree upon the mountains of Hermon."

Tu fons, hortus, platanus,
Cedrus exaltata,
Tu palma, tu olea,
Cypressus plantata.

CHAPTER II.

1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

The first clause here is rendered in the Syriac, LXX., and Vulgate, *flower of the plain*, and modern critics, for the most part, hold that the narcissus, not the rose, is the plant intended. The commentators differ as to the speaker. The Targum, followed by some Greek Fathers, assigns the verse to the Bride, but the majority of the Westerns, with some great Eastern names too, hold that it, as well as the succeeding one, belongs to the Bridegroom, claiming to be Himself the chief

Targum.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
Theodoret.
Philo Carp.

glory of that flowery bed of which the Bride had delightedly spoken just before. Following this interpretation first, let us hear Origen: "The *plain* is level ground, cultivated, and tilled by husbandmen. The *valleys* denote rocky and untilled places. We may thus understand the *plain* of that people which was cultivated by the Law and the Prophets, and the *valleys* of the rocky and untilled dwelling of the Gentiles. The Bridegroom was therefore the *Flower* among the Jewish people, but because the Law brought no man to perfection, therefore the WORD of GOD could not there pass beyond the stage of *flower*, and arrive at the perfection of fruit. But He was made a *Lily* in the *valleys* of the Gentiles. What kind of *Lily*? Such, no doubt, as He describes in the Gospels, which the Heavenly FATHER clothes. The Bridegroom becomes then a *Lily* in this valley, because His Heavenly FATHER clothed Him with such a garment of flesh as Solomon in all his glory could not have. For Solomon had not a body pure from all desire and from fleshly enjoyments, and thus liable to no sin. But He seems to set forth why He, Who was the Flower of the field, willed to be the *Lily* of the valleys. Though He had long been the flower of the field, yet He never says that any flower imitating or resembling Him had sprung from that field. But when He became the *Lily* of the valleys, immediately His beloved became a *lily* too, in imitation of Him; so that the result of His labour is, that as He is made a *lily*, so His neighbour, that is, every soul which draws near Him and follows His example, becomes a *lily* also. What He then says, 'As the *lily* among thorns, so is My love among the daughters,' we may take as spoken of the Gentile Church, either because she arose from the midst of unbelievers, as out of thorns, or because set in the midst of thorns by reason of noisy heretics around her, attacking her with their teeth." And the same great Father in another place expounds the words of CHRIST's Incarnation. For my sake, he says, who was in the valley, the Bridegroom comes into that valley, and becomes a *Lily* there. Instead of being the Tree of Life, planted in the Paradise of GOD, He became the Flower of all the plain, that is, of the whole world, of the entire earth. For what could so truly be the flower of all the world as the Name of CHRIST? His Name is ointment poured out. Aponius sets be-

Origen.
Cassiod.
Aponius.
Beda.

S. Mat. vi.
28.

Hom. 2.

Aponius.

fore us this same idea from another point of view. CHRIST was, he comments, the *flower of the field* before His Incarnation, because in His glory He was the worship of the heavenly spirits in all the plain of the heavens, but after His Incarnation He became the *Lily of the valleys*, when He came down into the vale of tears, and brought with Him three things, the doing-away of sin, the wiping out of falsehood, and the cooling of desire, just as the lily exhibits three qualities, whiteness, fragrance, and medicine for certain complaints after it has been parched in the fire.

S. Cyril.
Alex. de
Incarn.

S. Cyril of Alexandria sees in the perfume of the flower, invisible in the visible blossom, the Godhead united with the Manhood of CHRIST, and inseparable

Theodoret.

from It. Theodoret, agreeing with many others that the words *flower of the plain* denote CHRIST's coming to earth, explains the *lily of the valleys* of His further humiliation, when He went down into the lower parts of the earth, and preached in Hades the Resurrection.

S. Ambros.
de Spir.
Sanct. ii. 5.

Yet again, they take the plain to be His most holy Mother, from whom He sprang by no human will, as the flower grows in spots no man has tilled. And thus S. Ambrose: "CHRIST was the Flower of Mary, and sprang from the virgin womb to shed the sweet perfume of faith throughout the world. A flower, though cut down, retains its fragrance, and if pounded, collects it, nor does it lose it by being torn up. So too the LORD JESUS withered not when ground upon the Cross, nor did He disappear when so torn away from us, but when wounded with that piercing of the spear, He, Who cannot die, bloomed yet more beautifully with the Precious Blood He shed, breathing forth the gift of eternal life to them which were dead."

Alanus de
Insulis.

"The human Nature of CHRIST," says one of the greatest of the Schoolmen, "is called a *plain*, for as a variety of flowers spring up in a plain, so are there many virtues in the human nature of CHRIST. Herein was the violet of lowliness, the rose of patience, the lily of purity. CHRIST was the flower of this plain; that is, its glory because of His Godhead, since He had by reason of that Godhead the fulness of gifts in His human nature. Fitly is that human nature of CHRIST denoted by a plain, because of its width and smoothness, for in Him was no roughness of sin. Whence also He is said to be *Lily of the valleys*. For as there was perfect humility in Mary and in CHRIST's human na-

ture, therefore the person of the Virgin and the Manhood of the WORD are called *valleys*." In the lily, beautifully notes another, there are five things observed. It is white, having a projecting anther of golden hue, it is fragrant, and expanding, and ever curving downwards. So was CHRIST white in His Manhood, golden in His Godhead, fragrant in His preaching, open in receiving penitents, bowed down in His condescension to sinners, and in lifting them up. Another writer dwells somewhat variously on some of these same qualities. "CHRIST was a lily," says he, "because of the glory of His Resurrection, externally white because of the glory of His Body, golden within by reason of the resplendence of His soul. And before His Passion He was as it were a closed lily, but when crowned with glory and honour because of that Passion, He was thereafter an open lily, because He disclosed in His assumed humanity the power of that divine radiance which He had with the FATHER before the world was." So far we have considered how CHRIST is Flower and Lily in Himself, and may next turn to ponder how He is these to us. And first, Origen tells us that the words mark different stages of spiritual progress, that He is the Flower of souls which are like a plain by reason of their simplicity, gentleness, or equity, in that He is in them the beginning of good works, the promise of fruit, while to those who search into deeper and more hidden things, as though in the valleys, He becomes a Lily, either in the brightness of purity or the sheen of wisdom, that they too may be lilies, breaking forth from the midst of thorns, that is, fleeing from the thoughts and cares of the world. S. Gregory teaches that CHRIST is the Flower of the plain, in that He gives the soul the beauty of heavenly desire; the Lily of the valleys, because of the purity He infuses into the lowly. And they delight to tell us how He is the crown and glory and loveliness of the Virgin Life. CHRIST, observes S. Jerome, (writing of one who had given herself to her LORD,) as the author and Prince of virginity, confidently speaks, "*I am the flower of the plain and the lily of the valleys*." The order of Virgins in the Church, comments another, is a plain, that is, an untilled soil whose flower is CHRIST, because He is its delight, its crown, and its reward. He is, notes a third, the Lily of the valleys, not of the fields of the

Hon. Aug.

Eucherius,
in Lib. iii.
Reg.

Origen.

S. Greg. M.

S. Hieron.
Ep. ad
Demetr.
Cf. S. Am-
bros. de
Virgin. iii.S. Just. Org.
Hon. Aug.

Nic. Arg.

active life, much less the lily among the thorns, but of those who dwell in the lowly and sequestered life of contemplation, whereon the rays of the sun pour the heat of love, unstayed and undisturbed by any words of temptation, while the mountains stand around, and the rivers of grace flow down them into the valleys, so that there is abundance of corn there, and the Lily, finding the water it loves, flourishes abundantly.

Ps. civ. 10.

Tres Patr.

Philo Carp.

S. Mat. vi.
28.S. Greg.
Nyss.Card. Hall-
grin.

Dion. Carth.

Following the other interpretation, which ascribes the words to the Bride, they tell us how the Church is the *flower of the plain* so far as she consists of believing Israel, levelled to the smoothness of a field by the Law and the Prophets, watered by the rain of heavenly knowledge, bright with the flowers of holiness. The Gentiles, uneven and rough through unbelief, and depressed by the weight of sin, are the valleys out of which the Lily springs from the depth, so high that she cannot be hid even in the lowest parts of the vale, lifting up her head in the grace and beauty of faith, of purification, and of contemplation of God. The Church under the Law, remarks another Greek Father, not dissimilarly, calls herself a flower, when she has listened to the voice of the Prophets, and striven to serve God. But when she has heard the voice of CHRIST Himself in the Gospel, telling His disciples to cast away all worldly anxiety, and saying, "Consider the lilies how they grow," then, attaining to the loveliness and fragrance of true devotion, she is bold to say, *I am the lily*. They take it too, of any holy soul growing in the plain of this world, exposed to wind and storm, but lifting itself up to heaven and diffusing perfume around. And the words *plain* and *valleys* denote twofold humility; the first, that whereby any one humbles himself to his superiors, and does not try to rise above his equals: and the second, that more perfect lowliness whereby he humbles himself to his equals, and strives to descend below his inferiors. Not any flower, but especially a *lily*, because it is white externally and with a golden spike within. Such is the soul, which is compassed with the glory of righteousness, and which carries within its inmost shrine the spiritual gift of wisdom and knowledge. How much more then is it true of her who was herself that pure calyx within which the golden glory of the Eternal Wisdom tabernacled! Well may the Ecstatic Doctor say, "The most Blessed Virgin is the most blooming,

fairest, and most fragrant flower of the field, that is, of this world, wherein we are placed as in the arena of contest, for our life on earth is a warfare. She is also the flower of that other field, the garden of delights, the heavenly Paradise. And again, she is the flower of the field, that is, of the Church Militant in its pilgrimage here on earth, whose mother, flower, queen, and advocate she is, obtaining by her prayers and merits the ornaments and perfume of merits for the Church. Then, she is the flower of every devout soul which loves her, into whose thought she never enters without fruit, and without shedding her sweetness around. She is the Lily of the valleys, that most sweet and peerless Virgin Mother of God, the blooming offspring of her lowly parents, from whom she sprang as a most fair Lily, nor was Solomon in all his glory arrayed as that fair Lily was." And lastly, taking our own version, we may see in the rose and lily the double grace of martyrdom and chastity which forms the choicest coronal of heaven. Thus S. Bernard observes, "The flower is virginity, the flower is martyrdom, the flower is good deeds. In the garden, virginity; in the field, martyrdom; in the chamber, good works. He is the flower of the garden, the Virgin sprung from a virgin stem. He too is the flower of the field, the Martyr, the Crown of Martyrs, the force of martyrdom." Wherefore the Paris Breviary fitly sings in the Common of Virgin Martyrs:

Serm. 47.

Roses and lilies are the Bridegroom's portion,
Thou, to thy Bridegroom evermore found faithful,
Gavest Him roses as a Martyr, gavest
Lilies, a Virgin.

Sant. Vict.
The Hymn,
Quidsacram,
Virgo.

2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Noting the contrast, so strongly marked in the first clause, they observe that as the lily surpasses thorns, so does the Church of God excel the Synagogue, the schools of philosophy, and the parties of the State. Again, the Church was a lily among thorns in the time of her greatest purity and beauty, when she was the victim of repeated persecutions. Whereupon Honorius: "As I, saith the Bridegroom, am the Lily of the valleys, the ornament of the lowly, so thou, My love, shalt be the lily among thorns, the glory of the Gen-

Theodoret.
S. Just. Org.

Honor.
August.
S. Ambros.

- Cassiod. tiles; and as I am the Lily among thorns, that is, the Jews who pierce and wound Me, so thou, O Church, My love, shalt be among the Gentile daughters of Babylon, which is confusion, who shall pierce thee with many a thorn, and rend thee with many a suffering." The words are true also of that inner Church of the elect, compassed by the outer Church of the called, wherein are many reprobates who show no grace or beauty in their lives, but are like thorns, flowering quickly in temporal prosperity, withering swiftly in goodness, wounding the devout with their evil habits, cut down and given to feed the fire. Such as these are *daughters*, indeed, but not of GOD, rather of the evil one, carnal and worldly souls, given up to the wounding and torturing pleasures of the senses. And observe further, that a lily growing amongst thorns ensures the wounding of him who would gather the flower for his very own. On which a devout writer comments thus: "As the Bride's love for her Spouse is signified here, so also is His love for her. For he that would gather a lily amongst thorns, necessarily suffers their pricks; which is evidently true of the Bridegroom Himself, for He, gathering that lily from the midst of the reprobate, suffered the prickings of the thorns, whilst He underwent the rendings of the persecutors as He was assembling His elect by His own preaching and that of His disciples. Whence it is written, 'Whoso breaketh a hedge [the synagogue of the people,] a serpent shall bite him.' The LORD acted like a hunting dog, which pursuing wild game, thrusts its head amongst the prickles of thorns, fearing no wounds so that it may take its prey. He drew forth the Church, lurking like a wild beast amongst thorns, that is, amongst the reprobate; but He endured the piercings of the thorns even to bloodshedding, in token of which He wore a thorny crown upon the Cross." The soul which clings to CHRIST amidst the troubles, cares, and persecutions of an ungodly world, is also fitly called a lily among thorns. But all these cannot really hurt the lily, rather do they set off her beauty. "The thorn," expounds S. Bernard, "is sin, the thorn is punishment, the thorn is a false brother, the thorn is evil hard at hand. 'As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.' O shining lily, O frail and delicate flower, the unbelieving and destroyers are with thee, see then that thou
- S. August. de Bapt. 5.
S. Greg. M.
- Corn. à Lap.
- Tres Patr.
- Hugo Card.
- Eccles. x. 8.
- S. Greg. Nyss. Aponius.
- S. Bernard. Serm. 48.

walk cautiously amongst the thorns. The world is full of thorns. They are in the earth, in the air, in thy flesh. To be amongst them, and not to be hurt by them, comes of the Divine power, not of thine own strength. 'But be of good cheer,' saith He, 'I have overcome the world.' Therefore, although thou seest the prickles of tribulations, like those of thorns, aiming at thee on every side, let not thine heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid, 'knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.' Consider the lilies of the field, how they flourish and bloom among the thorns. If God so guards the grass which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more His love and dearest Bride?" And another holy writer treats at much length of the various thorns which must be overcome by patient continuance in well-doing. The truly patient soul is likeliest to the beauty of CHRIST, to the measure of a perfect man, in that it bears all cheerfully, and loves those who put it to pain; first, by words of slander and calumny, then by actual wrong-doing. How is this patience to be attained? Harken, O lily among thorns. "My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace. I labour for peace." And again: "They that went about to do me evil, talked of wickedness, and imagined deceit all the day long. As for me, I was like a deaf man and heard not, and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth." And this is effected by loving contemplation of our Maker, because the soul that looks on God is deaf and blind to meaner things, and is filled with such delights in thinking on Him that pain becomes of no moment, or even a source of pleasure, as the Cross was to S. Andrew, the fire to S. Laurence, the stones to S. Stephen, the dungeon and rack to S. Agatha. And this patience is threefold, in heart, word, and deed, indisposing men to vengeance, leading them on to entire forgiveness of their enemies, and thence to hearty interest in and affection for them. Those who begin by checking their own impulse to revenge, at first from the lower motive of fear of results, and then for the sake of salvation, and at last from true love of God, attain even on earth the "peace to men of good will," promised by the Angels at the Nativity, and, tried by many sorrows and tribulations, reach at last the per-

S. John xvi.
33.

Rom. v. 3.

Henr.
Harph.

Ps. cxx. 5, 6.

Ps. xxxviii.
12, 13.S. Luke ii.
14.

feet tranquillity of the children of GOD, in their own beloved Home. *Among the daughters.* That is, among all elect souls, loving GOD the FATHER with filial tenderness, but yet *thorny*, as beset with the pricks of original and actual sin, and unable to fulfil His commandments perfectly. And therefore there is only one of whom it is truly written, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all," and yet again, "Of all the flowers Thou hast chosen one lily."

Irimbert.

Prov. xxxi.

29.

2 Esd. v. 24.

Keble,
Christian
Year.

Ave Maria! blessèd Maid,
Lily of Eden's fragrant shade,
Who can express the love
That nurtured thee, so pure and sweet,
Making thy heart a shelter meet
For JESUS' holy dove!

Dion. Carth.

Whereupon the Carthusian: Although there were many holy virgins, yet in respect of the Most Blessed Virgin they seem as though but thorns, in that they had some sinfulness, and though pure in themselves, yet the embers of evil were not utterly quenched in them. But the Virgin Mother of GOD was perfectly freed from all sin, the embers of evil were completely quenched in her, and yet she was filled with the intensest love. Another reminds us that she was indeed among thorns, in that she, like her Son, was a mark for slanderous tongues, she, with her Son, suffered at the Cross. "As a rose groweth among thorns," says the great Swedish Saint, "so grew the Blessed Virgin in this world among troubles; and as the rose increases, so do the thorns likewise; thus as Mary, the choicest of roses, advanced in age, so much the more deeply was she wounded by the thorns of tribulation." Another Saint refers the thorns to Our Lady's kinship to the unbelieving Hebrews. "Sprung from the thorny race of Jews, she shone bodily with the pureness of virgin modesty, and she glowed in soul with the warmth of double charity, she was ever fragrant in good works, and with the unvarying impulse of her heart she soared up towards heavenly things." A Christian poet, six hundred years before the great Bishop of Ostia, had expressed nearly the same thoughts in verse:

Rupert.

S. Birgitt.
Serm. Angel.
16.

S. Pet. Dam.
Serm. 3. de
Nat. B.V.M.

Sedulius.

Et velut in spinis mollis rosa surgit acutis,
Nil quod ludit habens, matremque obscurat honore;
Sic Evas de stirpe sacra veniente Maria,

Virginis antiquæ facinus nova Virgo piavit,
Sicut spina rosam, genuit Judæa Mariam.

As from the sharp thorns springs the gentle rose,
Stingless, and hides its mother with its bloom ;
So blessèd Mary, come of Eva's stem,
A new Maid, purged that elder Maiden's sin.
Thorns bear the rose, Judea Mary bore.

3 As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

When CHRIST took the nature of man, He came down into the wood of this life, and became one of its trees, but a fruitful one, nay, able to make fruitful trees of men however evil and wild. And human life is called a *wood*,¹ because in it are found many things which beset the soul, lurking as wild beasts do in a forest, sluggish when the sun is hot, but active in the darkness. Because the "singular beast" which feeds in the wood had sorely hurt the beautiful vine of human nature, therefore the *apple-tree* was planted in the wood ; which, in that it is a tree, is of like nature with the wood of humanity ; for CHRIST was tempted in our likeness, though without sin. But in that it bears such fruit as to gratify the senses, it is more unlike the rest of the wood than the lily is unlike the thorns. For the pleasantness of the apple is common to three senses, it is beautiful to the sight, fragrant to the smell, and sweet to the taste. So CHRIST is more than the Bride, for He is the joy of our eyes, and the ointment to our smell, and life to us who eat of Him ; but human nature, even if perfected in virtue, is but a flower, not feeding the husbandman, but merely decking itself. For He needs not our good things, whereas we do need His. Therefore the purified soul beholds her Bridegroom made the apple-tree in the wood, that

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Ps. lxxx. 13,
Vulgate.

¹ It is almost a commonplace to note that this figure is used by Dante in the very opening of the Divine Comedy.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,
Mi ritrovai pel una selva oscura,

Chi la diritta via era smarrita.
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte,
Che nel pensier rinnova la paura.

grafting into Himself all the wild boughs of that wood, He may cause them to bring forth fruit like His own. They assign other reasons too why CHRIST is called an *apple-tree*,¹ and several of them dwell on His feeding us with the Gospel, while the Holy Eucharist is the idea which suggests itself to others, as the juiciness of the apple makes it both food and drink, and so CHRIST gives us His Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. A Greek and a Latin commentator, in distant centuries, following up this view, understand here, to make the simile more perfect, a *pomegranate-tree*, (therein agreeing with the Arabic version,) because the juice of that fruit is ruddy and watery, typifying that which flowed from CHRIST's side upon the Cross. They have pushed the metaphor further, and remarked how the grains from which the fruit is named lie enclosed in the ruddy flesh within the rind, just as the members of CHRIST, in the One Church, are united in His Body, crimson with His life-blood :

Theodoret.
S. Ambros.
S. Bernard.
Philo Carp.
Origen.
S. Ans. Laud.

Aponius.
Psellus.

Ovid. Ep. ex
Pont. 15.

Quæ numero tot sunt, quot in horto fertilis arvi
Punica sub lento cortice grana rubent.

Many, as in a fertile orchard's soil
Beneath their slight rind blush the Punic seeds.

Origen.

Among the sons. They vary much in expounding these words. Some will have it that the Angels, or Angels and men together are meant, but S. Bernard protests against this view, on the ground that CHRIST is spoken of as He appeared when made lower than the Angels, and thus, though fairer and more fruitful than the *trees of the wood*, than all mankind, not so glorious to the eye as many trees of the orchard or park. The praise given Him here, observes the Saint, is poor and small, as coming from one who is small. It is not the mighty LORD, highly to be praised, that is commended, but the LORD, small, yet highly to be loved, the little Child Who was born for us. Limiting, then, the word *sons* in this wise, some will have it that the Apostles and Prophets, and the elect generally, GOD's special children by adoption, are here intended, those trees of Eden around the Tree of Life. Others, taking it in a bad sense, refer it to evil men generally,

S. Bernard.
Serm. 48.

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.

Theodoret.
Tres Patr.

¹ It may be observed that modern critics, generally speaking, say that the *citron*, not the *apple*, is the tree denoted by ΠΥΡΡΑ, but the mystical sense is not affected thereby.

as having the wildness and brute terrors of the forest in them, or to the Jews in particular; or, with further restrictions of meaning, many of them see a reference to the crucified Redeemer, hanging on the tree between the two thieves, suffering Himself, as S. Thomas observes, to be fastened to a tree as its fruit, in order to atone for the first sin of man, in plucking the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. *I sat down under His shadow with great delight.* The Hebrew of the first clause, closely followed by the LXX. is, *I delighted, and sat down under His shadow.* The Vulgate, a little differently, *I sat down under the shadow of Him Whom I desired.* There are three things, comments Henry Harph, which cause a shadow, light, medium, and object. CHRIST, in His Divinity, is the Light whence is cast the shadow of GOD. The medium, whose form this shadow takes, is His Manhood, by the fulness of His grace, and the abundance of His merits. The object of the light, which becomes the shadow, is our will, lying, of its own glad accord, under the light divine. And as the shadow moves with every motion of the interposed body which causes it, and accompanies it wherever it goes, so the will which has become the shadow of GOD follows within the guiding of His SPIRIT in everything, and externally imitates the Manhood of the LORD JESUS, and His teaching in all the paths of perfection. Again; the shadow denotes CHRIST's providential care and guardianship of His Church, and of every soul which puts its trust in Him, according to that saying of the Psalmist, "My soul trusteth in Thee, and under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge." Or you may take it, with S. Gregory, of the HOLY SPIRIT, "The Shadow of CHRIST," says he, "is the protection of the HOLY GHOST. For the HOLY GHOST overshadows the soul which He fills, because He allays the heat of every temptation, and while He gently fans the soul with the breeze of His inspiration He banishes whatever baneful heat it had been enduring." Yet again, S. Bernard tells us that faith, being the evidence of things not seen, is shadowy and dark, as we walk by faith and not by sight, although that very shadow is leading us to the full glory of the heavenly vision. And whereas it is not said *I delight*, and *I sit*; but, *I delighted*, and *I sat*; we may understand the Church speaking of the time when she was yet in the Syna-

Rupert.
Aponius.
S. Bernard.
Psellus.
S. Thomas
Aquinas,
Comp. Theol.
c. 228.

Henr.
Harphius.

Origen.
Cassiodor.
S. Ans. Laud.

Ps. lvii. 1.

S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 48.

Origen.
Philo Carp.
S. Ambros.

gogue, abiding under the Law, which is but the shadow of the Gospel, and even then by anticipation rejoicing and trusting in CHRIST alone, looking hopefully for the Man who should "be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And they remind us how Elijah lay down under the shadow of a juniper-tree, and arising, found a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. So, those who come near to the Cross, find the *shadow* of CHRIST fall on them in the mysterious sacramental veils wherewith His Body and Blood are hidden from our eyes. Another reminds us that the dark sayings and hidden things of Holy Scripture, the chosen meditation of the faithful soul, are the shadow of CHRIST Himself; and the further explanation that every foretaste given us here in contemplation, is but the shadow of the Beatific Vision, has not been forgotten. Again; as the Cross is the Tree which throws the shadow, every sorrow and trouble endured for CHRIST's sake in this world is not merely endured, but *delighted* in by the faithful soul, which desires to be conformed to His Passion.

Bonar.

Oppressed with noonday's scorching heat,
To yonder Cross I flee;
Beneath its shelter take my seat,
No shade like this for me!

Beneath that Cross clear waters burst,
A fountain sparkling free;
And there I quench my desert thirst,
No spring like this for me!

A stranger here, I pitch my tent
Beneath this spreading tree;
Here shall my pilgrim life be spent,
No home like this for me!

For burthened ones a resting-place
Beside that Cross I see;
Here cast I off my weariness,
No rest like this for me.

Origen.

And so resting, she advances in holiness and in likeness to Him, because as the day passes from noon towards evening, the shadows become longer, and cover a greater space. Of none is it so truly said,

I sat down under His shadow, implying long and happy rest, as of her concerning whom the Angel spake, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," for her abiding in the peace of GOD was of no brief hour, but for all time. They tell us too how the Saints, striving to imitate the Sun of Righteousness, are His shadows, a delight to those who hearken to their teaching and follow their examples. *And His fruit was sweet to my taste.* There are many such fruits, for the Tree of Life bears twelve, besides those fruits of the Spirit which the Apostle counts up for us. And first, it is the preaching of CHRIST'S Passion, and that which comes thence, the remission of our sins. Then, there is the meditation on GOD'S love, a true sustenance of the soul, and the contemplation of the Godhead, Manhood, and Life of CHRIST, whereof a Saint tells us: "CHRIST Himself is a fruitful Tree, planted in our hearts by faith, which tree, if our soul love as it deserves, and tend carefully, brings forth sweet and wholesome fruits. When the soul eagerly gathers and eats of these, she esteems all worldly pleasures as inferior to their sweetness." Again; the Holy Eucharist, as noted above, is the *fruit* of that Tree which gives us both food and drink. He Himself, when born for us, the fruit of the overshadowing SPIRIT, was sweet to His Mother as she pressed her lips to Him. Further; as fruit is the ultimate product of the tree, so action is the ultimate product of man's will put into exercise, and when that will is moved by a higher influence than any of earth, then man's good works are the fruit of the SPIRIT, pleasant to the palate, and not biting, and yet palling, like earthly delights. Words are but leaves; devout thoughts and inward devotion are the flower; but only the perfect Christian life is the fruit. And they tell us, too, that the deeper insight into the things of GOD which is attained by contemplative Saints in mystic vision is, in an especial manner, the fruit of that same Tree which gives us the other fruits of refreshment and consolation in our hungering and thirsting after righteousness here below, and who are bidden to "taste and see how gracious the LORD is," and find Him indeed *sweet* to their *taste* or *palate*, that spiritual understanding without which the choicest dainties are insipid.

Rupert.

S. Luke i.
35.

Tres Patr.

Rev. xxii. 2.
Gal. v. 22.
S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

Origen.

S. Greg. M.

Aponius.
S. Bernard.
Rupert.
Dion. Carth.Heur.
Harph.Dion. Carth.
Thom.
Vercell.

Ps. xxxiv. 8.

Tres Patr.

4 He brought me to the banqueting-house,
and his banner over me was love.

The banqueting-house. More exactly, with LXX. and margin of A. V., *the house of wine.* The Vulgate is but little different, *the chamber of wine.* They take the words, firstly, of admission into the Catholic Church, wherein alone is the wine of the SPIRIT to be found. Next; it is explained of Holy Scripture, a view not very remote from that of the Targum, which calls Mount Sinai the house where the wine of the Law was stored up for Israel. That, after all, remarks Cardinal Hugo, was only the chamber of water, the mere outward and typical sense. Not till CHRIST came for His bridal with the Church, was the water turned into wine, and the inner mystical meaning revealed. But as the revelation was not completely given till the advent of the PARACLETE, some explain the *house of wine* to be that upper chamber in Jerusalem where the disciples were gathered together on the Day of Pentecost. "Do you not think," asks S. Bernard, "that the *chamber of wine* is that dwelling where the disciples were assembled, when 'suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting,' and fulfilled the prophecy of Joel? Might not each of them, going forth inebriated with the plenteousness of that house, and given to drink of such pleasure as out of a river, truly say, 'The King hath brought me into the chamber of wine?'" This was that new wine put into new bottles, of which the LORD spake, so that the Jews were in one sense right when they said, "These men are full of new wine."

Theodoret.
Cassiodor.
Hugo Victorin.
S. Greg. M.
Targum.

Hugo Card.

S. Just. Org.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 49.

Acts ii. 2.

Beda.

S. Bernard.

Acts ii. 13.

Adam. Vict.
The Sequence,
Lux jucunda
for Pentecost.

Utres novi, non vetusti,
Sunt capaces novi musti;
Vasa parat vidua;
Dat liquorem Helisæus,
Nobis sacrum rorem Deus,
Si corda sint congrua.

Bottles new, no longer olden,
Hold that wine, so new and golden;
Lo, the widow's jars are here:
Oil Elisha is renewing,
GOD gives us His own bedewing,
If our hearts prepared appear.

Again; remembering that it is written, "Wisdom hath

buildd her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars : she hath killed her beasts ; she hath mingled her wine ; she hath also furnished her table," some explain the *house of wine* to be the Altar of God, where the Cup of Salvation, the Wine which truly maketh glad the heart of man, is given by the Bridegroom to His love. And with this sense the *banqueting-house* of the A. V. best accords. Also they see here a reference to the progress of the soul in prayer and contemplation, when God bestows the wine of comfort, joy, love, and fervour. First, as the Greek Fathers tell us, by meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation, because CHRIST'S Human Body is the house wherein dwells God the WORD, the true Wine of the soul. Then, as a great Latin Doctor adds, "What can we better understand by the *chamber of wine* than the hidden contemplation of eternity? In this eternity the holy Angels are inebriated with the wine of wisdom, when, beholding God face to face, they are filled with every spiritual delight. Into this the holy soul enters, if it leave all temporal things behind, and be brought in by the Bridegroom, and there tastes whatsoever is bestowed upon it of those delights of the Angels. And if as yet, because still detained in a corruptible body, she cannot fill herself completely; nevertheless, even from that very little which she can hurriedly take, she understands how much she ought to love that which she does love." Nay, more, add others, for the draughts she there imbibes make her utterly forget everything else, and take from her all wish, yea, all power, of returning to her former life. And lastly; the *house of wine* is interpreted of the heavenly mansion where the marriage-feast of the Lamb is made ready. And the Church says of this, not, *He will bring me in*, but, *He brought me in*. And that for two reasons, first, because His promise is so sure, that a thing pledged by Him is as certain as though it were already past; and again, He has bestowed so many foretastes of everlasting blessedness even here on earth that we may truly say, *He brought me into the banqueting-house*, where the Saints assemble from the East and the West, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

And His banner over me was love. Little doubt what that banner is, the sign of that love greater than which no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Prov. ix.
1, 2.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
Rupert.
Psellus.
S. Pasch.
Radb.

Tres Patr.

S. Greg. M.

Honorius.
Hugo Card.

Dion. Carth.

Origen.

Salve Crux, arbor
Vitæ præclara,
CHRISTI vexillum,
Thronus et ara.

Hail, O Cross, Life's Tree
Glorious alone,
CHRIST JESUS' banner,
Altar, and throne.

But it will not be the token of warfare in the House of Wine on high, as it is in the Church Militant on earth. There it will be, as the same hymn continues, the emblem of past victory, the pledge of everlasting peace, and the glory of the triumphant Saints :

Crux cœlestis
Signum victoriae,
Belli robur
Et palma gloriæ.

Cross of the heavens,
Victory's crown,
Strength in the battle,
Palm of renown.

- Ghislerius. Here, the office of the banner is manifold. First, it is the summons to the nation, to assemble the host. And so it is written, "Lift up a standard for the people." Isa. lxii. 10.
- Jer. li. 27. Next, it is the signal for the battle: "Set ye up a standard in the lands, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her." Thirdly, the great banner marks the tent of the Leader, for Numb. ii. 2. "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." And in all these ways the Cross of CHRIST is the banner of the Church. But the Vulgate reads, less exactly, *He set love in order over me. Ordinavit in me charitatem.* "Love," observes S. Jerome, writing to Marcella, "has no order, and impatience knows no measure, and therefore this is a hard thing." But GOD is the author of order, not of confusion, and therefore the first way in which we are taught His love in order is by contemplation of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, wherein we learn first, the Name of the FATHER, Who so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten SON for it; secondly, the Name of the SON, the Eternal Wisdom Who loved us and gave Himself for us; thirdly, the Name of the HOLY GHOST, the SPIRIT of love, Who comforts and strengthens us. And our order is therefore that we
- S. Hieron.
Ep. ad
Marcell.
- Aponius.

are to love the LORD our GOD with all our heart ; with all our mind ; and with all our strength. He *set love in order*, for He loved us first, and thus drew us on to love Him. S. Bernard understands the gift of spiritual tact and discretion, which regulates and guides our zeal, teaching us what things are to be preferred to others,—the love of GOD to the love of man ; heaven to earth ; eternity to time ; the soul to the flesh. But love is also divided into active and affective, and it is after the order of GOD's law that active love has to busy itself with less perfect things, and persons, for their sakes, rather than for its own, when it would prefer rising with affective love, to the contemplation of heavenly things. It is to be noted that the LXX. takes this whole verse as addressed by the Bride to the companions of the Bridegroom, and reads, *Bring ye me into the house of wine, set love in order over me*, applying the words first to the Jewish Church calling on the Prophets to lead her to CHRIST, then of the Christian Church appealing to the Apostles and Doctors ; and afterwards of faithful souls asking for further instruction in divine mysteries, and for guidance in their affections. It has thus been not inaptly applied to postulants for the Religious Life, asking for admission from Superiors, and instruction in the rule and order which they propose to follow. The Vulgate may also be explained to mean, *He set love in array over me* ; that is, as my chief and leader in the battle, teaching me that in all things charity is the more excellent way. Or, again, *He arrayed his love against me*, attacking the fortress of my heart with power which I could not resist, entering it as its Lord and Conqueror, and setting His banner in token of victory over its highest battlements.

Cassiodor.
Beda.
S. Bernard.
Serm. 49,
and 50.

Origen.
Philo Carp.

De Ponte.
Ghislerius.

Hugo Card.

Sanchez.

O generous love ! that He who smote
In man for man the foe,
The double agony in man
For man should undergo ;

And in the garden secretly,
And on the Cross on high,
Should teach His brethren, and inspire,
To suffer and to die.

J. H. New-
man, *Dream
of Gerontius.*

5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.

The version before us seems to be the intreaty of

- the Church for the Holy Eucharist under its two forms, the *flagons* denoting the chalice, and the *apples* the species of Bread, true medicine of the soul which longs for CHRIST. But there is a twofold difficulty in accepting this apparently obvious meaning. In the first place, the Bride speaks not to the Bridegroom, but to His friends, for the verbs are in the plural, and He alone would be asked to give Himself. Next, the A. V. is at variance with the older translations and with modern criticism. The LXX. reads, *Strengthen me with ointments, strew me with apples, for I am wounded with love.* The *ointments* are those which have been poured forth, the *apples* are the fruit of that Tree under whose shadow the Bride sat down. And the words are thus, notes Theodoret, a petition to the Bridegroom's friends to heap up about her every memory of His love, to guard her against herself, to hinder her from straying to any other than Him.
- Theodoret.
- S. Ambros. Thus too a Western Doctor, following the same reading, tells us that the *ointment* is that which CHRIST shed, the *apples*, what hung upon the Tree. Others, however, explain the *ointments* to be the graces of the HOLY SPIRIT, and particularly that of ghostly strength, while the *apples* are discourses on divine things, sweet to the palate of the Bride. The Vulgate is somewhat different: *Prop me with flowers, surround me with apples.* It is, says S. Gregory, the mother calling her children round her bed, that in seeing their beauty and growth she may find some comfort, the *flowers* being the younger and weaker offspring, the beginners in the spiritual life; the *apples*, those who have gone on further towards perfection. And with this agrees Origen's interpretation, which sees catechumens and faithful souls in the two, and also that of Aponius, who explains the *flowers* of all pure souls, and the *apples* of the Apostles, growing out of CHRIST, as out of a tree, by His teaching. Again, the words have been aptly taken to denote severally the words and the deeds of CHRIST, which the Bride beseeches His companions to recall to her memory, lest she should fail to bear them in mind; and thus she looks at them and turns them over lovingly as the letters and gifts of her absent Bridegroom. Hermann Hugo reminds us that it is no earthly flowers and fruits that she desires, but roses and lilies and apples, such as S. Dorothea in the legend sent to Theophilus by the hand of an Angel,
- S. Greg. M.
- Tres Patr.
- Origen.
- Aponius.
- Titelmann.
- Pia Desid. iii. 2.

to tell him of her arrival after martyrdom in the garden of God, blooming in its pride when earth was lying frozen in the grasp of winter. The Bride would fain have many such flowers heaped around her,—roses by the martyrs; lilies by the virgins; violets by the confessors and penitents; and apples by all who do good works in the Church, and bring forth fruit to perfection. And yet again, the flowers may well be the prayers of the faithful, and the apples their works, by which the Church in general, or any soul in particular, may be aided. Modern criticism translates the first clause of the verse, *strengthen me with raisin-cakes*, and the latter, *strew my bed with apples*, (i.e. probably, *apple-leaves*.) The *raisin-cakes*, made of dried grapes, out of which the wine has been pressed, but still retaining much sweetness, and amongst the most satisfying of foods, and the *apples*, or their *leaves*, used, not for sustenance, but for a bed whereon to recline, most fitly typify that spiritual communion of the faithful soul which is cut off, by one cause or another, from opportunities of Sacramental feeding at the Altar of God. Strength and rest are to be had even thus, and the sick may be healed by touching the hem of JESU'S garment.

Hugo Card.

De Wette.
Hitzig.
Cf. 1 Sam.
xxx. 12.

LORD, I cannot seek Thee
At Thine Altar-throne,
Yet may I receive Thee,
Friendless and alone.

*Lyra Eucha-
ristica.*

Far from Priest and Altar,
CHRIST, to Thee I cry,
Come to me in spirit,
Let me feel Thee nigh.

In my silent worship
Let me share the Feast,
Be Thy Love the Altar,
Be Thyself the Priest.

For I am sick of love. O happy infirmity, where the "sickness is not unto death," but unto life, "for the glory of GOD!" O happy fever, that proceedeth not from a consuming, but a perfecting fire! O happy disorder, wherein the soul relisheth no earthly things, but desires only the savour of heavenly food! The LXX. reads, *wounded with love*; that is, as all the Easterns agree, with the love of GOD. And thus S. Augustine says, "She calls herself wounded with love. For she loved, and did not yet possess; she grieved,

Gisten.
S. John xi. 4.Origen.
Tres Patr.
S. Basil. M.S. Aug. in
Ps. xxxvii.

because she had not yet; therefore, if she grieved, she was wounded, but the wound hurried her to true healthfulness. For he who is not wounded with this wound, never can attain to true health." Every virtue, observes Origen, wherewith the soul is affected, is as it were an arrow of GOD shot at the soul, arrows that are very sharp, so that it is subdued unto Him. "GOD," says an ancient Father, "hurled His SON at me, His BRIDE, as at a target, a javelin whereof is said by the Prophet, 'In the shadow of His hand hath He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft.' That arrow, piercing me with its point of faith, hath brought its Archer together with it, according to that saying, 'I and My FATHER are one.' 'We will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'" And so a quaint old English poet says :

Origen.
S. Hieron.
Ep. 140.
Ps. xlv. 6.
S. Greg.
Nyssen.
Isa. xlix. 2.

S. John x.
30; xiv. 23.

Francis
Quarles,
*School of
the Heart,*
33.

LORD, empty all Thy quivers, let there be
No corner of my spacious heart left free,
Till all be but one wound, wherein
No subtle sight-aborring sin
May lurk in secret, unespied by Thee,
Or reign in power, unsubdued by Thee,
Perfect Thy purchased victory,
That Thou may'st ride triumphantly,
And leading captive all captivity
May'st put an end to enmity in me.

Then, blesséd Archer, in requital, I
To shoot Thine arrows back again will try;
By prayers and praises, sighs and sobs,
By vows and tears, by groans and throbs,
I'll see if I can pierce and wound Thine Heart,
And vanquish Thee again by Thine own art;
Or, that we may at once provide
For all mishaps that may betide
Shoot Thou Thyself, Thy polished shaft, to me,
And I will shoot my broken heart to Thee.

The interpreters of the Vulgate reading, which is also that of A.V., explain the words to denote the eager, restless longing of the exiled soul for the Heavenly Country, which gives her strong distaste for earthly things, and makes her languid in all that regards them. And her sickness, adds another, is threefold. She is sick because of her own vileness, which she fears will repel her Spouse; sick with anxiety, lest she should fall short in those good works which He desires; sick by reason of her frailty, lest she should become cold and lax through want of perseverance. And accord-

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.

Hugo Card.

ingly, she asks for three remedies against these,—*flowers*, to give her beauty; *apples*, to give her fruit; and, in the next verse, His own *Hand* to be her stay. None has expressed this yearning for heaven, this sickness of earth, both springing from love, better than S. Teresa.

Ah, what a length does life appear,
How hard to bear this exile here,
How hard from weary day to day
To pine without relief:
The yearning hope to break away
From this my prison-house of clay
Inspires so sharp a grief,
That overcome I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

S. Teresa.
The Rhythm,
Vivo sin vivir
in me.

* * * * *

Ah, LORD, my Light and living Breath,
Take me, O take me from this death,
And burst the bars that sever me
From my true life above.
Think how I die Thy Face to see,
And cannot live away from Thee,
O my eternal Love.
And ever, ever weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

And in this sickness of love, comments a great master of the ascetic life, the Bride passes out of herself, and falls into a death which is life, a trance wherein, no longer able to sustain herself, she is stayed up in the everlasting Arms, and therefore adds, as she feels them,

Gerson.
Sympsalma
in Cant.

6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

“The Bridegroom cannot bear the suffering of His Bride, He is at hand; for He cannot delay when called by such longings. And because He finds that she was faithful in her tasks, and eager for gain while He was absent, in that she desired to have flowers and apples to be added to her, He returns to her now with an even more spontaneous reward of grace. He supports her reclining head with one of His arms, holding the other ready to embrace her, and cherish her in His bosom.” And on the difference between these two hands, let us hear the Doctor of Grace: “*His left hand is under my head*, for He will not leave me even

S. Bernard.
Serm. 57.

S. August.
in Ps. cxliv.

- in temporal needs and desires, but nevertheless the left hand will be *under* my head, not put before it, but beneath it, that *His right hand* may embrace me, promising me everlasting life. Thus is fulfilled that saying of the Apostle: 'Having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' What of that which now is? *His left hand is under my head.* What of that to come? *His right hand doth embrace me.*
- S. Greg. M. Do ye seek things for time? 'Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD,' that is, the right hand, 'and all these things shall be added unto you.' Ye shall have, saith S. Pet. Dam. Ep. 37. He, riches and glory, and in the world to come life everlasting. With the left hand I will sustain your weakness, with the right I will crown your perfection." Again, the same Saint in another place observes that the right hand is above, the left hand below; the left for consolation, the right for protection. Our head, that is, our faith, where CHRIST dwells, rests on the left hand, because we set that faith above all temporal things, and then, truly, the right hand embraces us.
- In Ps. cxx. But, writes another Father, even the temporal things here intended are not earthly, rather they are Divine. "GOD'S *left hand* means the pledge of the HOLY SPIRIT, the understanding of the sacred Scriptures, and such like gifts and graces whereby Holy Church is comforted in the present life. By the *right hand* is denoted the blessedness of the Heavenly Country, and by the *head* the guiding principle of the soul. Therefore the Bridegroom's left hand is under the Bride's head, because the Church receives all these gifts to the end that she may learn to sigh for things eternal. And the right hand of the Bridegroom embraces her, because the whole aim of the Church or of the faithful soul is that she may at length attain everlasting blessedness, and rejoice in the vision of her Maker. It is well said, therefore, that the Bridegroom's left hand is under the Bride's head, and then that His right hand embraces her, because no one can arrive at the embraces of eternal bliss, unless he strive to be partaker here of heavenly mysteries and Divine gifts." And thus too, more tersely, S. Bernard: "The left hand raises, the left clasps. The left heals and justifies, the right embraces and blesses. In His left hand are merits, in His right rewards. In His right, I say, delights; in His left, medicines." Another view sees in the left hand, under the head, as giving a certain
- S. Greg. M.
1 Tim. iv. 8.
S. Just. Org.
S. Mat. vi. 33.
S. Pet. Dam. Ep. 37.
In Ps. cxx.
Cassiodor.
Philo Carp. Beda.
Serm. 4, in Nativ. Dom.
S. Hieron. 4, in Zech.

degree of support, the old Law, but in the loving embrace of the right the tidings of the Gospel. Again, the left hand is taken to denote punishment and suffering, the right to be blessings and rewards. And in this sense an Eastern Father writes: "*His left hand is under my head*, that is, I am lifted up above sufferings, and not pressed down under them, because I am united to my Bridegroom, and heed Him eagerly. *His right hand shall embrace me*; that is, He will deck me with His bounties, and as though embracing, and grasping, and fulfilling my desire, heap me therewith." So too S. Bernard tells us that when we have attained that love which casteth out servile fear, GOD's left hand of threatening is *under* our heads, and we are bold enough, in confident hope, to draw close to that right hand wherein are His promises; but that when we fear Him more than we love or hope, when dread of wrath to come is our chief sentiment, then His left hand is *over* our heads. Another, accepting the view that the left hand denotes punishment and suffering, applies it in a different and very beautiful way. "The scaffold, and torments of divers punishments, seemed to the foolish and ungodly shameful and hateful, but to the Martyrs, and to all who have been brought into the hall of wisdom, to be joyous delights, and beds of rest for the weary. Beds whereon fire rouses only a sportive smile; whereon the amphitheatre of the tried soul is turned into a paradise, the gratings and frying-pans become the softest feathers, the balls of flame turn to the sweetest flowers, melted lead into balmy unguents, the scourges, and rods, and toothed irons, become the most delicate brushes, wherewith the soul, cleansed from every stain of sin, and called back to her former beauty, is restored to her Creator. For death undergone for CHRIST's sake is preferred as more precious than any joy, any pleasure, or the most costly gem. These, then, are the delights of holy souls for winning everlasting joys, where the Church, fainting in delight, is glad of being held in the embrace of CHRIST her Beloved, that she may be counted worthy to bear the most savage tortures for her Maker. The left hand under her head may well be the shield of faith, held in the warrior's left hand as he fights; and by the embrace of the right hand we may understand the sword of prayer, wherewith he is ever armed on the right. With one of these arms the enemy is par-

Theodoret.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 51.

Aponius.

Thom.
Vercell.

Isa. liii. 2.

Origen.

Prov. iii. 16.

S. Bern. de
Dilig. Deo.

ried, with the other he is laid low." Others see in the first clause the highest grade of mystic contemplation, which is GOD's left hand under the head of intellectual meditation in the illuminative way, while the embrace of the right hand denotes the close union of the loving will with Him in the unitive way. But the loveliest interpretation of all is that which sees in the left hand the Manhood of the Eternal WORD, and all the works wrought by Him after His Incarnation, when He was indeed *under* our head, made lower not only than the Angels, but than men, a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised and rejected, marred more than any other, with no beauty that we should desire Him, so that we esteemed Him not; and in the Right Hand the Godhead of the Crucified One, full of Divine gifts, the place of everlasting glory and blessedness. And thus Origen says: "That part of the WORD of GOD which existed before His taking flesh in this dispensation, may well be His Right Hand; that which exists through His Incarnation may be called the left. Whence the left hand is said to have riches and honour. For through His Incarnation He sought for riches and honour, that is, the salvation of all. In His right hand is said to be length of days, whereby without doubt that part which was in the beginning with GOD, which was GOD the WORD, is denoted as eternal. This left hand then, the Church, whose Head is CHRIST, desires to have under her head, that it may be protected by faith in the Incarnation; but to be embraced by His right, that is, to know and to be taught those things which were dark and hidden before the time of the dispensation which began when He took flesh. The right hand is there where we must hold that all things are wherein is nought of the misery of sin, nought of the fall of weakness. Here is the left hand, where He cured our wounds, and carried our iniquities, made Himself sin and a curse for us. All these, although they do as it were support the head and faith of the Church, may fitly be called the left hand of the WORD of GOD." And in the same strain S. Bernard observes, "In the left hand the holy soul recalls to mind that love, greater than which none is, that He laid down His life for His friends; in the right she remembers the Beatific Vision which He promised to His friends, and the joy in presence of His majesty." And therefore the Church looks for-

ward in hopeful awe for the coming of that Great Day when the sheep and the goats shall be portioned, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, trusting that then He will set her on His right hand in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours, denoting the various graces and merits of the holy souls whom He has purified by suffering here. Ps. xlv

7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The Vulgate and LXX. are both at variance with this version. The former reads, *I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the she-goats, and by the stags of the fields, that ye stir not, nor awake My love (fem.) until she please.* "It is," observes Cassiodorus, "the voice of the Bridegroom, adjuring the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, souls bent on everlasting desires, and seeking the Vision of Peace, not to rouse or disturb the reposing Bride. That is, do not disturb or try to engage in outer works the soul which is busied in Divine contemplation, prayers, or reading, *until she will*, to wit, until at the close of her time of contemplation, she desires, warned by her bodily weakness, to be roused from her sleep of everlasting rest, and to proceed to her temporal duties. Let us see then by what He adjures the daughters of Jerusalem. By the *she-goats* and the *stags of the fields*. She-goats and stags are clean beasts, hostile to serpents and poisons. They denote the virtues of the Saints, which shine with spiritual clearness, and are not merely on their guard against the venom of the devil's craft, but actually pursue it and bring it to nothing." S. Gregory, Beda. S. Greg. M.

agreeing with most of this explanation, prefers to understand the *daughters* to be weakly and effeminate souls, who prefer the temporal aspects of religion to the eternal ones, and therefore are eager to engage the Church chiefly in external works, instead of trusting to her better judgment as to the share to be given to each. S. Justus of Urgel applies the words very aptly to the wisdom of Christian teachers in not forcing the wills of the faithful towards counsels of perfection, but leaving, instead, some room for voluntary and spontaneous offering. And he cites S. Paul's counsel, 1 Cor. vii. 25, 35. not command, to virgins, and his advice to Philemon, Philem. 14. S. Just. Org.

S. Mat. xix. 12, 21. as also the LORD's own language respecting eunuchs, and to the young man whom He told to sell that he had, and give to the poor, in illustration of his comment. The palace of CHRIST, as another tells us, has not only many chambers and a banqueting-house, but also a great park, wherein are many souls, once wild in the woods of Gentile philosophy, but now captured by the hunters of the Church, and tamed for the delight of the daughters of Jerusalem, and set to disport themselves in the fields of Holy Writ, retaining their old swiftness and acute senses, but employing them better than before, when, as Platonic and Stoic teachers, they were only seeking after that GOD whom they have now found. They are urged to be patient with the Church, and to let her have her sleep out, to recruit her strength, when they would fain see their own intellectual eagerness in the pursuit of Divine knowledge universally shared. Again, it may be an appeal to all devout and peaceful souls, in the name of the Patriarchs and Seers of the Old Testament, and of the Apostles and Doctors of the New, not to interfere with the pious employments of their brethren on any pretext, but to rejoice in any spiritual advantage they may gain therein. Or you may take it as the address of CHRIST to the children of the earthly Jerusalem, the Scribes and Pharisees, not to interfere with or persecute the Christian Church, and this in the name of those swift ministering spirits, the Angels, who might otherwise be agents of punishment to them, as they had been of old to the Egyptians and Canaanites, when they meddled with the Synagogue. Cardinal Hugo, viewing the text as a warning against spiritual impatience to arrive at results before the means have been got ready, compares the necessary pause to the filling of cups before a feast can begin, to the tuning of instruments before a concert, to the whetting of arrows and hooks before a hunting-match, with other similes of the kind. And Rupert, taking the *daughters of Jerusalem* literally, interprets the passage of a warning to them, in the name of the Patriarchs, not to interrupt the silence of the Mother of GOD touching the mysterious burden of her womb, till it should please her to speak, lest Herod should learn the truth too soon, and find the Child to slay Him.

Titelman.

Hugo Card.

Rupert.

The LXX. read, *I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the forces and powers of the field, if ye*

shall stir up or awake the love so long as she (or he) please. And this is explained by Origen to mean that the Church is God's husbandry, but that each soul has its own plot in the great field, to till for Him and plant with virtues and good works. The Bride urges the daughters of the heavenly Jerusalem, by all that is dearest to them in these gardens of their souls, that if they have once begun to stir up and rouse love, which was sleeping, they are not to check its rising within any narrower bounds than those of the Bridegroom's will, because there should be no other measure to our love of God. It matters not what patience or suffering on the Bride's part this may involve, for it is her part to obey His will so long as He manifests it. S. Gregory Nyssen, agreeing in other respects with this, will have the forces and powers of the field to denote the Angels, whom the elect souls are hereby enjoined to imitate. Psellus, on the other hand, sees here a continuance of the former intreaty of the Bride that she may be decked for her Bridegroom, and represents her as calling on the Angels to increase in every way her love for Him, until His will for the salvation of all mankind may be fulfilled in her. Another very singular view is that of Philo, who takes the words as those of a holy soul beseeching other Saints not to urge God, Who is love, to call her to Himself by death, until His own good time, that she may employ herself in His service here below, according to that saying, "Until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to all them that are yet for to come." The Greek Fathers, it will thus be seen, agree with the A. V. in ascribing the words to the Bride, and represent Love himself, whether God, or a faculty of the soul, as the sleeper. Herein they are also in accord with the Targum, which represents the words as an address of Moses, after the return of the spies, adjuring the people of Israel by the LORD of Hosts and the powers of the land of Israel,¹ not to rouse the LORD, nor to attempt to enter Canaan until

Origen.

S. Epiphanius.
S. Greg. Nyss.

Psellus.

Philo Carp.

Ps. lxxi. 16.

Targum.

¹ Hence it appears that the Targum accepts the LXX., "forces" and "powers," for "gazelles" and "hinds," obviously referring צבאות to the root צָבָא "he went out to war"

and taking אֱלֹהִים hinds, as though it were equivalent to אֱלִים (from the same ultimate root אָל) princes or chieftains. 2 Kings xxiv. 15.

His will should allow of it, at the end of the forty years. This, taken in conjunction with some of the patristic comments given above, will lead us on to what is probably the true mystical import of the words. The Bride urges all devout souls, in the name of those other souls which, though less perfect, and not yet as meek and docile as the sheep of CHRIST's fold, are yet dear to the Good Shepherd, not to hasten God's good time by impatience, but to let patience have her perfect work. Storms and persecutions may rage round the ship of the Church, but if He be in the ship, even though asleep on a pillow, it is the truest faith to await His waking, instead of rousing Him entirely from slumber, only to rebuke our incredulity. Again; as the word is not *Beloved*, but *Love*, we may well see here counsel against hurrying on souls too fast in religious growth, lest undue forcing should make them weakly exotics, rather than hardy, vigorous, and fruitful plants. It is, in other terms, the Apostle's counsel to give milk to babes and meat to the full-grown only, and not to urge immature Christians to apply to themselves language and usages fitted only for the tried athletes of the Faith. Still further is it a warning against arousing CHRIST, by our sins, to stand up in judgment against us, because each of us has not been in soul a true Spouse to Him, "as the loving hind and pleasant roe."

Ainsworth.

Prov. v. 19.

8 The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart :

S. Ambros.

The first act of this dramatic idyl closed with the preceding verse, wherein the Bride warns her companions against disturbing the slumber of the Bridegroom. Now, His time for waking has come, she hears His voice and sees Him, from a distance, hastening to her, and the second stage of the action—wherein some commentators not unfitly see typified the first efforts of the Pentecostal Church—begins with awaiting His nearer approach to perfect union. The Targum, which refers the words to God's message by Moses to Israel in Egypt, and to His Passover, as He went slaying the first-born of the Egyptians, while

Targum.

sparing the houses marked with the blood of the Lamb, gives, as it were, the key to all subsequent expositions. *The voice of my Beloved!* At first it was only by His voice that CHRIST was known by the Church, for He sent it before Him by His prophets, and was only heard, not seen; while His people had merely the promise of His Advent announced to them, according to that saying of the Apostle, "GOD, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON." And therefore, as the present verse represents the last few moments before His Advent, rather than that very time itself, this *Voice* has been aptly said to be that of the great Fore-runner, the "Voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD." And this exposition receives support from a saying of the Baptist himself, wherein he most plainly refers to this very passage of the Song: "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice." Another and singular view is, that the Voice of the Beloved is that call of the dead to resurrection, which will precede His second Advent to judge the world. A Latin Father, following the reading which makes the Bride the sleeper, bids us note how light her slumber is, how she is roused at once by the first tones of the Bridegroom's voice, heard in Holy Writ, in prayer, or in meditation, according to His own saying, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." A Greek commentator, on the other hand, bids us observe how difficult true contemplation is, how we do but hear the voice, without seeing the form, of the WORD of GOD, and how, even when He does appear, the swiftness of His movements is such as to dazzle the eye, as He does not remain fixed that we may gaze, but comes rapidly on. And from this is drawn counsel, where the Western writer does but state a fact, to wit, the need of the soul being on the alert to catch the first intimation of her Bridegroom's presence. If He will but speak to her, it is enough, because "the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." Again; as the time of silence and waiting was said above to be applicable to the abiding of the Apostles in Jerusalem during the ten days of expectation; the Voice here may fitly be taken of the mighty rushing wind of Pentecost,

Origen.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.
Heb. i. 1.Tres Patr.
Isa. xl. 3.
S. Mark i. 3.Hengsten-
berg.
S. John iii.
29.

S. Just. Org.

Aponius.

S. John
xviii. 37.S. Greg.
Nyss.

S. John x. 4.

Ghislerius.

Corn. à Lap. which gave the Apostles utterance, called the Voice of the Beloved, because of the mission of the Comforter from the SON. And so it is written: "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." *Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.* "I long," cries a Saint, putting words into the mouth of the Bride, "that love should be stirred up for me. I count myself wounded with love, and love itself hastens to me the more. I said, Come, it leaps and skips. I ask Him to come with grace. He worketh the increase of graces, and as He comes, brings with Him additional grace; nay, He gains it Himself in coming, because even He desires to please His beloved. He leaps upon the high places, that He may ascend to His Bride. For the chamber of the Bride is the Judgment-seat of CHRIST." He leaps on the Church, He skippeth on the Synagogue. He leaps on the Gentiles, He skippeth on the Jews. Let us behold Him leaping. He leaps from heaven into the Virgin's womb, from the womb into the manger, from the manger into Jordan, from Jordan to the Cross, from the Cross to the grave, from the grave into heaven. And there is an ancient tradition of the Church, that the LORD, in the course of His Ascension, tarried one day with each of the nine orders of the Angelic hierarchy, arriving on the tenth at the right hand of the FATHER, and thereupon sending the HOLY GHOST down on the Apostles. For this reason, they say, it is that the *Kyrie Eleison* is said nine times in the Mass, and ended with the *Gloria Patri*. All this, observes S. Gregory, was *leaping on the mountains*, because beyond man's reach, though for the most part visible to him, and also because surpassing, in the might of His loving-kindness, all that the greatest Saints have ever done. S. Bernard, pointing out that the Bridegroom is said first to leap over *mountains*, and then over *hills*, refers the verse to the humiliation of GOD the SON, passing from His throne in the highest, revealing, as He goes down through the choirs of angels, the wonderful mystery of His love, hidden from all generations. He reaches the mightiest Spirits, still unspeakably below Himself, and passing by them, comes to the lowlier powers, and leaves even these far above Him, made, as He was, lower than the Angels for our sakes, and found in fashion as a man. Not only so, but He is said to leap over the Angels for an-

S. John
xvi. 14.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 29, in
Evang.

Hugo Card.

In loc.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 53.

other cause also, His far greater eagerness to minister to the heirs of salvation, rejoicing as a giant to run His race. "He leaped over Gabriel, and came before him to the Virgin, as the Archangel himself beareth witness, saying, 'Hail, full of grace, the LORD is with thee.' What? dost thou find Him in the womb Whom thou leftest but now? How is this? 'He did fly, yea, He did fly before on the wings of the wind.' Thou art vanquished, O Archangel; He who sent thee forward hath leaped over thee." And the same Saint reminds us in another place how often the LORD literally chose a mountain for His manifestations, preaching His first discourse to the people on one, praying on another, transfigured on a third, crucified on a fourth, and ascending again from that Mount of Olives which had been His frequent resort.

Ps. xix. 5.
Serm. 64.

Ps. xviii. 10,
Vulg.

Serm. 4, in
Ascens.

Thrice for us the WORD Incarnate high on holy hills was set, Once on Tabor, once on Calvary, and again on Olivet, Once to shine and once to suffer, and once more, as King of kings, With a merry noise ascending, borne by cherubs on their wings.

Again; He leaped over mountains and hills by His conquering the kingdoms and provinces of the earth through the conversion of the Gentiles in the person of His messengers, of whom is written, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." And, as another aptly points out, He overthrew the idol temples, so often set upon hills in the midst of groves, a meaning enforced, as is noted, by the version of Symmachus, who reads, *Going against the mountains, leaping against the hills.*

Origen.

Vicyra.
Isa. lii. 7.

Theodoret.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

Milton,
Hymn on
the Nativity,
182.

He comes leaping also to holy souls, not only to those more perfect ones, like His Apostles, who are lofty and strong as mountains, rooted deep in love, and kissed by the first rays of the sun; but also to the lowlier hills which court His presence. "Behold, He cometh, not upon the plains, nor upon the valleys, but leaping upon the mountains. If thou be a mountain,

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

He leapeth on thee. He leaps on Isaiah, He leaps on Jeremiah, He leaps on Peter, John, James. The mountains are round about Him. If thou canst not be a mountain, if thou art not strong enough for that, be at least a hill, that CHRIST may go up on thee, and if He pass, let Him so leap over thee, that the shadow of His transit may be thy safeguard." And another Saint reminds us that the Bridegroom is said to leap, and to leap over the hills, to teach us that though He comes often to His Saints, yet that the sweetness of internal contemplation is very brief and rare for each one even in the case of those most advanced in holiness, because we are weighed down with the burden of the flesh. He comes leaping to us as we study Holy Scripture, appearing in passage after passage on the hills of the Old Testament, and the loftier and more conspicuous mountains of the New. And in this sense we may take that saying, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence is my help." *Like a roe or a young hart.* For *roe* the LXX. reads *δορκάδι* a doe. And because this word is derived from *δέρκω*, "I see," by reason of the animal's large and beautiful eyes, Origen tells us that CHRIST is compared to it because He comes to us in contemplation, and that He is like a young hart, because the stag hates and destroys serpents, and thus figures the active Saints who imitate their LORD in making war upon evil. There is a crowd of other yet more fanciful interpretations, amongst which it is unnecessary to specify more than two, which seem really to illustrate the words, to wit, the swiftness of the creatures named, and their delight in climbing among the mountains, symbolising the working of CHRIST in the soul; and the harmlessness of the young hart, which has not yet put out its horns, denoting the gentleness of the SAVIOUR.

Behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.

This wall, observes De Lyra, is that thick darkness in which the Law was given on Sinai, through which pierced the lightning-flashes from the hidden glory of GOD. CHRIST Incarnate stood, notes another, as though *behind our wall*, because the Godhead lay hid in our

Cassiodor.
Beda.

Origen.
Ps. cxxi. 1.

Acts ix. 36,
marg.

Aponius.
Beda.

Lyranus.

humanity. And because human weakness could not endure His infinity, were He to disclose it, He interposed the barrier of flesh, and whatever great work He wrought among men, He did as though hiding behind a wall. He who looks through windows and lattices, is partly seen and partly hides himself: so too our LORD JESUS CHRIST, when He was working miracles by divine power, and enduring insults in the weakness of the flesh, looked forth as it were through windows and lattices, because while hiding Himself in one way, He showed in another way who He was.

S. Greg. M.

Again, He stands behind *our* wall, that is, our sin and fleshly weakness prevent us from seeing Him constantly, and yet He gives glimpses of Himself, by making, as it were, openings in that wall whereby we can contemplate Him partially. This is the wall to which Hezekiah turned his face and wept, because he could not yet behold his SAVIOUR. The *windows* whereat we see Him, observes a Greek Father, are our powers of understanding, chiefly exercised when we pray or read Holy Scripture, and as we are so engaged, we see Him at intervals. And whereas the LXX. word for *lattice* is *nets*, the same Father tells us that it is just when we are in the midst of temptation and snares that we see CHRIST'S Face shining on us through the meshes, to bid us be of good courage, for He is at hand to free us. Another, remembering how S. Paul describes that mid-wall of partition which stood between Jew and Gentile till the Passion, tells us that the wall is the Law, which hid CHRIST altogether under type and shadow. The *windows*, which gave fitful glimpses of Him, are the Prophets; and the *lattices*, through which He looks out (LXX.) denote the Apostles, who had seen Him in the body, and were able to preach His full revelation. S. Epiphanius, however, not very dissimilarly, takes the chief Messianic Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, to be these windows. S. Bernard applies the words *windows* and *lattices* very touchingly to the weaknesses and suffering of our mortal bodies, as though gaps and crevices in a ruinous wall, and tells us that through these same windows of His own human Body the LORD looked out on suffering mortality, and learned to share and pity its deepest sorrows. The Chaldee paraphrase helps us to another deep mystical meaning, applying, as it does, the verse to the LORD looking through the windows of

Cassiodor.

Card. Hall-
grin.
2 Kings
xx. 2.
Theodoret.

Origen.

Philo Carp.

S. Epiphanius.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 56.

the Israelites in Egypt as they slew the Paschal Lamb, sprinkled its blood, and ate its roasted flesh with bitter herbs. So the LORD JESUS looks out steadfastly on faithful souls from behind the wall of the species of Bread and Wine in the Holy Eucharist, showing Himself in part to them even there, as they feed on Him in faith, and gives them joy with the light of His countenance. And again, they remind us how His love looked out upon us through the lattices of those Five Wounds He bore for us upon the Cross. The time will at last come when our wall shall be swept away, and all, especially sin, which now hinders us from beholding CHRIST face to face, shall vanish. Our sins separate between us and GOD. Would there were no barrier against me save that of the body, exclaims S. Bernard, and the sin which is inherent in the flesh, and not many another source of evil besides. I fear that besides that sin which is of my nature, I have added many, very many, of my own unrighteousness, whereby I have driven the Bridegroom too far from me, so that were I to speak truly, I should confess rather that He stands behind several walls than behind one. But it is written, "With the help of my God I shall leap over the wall." Till that blessed time come, we may pray in the language of a devout writer: "O my Beloved, Thou standest behind the wall of my mortality, blindness, and sloth, and I cannot see Thee, nor love Thee, as I would. Look upon me, then, through the lattices of all the powers of my soul, that I may know and love Thee as much as Thou vouchsafest. Look at me also, sometimes, through the windows, through those partial images of Thyself in my soul. So, though I cannot see Thee perfectly and wholly, yet I may ever in part behold Thee more clearly, and love Thee more truly, when and how far Thou willest, that I may thus learn by experience that Thou standest behind my wall, looking at me through the windows, and gazing on me through the lattices, and that no barrier parts Thee and me save that wall of mortal flesh, after whose dissolution I may see and know Thee perfectly, even as I am now known unto Thee."

10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come
away.

Spake. The word **אָנָה** *anah*, here rendered *spake*, is very much more frequently used in the Bible in the sense of *answered*. Accordingly the LXX. turns the sentence, *My beloved answereth and saith unto Me*, which suggests at once the constant occurrence of the same phrase in the Gospels, applied to our LORD, and by no means always denoting a reply to spoken words, but rather to unspoken thoughts, which He reads as in an open book. *Rise up.* The LXX. in some copies, and the Vulgate add, *hasten*, and also insert the word *dove* among the epithets of the Bride in this verse. Rise up, the LORD says, and come, My love; rise up from the pleasures of the world, rise up from earthly things, and come to Me, thou who art still labouring and heavy laden, because thou art careful about things of the world. Come away above the world, come to Me, for I have overcome the world. Come near to Me, now fair with the beauty of eternal life, now a dove, meek and gentle, and altogether full of spiritual grace. And why, another Father asks, does he say, *Rise up, hasten?* Because He would say, I bore for thee the tempest's rage; I met the waves which were thy due. My soul, for thy sake, was exceeding sorrowful unto death; I arose from the dead, breaking the gates of death, and loosing the fetters of hell. Therefore I say unto thee, *Rise up, and come away.* He calls her out of the house into the field, and saith, *Rise up* from thy pleasant couch, from that repose, wherein thou seekest to please Me alone with psalms, and hymns, and prayers, *hasten and come*, that is, hasten to the help of thy neighbours, that by preaching, and the example of good works, thou mayest make them true imitators of thee, and lead them to salvation with thyself. She is His *love*, observes S. Justus, because reconciled to Him by His death, His *fair one*, because washed from her sins. Or, as S. Bernard, at fuller length, comments, She is fitly called His *love*, who seeks her Bridegroom's profit by earnestly and faithfully preaching, counselling, and ministering. Fitly is she His *dove*, who unceasingly seeks to gain the divine pity for her loved ones, sighing and entreating for them in prayer. Fitly also is she His *fair one*, who shining with the heavenly longing of lofty contemplation, at any rate when it may be timely and suitably done, clothes herself in its beauty. It may also be taken of any holy soul which GOD calls to Himself out of the troubles of the world. And thus

S. Matt.
xi. 25.
S. John v.
19, &c.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac et
Anima, cap.
4.

Origen.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

S. Just. Org.

S. Bernard.

S. Hieron.
Epitaph.
S. Paulæ.

S. Jerome speaks of one who had served her Master well, and was ready when He came and called for her. "The moment she heard the Bridegroom calling, Rise up, come away, My love, My fair one, My dove; for lo, the winter is past and over, the rain is gone; she joyfully answered, The flowers are seen in the land, the time of pruning is come. I believe verily to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

Ps. xxvii. 15.

His calling is not merely away from the world, but into heaven. "See," He says, "the middle wall of separation, which parted the concord of our inner affections and roused the bodily passions to strife, and to contrariety, is taken down. Come then, unfearing, to see Me no longer through the lattice, but face to face, O My love, to enjoy My loving countenance."

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

And it is also taken in especial of the summons to the holiest of Saints by the voice of the Archangel. "Thou, the Heavenly Sender of the message would say, My love for thy lowliness, My dove for thy gentleness, My fair one for thy purity, come. Come, Mary, come, for Eve hath fled to a hiding-place. Come, and believe the Angel bringing thee glad tidings; for Eve believed the whispering serpent. Come, and crush the serpent's head, for Eve was deluded with the head, and tempted with the belly, and tangled in the tail of the serpent. Come, and say, Behold the handmaid of the LORD. For Eve hid and excused herself alike. The serpent, said she, deceived me, and I did eat. This is the Voice of my Beloved, and He saith this to me, Rise up by faith, hasten by hope, come by charity." The words are applied to the Blessed Virgin in another sense also, used as they are

Brev. Paris.
et Rotomag.

by the Gallican Church as one of the Antiphons for the Feast of the Assumption. And how does the Bride treat the call? She hears the command, replies a Saint, she is established by the word, she is aroused, she advances, she draws near. She becomes fair, she is called a dove. Fair, because drawing near God she has received the image of the Divine beauty in herself as in a mirror; a dove, in that she is lovely with that image of the HOLY GHOST she has received.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

11 For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

12 The flowers appear on the earth; the

time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;

Here, as so often, the Chaldee anticipates the true mystical sense, by explaining these words of the ending of the bondage of Israel in Egypt, and of the Voice of the HOLY SPIRIT of redemption, promised to Abraham, and now heard by his descendants. For *singing*, it reads, with the old Versions, *pruning*, and interprets the phrase of the circumcision of the firstborn. And the first general exposition of the verse by the Fathers takes it of the Gospel revelation, ending the rigour and harshness of the Jewish Law on the one hand, and of Gentile idolatry on the other. The *rain is over*, because the Sun of Righteousness, shining out, has dispersed the mists and clouds of error and sin, the earliest Saints, Apostles and Martyrs, spring up as flowers in the new field of the Church, as Prudentius sings of the Holy Innocents :

Targum.

Origen.
Theodoret.
S. Greg.
M., &c.

All hail ! ye infant martyr flowers,
Cut off in life's first dawning hours :
As rose-buds snapt in tempest strife,
When Herod sought your SAVIOUR'S life.

Prudentius,
The Hymn,
*Salvete,
flores mar-
tyrum.*

The Voice of the Holy Dove descends in tongues of fire on the disciples at Jerusalem, and the time of *pruning* away all ignorance, unbelief, and love of the world, has come, when the FATHER purges the branches of that True Vine which He hath planted. And observe that there are three stages of pruning the choicer vines. First the thick and hurtful branches are cut away. Secondly, the useless shoots, at the time when the vines flower. Thirdly, the superfluous leaves, which hinder the ripening of the grapes, that their removal may suffer the sun's rays to shine on the fruit. So too, it is needful in the soul first to prune away the more serious faults ; secondly, lighter offences, or even things which are not offences, but merely useless and superfluous ; and thirdly, things which are useful, lawful, and permitted, have to be cut away, that the precious and beautiful fruit may be ripened by the Sun of grace.

Nic. Argent.

One ancient Father, however, takes the word in a yet wider sense, that of reaping, and explains the whole passage to be only another form of those words of the

S. Epiph.

S. Mat. ix.
37.

LORD, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few, pray ye therefore the LORD of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

Philo Carp.

And next, they take the winter and rain to be the time of the LORD's Passion, when the floods came about Him, and the joyous shining which follows them denotes His Resurrection. So in many a hymn, as for example, Adam of S. Victor :

The Easter
Sequence,
*Mundi renova-
tio.*

Cælum fit serenius,
Et mare tranquillius;
Spirat aura levius,
Vallis nostra floruit.
Revirescunt arida,
Recalescunt frigida
Postquam ver intepuit.

Now the heaven from clouds is free,
And more calmly rests the sea,
While the air breathes balmily,
In our valley flowers appear :
Green is now the dried-up plain,
And the chilled earth glows again
Since the genial spring is here.

And similarly a yet older poet :

Venant.
Fortunat.
The Hymn,
*Salve, festa
dies.*

Hail, festal Day, for evermore adored,
Wherein GOD conquered Hell, and upward soared !

See the world's beauty, budding forth anew,
Shows with the LORD His gifts returning too !

The earth with flowers is decked,—the sky serene,
The heavenly portals glow with brighter sheen.

The greenwood leaves, the flowering meadows tell
Of CHRIST, triumphant over gloomy Hell.

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Angelomus.

They give other interpretations of the *voice of the turtle* besides that of the Pentecostal Advent. First, that it denotes the preaching of the Apostles, and this is followed by many. Then, that it refers to the song of the Blessed Virgin, chanting the glory of the Incarnation. The loneliness and sorrowful note of the bird lead some to see in it a type of the Baptist, crying in the wilderness : and lastly, these same qualities cause another writer to remind us of the sad and desolate life of that turtle-dove whose Soul GOD did indeed deliver out of the hands of His enemies, but whose Body suffered pain for three and thirty years, and Who uttered His voice in the land in the Seven

Parez.

Psellus.

Nic. Argent.

Words upon the Cross. And the Gloss bids us notice a difference between the use of the words *turtle* and *dove*. The turtle is a solitary bird, the dove a gregarious one; and accordingly the voice of the *turtle* always denotes the revelation of those more secret mysteries, the knowledge of which is confined to a few great Saints, whereas the *dove* implies whatever is made known to the lowliest, and therefore it was a Dove, not a turtle, which descended on CHRIST at the waters of Jordan, because His consecration to His Priestly office was to be known to all mankind. And there is a resurrection of CHRIST in every faithful soul also, when the winter of spiritual coldness, the rain of temptation, are past and over, when the blossoms of holy words and works spring out of the heart, when the time comes for pruning away all luxuriant and unprofitable growths:—or, if you take the word to be *singing*,¹ the time for making melody in the heart with spiritual song,—when the dove-like voice of pure, faithful, and retired prayer goes up in supplication to the LORD. Only One Dove, not many, as a Saint tells us, because the Inspirer of penitential prayer, Who Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, is but One. They take the words also of the Annunciation, in the spring-time of the year, when Mary heard the heavenly message: “O fairest of the daughters of Jerusalem, thou heardest the voice of the turtle, thou heardest and didst understand. He spake within, and thou wast within, therefore thou didst hear and understand, saying, It is the voice of my Beloved.” And, lastly, they take the *winter* to be all the sorrowful exile of earth; the spring, with its tokens of rejoicing, to denote the bliss of the Heavenly Country, the true Land of God’s people. Our Land, as the Bride calls it, for her Bridegroom, Who is LORD of it, gives it to her as a marriage present. The flowers are said to appear in the land because holy souls are received into heaven when they depart from earth. And because they did not remain slothful in good works in this life, winter though it were, they blossom gloriously in the Land of the living. It well follows: *The time of pruning is come*, because the larger the number of the elect that is gathered into heaven, the more swiftly are the reprobate cut off

¹ The Hebrew may denote singing, but not that of birds, as suggested by the italics of A. V.

Gloss.

S. Ambros.

Dion. Carth.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 59.Rom. viii.
26.Hugo Vic-
torin. Serm.
de Assumpt.

S. Greg. M.

Vieyra,
Serm. de las
Exequias de
Dona Maria
de Atayde.

from the Church as useless branches, that the world may come to an end. The great Portuguese preacher, in a touching funeral sermon delivered on the death of a young lady of rank, dwells on the juxtaposition of *flowering* and *pruning* in this verse. "The flowers," says he, "appear in our land, and Death grants them no longer time. They appear, they disappear. Behold the flowers, how the spring of their life is the autumn of their death. The pruning knife which is in his hand, is a tool for August, and not for April, but Death, with unseasonable activity, arms himself therewith, and threatens the buds, that the flowers may not guard themselves. O the sternness of it, O the disappointment! It is not the blow I grieve for, but its date. That there should be a time to bloom, and a time to prune, is natural, but that the time of blooming and of pruning should be the same, that the very flower of life should be the most frail, is hard indeed." The turtle which utters her voice is the Church, the land of the Bridegroom is the life of blessedness, her voice is heard therein, because her prayers, uttered in longing here, are received by CHRIST in heaven. And even here she has her flowers of promise, the foretaste of that bliss which, in its perfection, will be abundance of fruit.

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 16, in
Ezek.

13 The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Cassiodor.

It is still only the promise of fruit. The fig-tree of the Synagogue, though unable to bring fruit to maturity, yet trained souls imperfectly to some degree of spiritual advance; reared its Nathaniels and other seekers after God, soon to be ripened in the sun of CHRIST'S presence, and to develop into Apostles and Saints of His Church. And whereas the green figs, for the most part, fall from the tree before they ripen, so, though multitudes listened to CHRIST and His Apostles' preaching, comparatively few clung steadfastly to the Faith, or brought fruit to perfection. Others, however, take this falling away of the immature figs to denote the disappearance of the ceremonial rites of the Law. And taking the fig-tree to be the Christian, rather than the Jewish Church, they

S. Ambros.
Lib. vii. in S.
Luc. c. 13.

Beda.

tell us that its young fruits, soon to be so sweet, are the early Martyrs and Saints, and that the Vine of the Church put forth the grapes with a good smell, when the multitude of new converts filled the world with the fragrance of their holy works. S. Bernard prefers to distinguish two classes of Saints here, the meek and gentle, typified by the sweetness of the fig; the zealous and fervent, denoted by the glowing produce of the grape. Others, applying the words to the devout soul, tell us that the green figs denote the first-fruits of faith, immature, but the pledge of better things to follow. These grow, some allege, on the tree of human nature, not able of itself to achieve ripeness; but others tell us that the only tree which bears such fruit at all is the Cross, which bore no flowers, but at once gave the fruit of salvation to the world. And as the Chaldee paraphrase interprets the words as a summons to Israel to enter the Land of Promise, of which it is written, "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; none shall make them afraid," the words are also explained of the blessedness of heaven, and the foretaste of it which a holy life yields us even on earth. And therefore the Bridegroom again says, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*, because in this pilgrimage and race, incessant advance and progress are needful, and the soul that has risen can go on rising, can come ever nearer to her God, finishing her course. And the repetition denotes, on His part, His tender affection, His eager longing for the salvation of mankind, wherefore He calls His beloved once more to her labour in the vineyard. So long as it is winter He suffers her to rest, He permits that in seasons of distress and tribulation quietness and confidence should be her strength, but the moment the time is again favourable, she must be up and doing His work upon the earth.

Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 60.

Theodoret.
Psellus.

Corn. à Lap.

Targum.

Micah iv. 4.
1 Kings iv.
25.
Zech. iii. 10.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Hom. 5.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 61.

Parez.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

The Greek Fathers, remembering how the Apostle has said that the Rock is CHRIST, interpret the dwelling of the dove as the sure doctrines of the Faith, the mysteries of the Gospel. For the *secret places* of

1 Cor. x. 4.
Origen.
Theodoret.
Tres Patr.

the stairs, the LXX. reads *having a bulwark*, or *outer wall*, which, Origen tells us, implies that the Bride is called out of the city, beyond its fortifications, to her labour, but is told that her path shall not be unsheltered, seeing that the shadow of the Rock will be over it. Others tell us that this *outer wall* is the old Law, and that we are called to pass from it to the safer refuge of the Gospel Rock. So too, a Western commentator bids us see in the *clefts of the Rock* the four Gospels, in the *cavern of the wall* (Vulg.) the doctrine of the Apostles and the examples of the Saints. But he gives also that which is the favourite interpretation of the Latin Fathers, namely, that we are to see, in the clefts and cavern, the Five Wounds of the LORD's crucified Body. "I would understand by the *clefts of the Rock*," observes S. Gregory, "the wounds of CHRIST's hands and feet as He hung upon the Cross; and in the same way, I should call the wound in His side, which was made with the spear, the *cavern of the wall*. Rightly is the dove said to be in the clefts of the Rock, and in the cavern of the wall, because when in meditating on the Cross she imitates CHRIST's patience, and calls His words to mind for her example, she is a dove in the clefts." They shall look, observes another, on Him whom they pierced. And He says, that the soul which sighs because of His piercing with the nails, is a dove in the clefts, and when grieving for the wound in His side, she is in the cavern of the wall. I was a *wall*, the LORD continues, when I was mortal and passible, but now that I have risen from the dead, I am a most strong Rock, nevertheless, the clefts are still to be seen in Me. "O happy clefts," exclaims the great Abbat of Clairvaux, "which build up faith in the Resurrection and in the Divinity of CHRIST! 'My LORD,' saith Thomas, 'and my GOD.' Whence came this oracle, save out of the clefts of the rock? Herein the sparrow hath found her an house, and the turtle a nest where she may lay her young. Herein the dove guards herself, and fearlessly looks on the wheeling hawk." He is here in unconscious accord with Homer:

Philo Carp.

Aponius.

S. Greg. M.

Rupert.
Zech. xii. 10.S. Bernard.
Serm. 61.Ps. lxxxiv.
3.Hom. II. xxi.
495.

φύγεν, ὡς τε πέλεια,
ἡ βῶθ' ὑφ' ἱρηνος κολίην εἰσέπτατο πέτρην.

she fled; as flies a dove,
Shunning the falcon, to the hollow rock.

And he goes on to remind us how the bowels of

CHRIST'S mercy may be seen by us through His gaping wounds, and how the Martyrs found their rest therein when their own bodies were but one huge wound under the torturer's hand. And so runs the hymn,

Here is the heart's true bulwark found,
 And here is rest secure,
 And here is love's most certain ground,
 And here salvation sure.
 In this cleft Rock, once rent for all,
 And in this Heart's protecting wall,
 May I confide, may I abide,
 O JESU, SAVIOUR glorified.

The Hymn,
*Cor meum
 tibi dedo.*

Again, while the *rock* must always mean CHRIST, the wall may be taken as the guard of Angels round about the elect, or as that wall of the Communion of Saints built up with living stones, wherein the soul may tarry for a time in contemplation of the holy lives of Saints departed. But if she will be perfect, she must pass from the disciples to the Master, from active imitation of the servants to loving gaze upon the face of the King. The wall may be insecure, the Rock never. And therefore it is well said to the Church Militant by the Prophet, "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the side of the hole's mouth." The words are taken by S. Bernard in yet another sense, as denoting the hidden mysteries of GOD'S glory, wherein the contemplative soul makes her dwelling. The A. V. reading, *secret place of the stairs*, supported by the Chaldee paraphrase, but not by any of the old versions, accords very well with this last meaning, as the clause will then denote the gradual ascent of the soul towards GOD, up the steps of that ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, set up on the earth, and its top reaching to heaven, denoting the Manhood and Godhead of the One Mediator between GOD and man. It is in this latter sense of secret retirement and meditation on the mysteries of Divine love that we shall best apply the words to the Blessed Virgin, although more fanciful reasons are given by various commentators when explaining them of her, to whom is then said, *Show Me thy countenance*, in pure love and trust, not like Eve, who hid her face from Me in the garden after her sin, *let Me hear thy voice*, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to Thy word," unlike Eve too, who was silent and uttered no word of

Beda.

S. Bernard.
 Serm. 62.

Jer. xlviii.
 28.

Ainsworth.
 S. Greg. M.
 Gen. xxviii.
 12.

Philipp.
 Harveng.

Rupert.

Dion. Carth.

Rupert.

Origen.
Theodoret.
Beda.
S. Just. Org.

Rom. x. 10.
Aponius.

S. Epiphani.
S. Greg.
Nyssen.
Pablo Carp.
Psellus.

penitence when charged with her guilt, nor song of thanksgiving when I gave her the promise that her Seed should crush the serpent's head. The *face* and *voice* are, they tell us, the works and prayers of the Church or of the holy soul. As the face is the outer expression of our nature, so our purity of life and devoutness of zeal must be exhibited in action; and GOD requires our preaching of His kingdom, and our prayers and praises also, because "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Another and singular view sees here CHRIST calling on the Jewish Church, which had turned away its face from Him, to turn it back to Him now, though all stained with His Blood, that He may cleanse it with that very stream which has reddened it; to utter again in His ears that voice which had but lately yelled out the harsh and bitter cry, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," that with the medicine of that same Blood, He may restore to her the power of celebrating His praises in sweet and musical tones. And He shows His love by telling the sinner that it is for His own sake as well as ours that He asks this, by adding of our harsh voice that it is *sweet*, of our disfigured countenance that it is *comely*. Some of the Greek Fathers take all the latter clause of this verse as the words of the Bride, desiring to see and hear CHRIST in the flesh, and no longer in prophetic mystery.

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 63.

The Bride has now obeyed her Bridegroom's summons, and they two have gone on together to the vineyards, but in no leisurely fashion, as the companions are at once called to the work of capturing the mischievous fox-cubs. And note that the Bridegroom speaks in the same terms as the Bride. She had spoken, but just now, of *our* land, claiming as hers what is His. He, in turn, says, Take *us* the foxes. "He might have said, Take *Me*, but through love of His fellowship with man, He says, Take *us*. O sweetness, O grace, O might of love! Is the Most Highest of all thus become one of all? Who hath done this? Love, that knows nothing of dignity, yet rich in dignity, powerful in affection, mighty in persuasion."

The Targum, explaining the little foxes to be the Amalekites, of whom is written, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not GOD;" gives the key to the mystical sense. Accordingly, the primary interpretation is that heretics, spoiling the vineyard of the Church, but not actually striving to root up the vine, like the wild boar of Paganism or open unbelief, are intended. They are called *foxes* from their craft and deceit; *little foxes*, because of their external show of humility. They assign as another reason for the simile, that one well-known trick of foxes is to simulate death, lying stiff and extended, till their prey, taking courage, approaches near enough to be seized; resembling heretics, who make a special show of sanctity and deadness to the world, in order to deceive the unwary. And note, that the command is not to kill them, nor even to drive them out, but to *take* them. That is, comments the Doctor of Grace, to convince them of error, to convert them, and that, not only for their own sakes, adds another Saint, but for that of the Church in general. If the heretic be truly convinced of his sin, and so repent and be converted, we have gained him for GOD; if not, at any rate, the weaker members of the Church have been put on their guard by his detection, and are established in the true faith. S. Ambrose, citing that text, "the foxes have holes," says that heretics are aptly compared to foxes for this amongst other reasons, because they do not dwell in a house, but prefer a burrow of their own making, where they lie in wait for that hen of the Gospel which gathers her chickens under her wings. Secondly; it is said that the words are addressed by the Bridegroom to His companions, the Angels, directing them to extirpate the evil thoughts which the craft of the powers of darkness introduces into the vineyard of the soul in order to spoil its fruits. They *take* them, when they suggest to the spiritual understanding their true origin, and teach it, by the discerning of spirits, to know what is from GOD and what from the devil. They *take* them when *little*, by repressing them at once, before they have effected a lodgment in the soul, and before they have grown to maturity by being willingly dwelt on. They are called

Targum.

Deut. xxv.
17, 18.

Origen, &c.

Ps. lxxx. 13.

S. Greg. M.

Hugo Card.

Dion. Carth.

S. August.
in Ps. lxxx.S. Bernard.
Serm. 64.S. Ambros.
lib. vii. in
S. Luc. c. 9.

Origen.

Tres Patr.
S. Greg.
Nyss.

foxes, too, and *little foxes*, by way of contempt, to make us learn that they are no formidable enemies, lions, tigers, bears, endowed with gigantic strength, that we have to encounter, but rather skulking foes, whose whole resource is craft, needing only watchfulness as the sole weapon to repel it. S. Bernard, applying the passage to the Religious Life, remarks that the words do not refer to the spiritual perils which beset novices, because their vocation is only in its flower, and the foxes wish for fruit. The danger of novices is, that a frost of spiritual coldness may blight the promise of their early zeal, but the peril of the professed is more subtle, namely, that Satan will transform himself for them into an angel of light, and suggest ideas to them which look like virtues, but which lead to sin. He specifies such examples as a Religious leaving the convent and returning to the world for a time, in the hope of converting kindred and friends, and bringing them to the same haven, but being, instead, led back by them into secular habits. Or, on the contrary, withdrawing for the opposite reason of desiring a solitary life in a hermitage, and then falling, either because of the removal of the external constraining discipline of a community or from spiritual pride. Again; excessive and unprescribed fasting and penances are more likely, adds the Saint, to lead to evil than to good, because they give rise to scandal in one way or other by introducing a different standard of practice into the house from that recognized by authority. On the other hand, the *little foxes* of a Religious house are petty relaxations and violations of the rule, such as breaking silence, lack of punctuality, and other seeming trifles, which, if not checked at the outset, finally subvert the whole discipline and order of the community. And observe, it is not merely necessary to take the foxes which have already made their way into the vineyard, but to keep others out for the future, and this must be done with a wall or fence. Not with one so low and so slightly put together that our enemy can say of it, "Even that which they build, if a fox go up he shall even break down their stone wall." The stones must first be laid in close order, so that no crevices shall be in the wall; next, they must be built up to a considerable height, so as not to be climbed over; thirdly, they must be cemented with mortar, that they may not be dislodged. So the prayers and good works

S. Bernard.
Serm. 64.

Corn. à Lap.

Neh. iv. 3.

of a soul which seeks to keep the enemy aloof must be regular and continuous, not intermittent and casual; they must be numerous, so as to fill up the day in such wise as to leave few idle moments for temptation, they must be bound together with that binding cement of love towards God and our neighbour, whose chief ingredient is the precious Blood of CHRIST. Again; they remind us how the LORD, speaking of Herod Antipas, said, "Go, tell that fox," and thereby showed another class of enemies of the vine to be here intended. "See you not how that wild beast has eaten the tender shoots, how that cruel monster hath slain the infants in Bethlehem of Judah, the city of David? *Take the foxes, for our vineyard hath flowered.* (Vulg.) Its fruit is yet in flower, and not in grape; it is not yet ripe, and therefore it is most destructive to the vineyard that its flower should be cut down or spoiled. Let it grow first and let fruit come of the flower, let the Gospel be founded, and let it be known by signs and wonders that the Holy of Holies hath come,—this will be the coming of the flower to fruit, of the grape to ripeness. Then, if this grape be cut down, it will be kept, and carried on the pole of the Cross; that by the proof of its Resurrection and sweetness, men may learn what is the Land, what is the Kingdom, with which the little foxes, which spoil the vines, have nought to do." The Syriac, LXX. and Vulgate translate the last clause more correctly than the A. V., rendering it, *our vines (vineyard, Vulg.) are in flower.* This is the time to take the foxes, for when the time of ripeness has arrived, the LORD of the vineyard will come Himself for the vintage of the mature grapes, and then there can be no more peril from the craft of the enemy. And, finally; the words may be explained as spoken to the Angels in the Day of Judgment, according to that saying of the LORD, "So shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Especially is it spoken of the evil spirits, who strive to injure His vineyard. And then truly will His vine flourish in luxuriant beauty for evermore.

S. Luke xiii.
32.
Rupert.

Cf. Heng-
stenberg,
in loc.

Honorius.

S. Mat. xiii.
40.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

- Eph. v. 31. "For they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning CHRIST and the Church." Her Beloved is hers, because He is her Head; she is His, because she is His Body. "My Beloved is mine, saith the holy soul, He gives me the grace of vocation, the badge of redemption, the glorious liberty of adoption. And what do I give Him? Obedience of will, the desire of preserving that purity which He gave me by nature. What gives He to me? A perfect example of guarding virginity, by His Virgin birth. What give I to Him? Singular gladness by my being born again in Baptism, by keeping His precepts with all my heart, by imitating the nature of angels and heavenly spirits." And whereas the Hebrew, as well as the LXX. and Vulgate, reads simply, *My Beloved to me, and I to Him*, they delight in supplying words to complete the idea variously. *My Beloved* is careful for me, anxious for my salvation. I am careful for Him, to obey Him in all things. He co-operates with me, by His assisting grace, *I with Him* by my free will, thus being a "labourer together with GOD." *My Beloved* is like to me, in nature, having taken on Him the form of a servant. I am like to Him by grace, being made holy and pure, and wise through His gift. He is the reward to me of all my toils, suffering, and weariness. I am the reward to Him of all the sorrows of His life, and of His Passion. He lived and died for me wholly, and to me. I will live and die to Him, "for whether we live, we live unto the LORD, and whether we die, we die unto the LORD." *My Beloved* drank to me in the Cup of His Passion; I drink It to Him in His honour and glory, taking the Cup of Salvation, and calling on the Name of the LORD. *My Beloved* spake to me, revealing to me the mysteries of His law, *I to Him* in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. *My Beloved* is wisdom to me: I am heart to Him. He comes from heaven to me, I from the Gentiles to Him. And S. Bernard bids us note the briefness, and as it were incoherence, of the Bride's words. She is too fervent and eager to be altogether silent; she is too deeply and inexpressibly happy to say much. And thus infrequent speech is a mark in Scripture of that especial soul which could more truly than any other say, *My Beloved* is mine, and I am His, because I am she of whom is written, "A Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call
- S. Just. Org.
- Aponius.
- Hugo Card.
- 1 Cor. iii. 9.
- Rom. xiv. 8.
- Ps. cxvi. 12.
- Parez.
- S. Epiphanius.
- Rupert.
- Isa. vii. 14.

His Name Immanuel;" and therefore, "all generations shall call me blessed." There is an old poem, written with a lower intent, which, taken in a better meaning, makes a good comment on this verse:

My true-love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one to the other given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven,
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

Sir Phillip
Sidney.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides,
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his, because in me it bides,
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

He feedeth among the lilies. What are denoted by the lilies, asks a Saint, save pure souls? which retain the whiteness of chastity, and by their fair fame give their pleasant fragrance to all near them. The Bridegroom *feedeth among the lilies*, doubtless because He delights in purity of souls, which both preserve bodily chastity, and are pleasant unto Him by their stainless thoughts, giving, at the same time, a pattern to their neighbours, as though a grateful savour. And so runs the hymn for the Common of Virgins:

Who feedest where the lilies spring,
Surrounded by the Virgin ring,
With glory decking them, Thy brides,
And granting spousal gifts besides.

The Hymn,
JESU,
Corona
Virginum.

Our Beloved is fed, when we love Him, for His food is our love; and our sighs, affections, desires, and aspirations are His chosen dainties. He is among the lilies, says S. Bernard, of His own truth, and meekness, and righteousness, lilies which have sprung out of the earth, shining thereon, conspicuous amongst the other flowers, fragrant beyond all spices. As many virtues as there are, so many are His lilies, and they are countless, all snowy white, all sweetly perfumed. Our lilies of good works are few and poor, and much intermingled with flowers of less account, yet He loves them, and is fain to dwell amongst them, continuing as He began, for He dwelt first on earth between the lilies of the pure lives of Joseph and Mary in the carpenter's dwelling at Nazareth. So far, the text has been taken of CHRIST feeding Himself. But its fuller

Nic. Arg.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 70.

Serm. 71.

Rupert.

sense appears to be that He is here spoken of as the Good Shepherd, feeding us in His pleasant pastures. "The divine Mysteries," comments S. Ambrose, "are good pastures. There thou mayest gather that new flower which gave the sweet odour of the Resurrection, there pluck the lily, wherein is the brightness of eternity; there too the rose, the Blood of the LORD's Body. The books of Holy Writ are also good pastures, wherein we are fed by daily reading, wherein we obtain refreshment and strength, when we taste what is written in them, or chew the cud of frequent thought over it. In these pastures the LORD's flock is fattened. Good too are the pastures of CHRIST, Who feeds us among the lilies, that is, in the glory of the Saints." In this last sense the Cluniac also, speaking of the joys of Paradise:

Bern.
Cluniac.
Rhythm.

While through the sacred lilies,
And flowers on every side,
The happy dear-bought nations
Go wandering far and wide.

Esth. ii. 8.

And that, because "when the King's commandment and His decree was heard, many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace," for Shushan is by interpretation, "Lily."

17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

S. Greg. M.

Until the day of Resurrection, the *day* of the revelation of eternal glory, dawns, until the *shadows* of this world's night *flee away*, so long does the Bridegroom feed amongst the lilies of pure souls obeying Him truly upon earth. But why, asks S. Bernard, is it said *Until*? Should we not rather expect that He would feed more among the abundant lilies of heaven than amongst the rare ones of earth? And the saint replies that the reason is twofold. First; we sinners here have to be incorporated into CHRIST's mystical Body, and that we may be so, have to be ground with His teeth of suffering and trial, but there will be no sinners and no suffering in heaven, wherefore the LORD speaks not of eating there, but says that He will drink

S. Bernard.
Serm. 72.

new wine in His kingdom, and that, because the Saints, after their full refinement from all dregs, which cannot be accomplished in this life, will be the sweet and pure wine of the marriage feast. The Carthusian, more simply, bids us see here a warning to us to cultivate the lilies of purity in our hearts by holiness of thought, word, and deed, until the close of our lives, that the Lamb may find His accustomed pasture in some few spots at least of the world. When the day comes, we shall no longer need to tend our gardens, for their flowers will be perennial, their dangers gone. Others take the *day* to be the preaching of the Gospel, before which the *shadows* of the Law disappeared, though even under that Law CHRIST was feeding His people as their Shepherd. But the literal sense of the Hebrew is somewhat unlike all this. It points to the coming-on of the evening, not to the dawn of day, and runs, *Until the day breathe*, that is, till the cool evening breeze sets in, *and the shadows flee*, that is, lengthen out before us, becoming vaguer in their outline. And this is the sense of both LXX. and Vulgate, though most of the commentators have followed the other view. And so rendering the passage, we shall follow the traditional Hebrew construction, and take it with the clause which follows, rather than with that which precedes. The Bride is called to her labour, and the Bridegroom, after the summons, departs, leaving her alone. She, knowing herself unable to accomplish her labour unaided, calls on Him to *turn* back again to help her, and that so long as the working-day continues, remembering that it is written, "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." The nearer the night is, the shorter the time that remains for completing our appointed task, the greater need have we of His help, and we therefore say, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And S. Anselm therefore applies the word *turn* to the LORD's co-operation with His Church in the conversion of the heathen. Others see rather a prayer to Him to visit our souls, even if only in the sudden and rare semblance of a stag appearing at intervals upon the hills. Again; some take it of His return to judgment, coming in that same human form which He took of us, and His Resurrection and Ascension have been also thought to be here referred to. *Upon the mountains of Bether*. Some take these to be

S. Mat.
xxvi. 29.

Dion. Carth.

S. Just. Org.

Sanchez.

Hugo Card.

Ps. civ. 23.

Hengsten-
berg.S. Luke
xxiv. 29.S. Anselm.
Cassiodor.
Beda.S. Greg. M.
S. Bernard.
Serm. 73.
Aponius.
Rupert.S. Just. Org.
Theodoret.
Philo Carp.

the proud and haughty, to be brought low when CHRIST appears and sets Himself above them, while others, conversely, take it of His visits to lofty and contemplative souls. *Bether*, meaning "division," a region cut up by a chain of hills pierced with valleys in every direction (whence the LXX. *mountains of hollows*,) denotes here anything which parts us from CHRIST, and we, unable to surmount the obstacle ourselves, pray to Him to *turn*, and show the light of His countenance, that we may be whole. Further than this, it is a prayer to Him to break down the mid-wall of partition between Jew and Gentile; and yet more, to come from the mountains of division, parting believers from idolaters, into that wide place of the Church Universal, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but CHRIST is all, and in all." And De Lyra, who, according to his wont, explains the mountain to be those of Sinai, when Israel's sin in the matter of the calf caused GOD to threaten that He would abandon and destroy them, thereby points the lesson that all occasions of sin are necessarily gulfs opened between the soul and GOD. Finally; in the petition of the Bride for the perfect bliss of heaven, it is not enough for her longing that she should merely enter in there, unless her Bridegroom come close to her Himself, leaping over the nine divisions of the Angelic hierarchy, in order to come to her who is of His own nature, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh.

CHAPTER III.

1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Titelman. While mankind lay on its bed of sickness, smitten with the deadly disease of sin, and in the midst of the darkness of ignorance, it looked eagerly on every side for the coming of the Great Physician, but could nowhere find Him, till the time when He, our true Elisha,

came of His own loving-kindness to stretch Himself on the couch of our mortality, to rouse the lifeless sleeper. So too, until His Advent, the Synagogue lay on the bed of the Mosaic Law, looking for her LORD in the dark shadows of the ceremonial types and of the hidden prophecies, and found Him no more than the Gentiles did. And as night denotes the time of rest as well as of darkness, so here we may see the Church in its earliest days resting after Pentecost, and confining itself and its preaching to Jerusalem and Judea, but not finding CHRIST in the hard hearts of the Jews, who refused to hear the glad tidings and to put on Him. And therefore she was compelled to rise up from that brief repose, and begin the long journey of her mission to the heathens, never ended since. Taken of the soul, rather than of the Church at large, it may be variously interpreted. They say, for the most part, that it denotes the impossibility of finding CHRIST while we lie down in carnal pleasure, and in the darkness of sin. Or, again, not quite so sternly, but still in a voice of warning, they tell us that it is not in bodily ease and quiet that we can find CHRIST, Whose bed was not of down, but the hard Cross :

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

Corn. à Lap.

Cassiod.
Beda.
Philo Carp.
Angelomus.

Vieyra.

Ah, malè te placido quæsivi, Sponse, cubili ;
Qui Crucis in thalamo reperiendus eras.
Pax mihi lectus erat. Tibi Crux erat aspera lectus.
Hoc te debueram quærere, Sponse, toro.

Hugo. Pia
Desid. ii. 10.

Ill sought I Thee in my hushed place of rest,
Spouse, Whom the Cross's bridal-chamber shrined,
My bed was peace, the rough Cross Thou hast pressed,
That is the couch where, seeking, I shall find.

There are many, observes S. Ambrose, who seek CHRIST in ease, and find Him not, and then seek Him in persecution, straightway finding Him ; and for this reason they find Him after temptations, because He is always at hand in the peril of His faithful ones. "Alas, LORD," exclaims one of the greatest of penitents, "I went very far to seek Thee, and Thou wast very near. I may find Thee in mine eyes, by modesty and purity ; in my mouth, by confession of Thy greatness and my sins ; in my memory, by the remembrance of my iniquity and Thy mercies ; in my mind, by holy thoughts and meditations on Thy Divine Law ; but above all, I shall find Thee in my heart, because, if I love Thee, it cannot be but that Thou shouldest rest there." There is

S. Ambros.
de Isaac. 5.

S. August.
Confess.

a happier sense, however, in which we may look at the words, as agreeing with that saying of David, "Have I not remembered Thee in my bed; and thought upon Thee when I was waking?" We seek our Beloved on our *bed*, when during any brief repose in this life we sigh with longing for our Redeemer. We seek *by night*, because though the soul is watchful in it, the eye is clouded. And on this a devout author speaks: "Fear not, O Bride, nor despair; think not thyself despised if thy Bridegroom withdraw His face awhile. All things work together for good. Both from His absence and His presence thou gainest light. He cometh to thee and He departeth from thee. He cometh to comfort thee; He departeth, to make thee careful, lest thine abundant consolation should puff thee up. He cometh, that the languishing soul may be comforted. He departeth, lest, if the Bridegroom be always with thee, thou shouldest despise His companions, and thou shouldest ascribe this constant visitation not to grace, but to nature. He departs therefore, lest, if too continually with thee, He should meet with contempt, that, being absent, He may be more desired, and being desired, be more eagerly sought; and being long sought, may be more gladly found." There are many ways, then, in which we may seek Him; there are many reasons why we should seek Him. And first, we may seek in the quiet of still contemplation. Thou art well placed on thy bed, observes a famous English Abbat, if thy soul keep free holiday in repose from its occupations, for what suits love better than repose and freedom? And night is good, which covers in wise oblivion all temporal things, that we may seek Him Who is Eternal; a convenient time, unfolding favourable opportunities, and hiding from us the desire, the care, and the very thought of the world. Even in the night of trouble and sorrow we can still seek Him in contemplation. But as the words are spoken by a still imperfect soul, she does not say, On *our* bed, denoting completed union with her Spouse, nor on *His* bed, but on *my* bed. Still, even so, it is the place where her passions have been hushed to sleep, and where victory after strife has come. She seeks Him then, pondering on His works, following His traces through creation, from stones to plants, from plants to animals, from them to man, thence to the Angels, but finds Him not, because He is exalted

Ps. lxxiii. 7.

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 25 in
Evang.Guigon.
Carthus.
Scala
Paradisi.
c. viii.

Gerson.

Gillebert. in
Cant. Serm.
1.

Ric. Vict.

Cf. Bellarm.
Ascens.
Ment. in
Deum.

above all, and she must soar to the highest before she can reach his throne. *I found Him not*, only because He dwells in that light inaccessible which is night to man's eyes, not because I failed to search diligently. So Mary Magdalene sought Him in the bed of His sepulchre, coming before the dawn, and found Him not, because she looked for the living among the dead, and yet was blessed in her seeking. And thus S. Bernard couples the two ideas in his lovely hymn :

S. Dionys.
Areop.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
Thom.
Vercell.

JESUM quæram in lectulo,
Clauſo cordis cubiculo ;
Privatim et in populo
Quæram amore ſedulo.

S. Bernard.
Rhyth. Ju-
bilus.

Cum Mariâ diluculo
JESUM quæram in tumulto ;
Cordis clamore querulo
Mente quæram, non oculo.

I ſeek for JESUS in reſe,
When round my heart its chambers cloſe ;
Abroad, and when I ſhut the door,
I long for JESUS evermore.

With Mary, in the morning gloom,
I ſeek for JESUS at the tomb ;
For Him, with love's moſt earneſt cry,
I ſeek with heart, and not with eye.

So then, the ſleep, thus taken, does not typify ſpiritual ſloth, but that fulneſs of love which makes the Bridegroom preſent even in the dreams of the Bride. And that becauſe ſhe knows ſo many reaſons for ſeeking Him when ſhe wakes. Upon theſe let us hear S. Bernard again : And firſt, becauſe He is not always to be found, as He has Himſelf ſaid : "Ye ſhall ſeek Me, but ye ſhall not find Me ;" and that from ſeeking at the wrong time, by the wrong way, or in the wrong place. Wherefore the Prophet ſays, "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found," before He ſhuts the door againſt the fooliſh Virgins. Now is the accepted time, before the bed of death, before the night of the grave, in which there is no redemption. And here He muſt be ſought eagerly, carefully, in no half-hearted and leiſurely faſhion. Not after the fleſh either, in the bed of His tomb, His manger-cradle, or His Mother's womb, but in Heaven His dwelling-place. *My* bed is mortal weakneſs : *His* bed is Divine power. *I ſought* Him there in the night of my ignorance, in the feeble-

Aben Ezra.
S. Ans. Laud.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 75.

S. John vii.
34.

Iſa. lv. 6.

- Serm. 84. ness of my spiritual night. And yet, even so, it was good to seek Him, for it is written truly, "Seek His face evermore," even after He is found, seeking Him with desire when He need no longer be sought with the step. It is good for the lost sheep to seek the Shepherd who first sought it; good for seven reasons. First, for correction; agreeing in time with that Adversary who wars against our sins. Next, for enlightenment, that the WORD may be a lantern to our feet. Ps. cxix. 105. Thirdly, for ghostly strength, that He may comfort us according to His WORD, that we fall not when the world, the flesh, or the devil attempts to cast us down. Fourthly, for the sake of learning wisdom, only to be learnt from Him Who is Himself the Eternal Wisdom. Fifthly, to recover the beauty lost by sin. Sixthly, for fruitfulness in spiritual wedlock, bringing forth good works abundantly, and rearing fresh children for CHRIST. And lastly, because of the perfect gladness to be found in the enjoyment of the WORD. O whoever thou art that wouldst fain know what this means, to enjoy the WORD, prepare for Him thy soul, not thine ear. The tongue teaches it not, but grace. It is hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. It is sweet, remarks another, taking up the subject just where the dying Abbat of Clairvaux laid it down, to seek Thee, O good JESU, it is sweeter to hold Thee. The one is loving toil, the other perfect gladness. Good it is to seek Him on the bed in contemplation, for "in peace is His habitation, and His dwelling in Sion." *By nights* (Heb. LXX. Vulg.) I sought Him. The nights are many, the bed is but one. Many are the sorrows and trials of the righteous, but they bear them all on the one bed of their calling, saying, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest." So it may be taken too of the bed of sickness, when the LORD makes the bed of the patient.

Gillebert.

Ps. lxxvi. 2,
Vulg.Ps. iv. 9.
S. Bernard.
Serm. 86.
Ps. xli. 3.

Monsell.

O how soft that bed must be,
Made in sickness, LORD, by Thee,
And that rest,—how calm, how sweet,
Where JESUS and the sufferer meet!

It was the Good Physician now,
Soothed my cheek and chafed my brow,
Whispering, as He raised my head,
"It is I, be not afraid."

And, once more, the *bed* may be taken to denote the

quiet, as the *night* does the coolness and obscurity of the Religious Life, wherein many a soul has sought the Bridegroom, and found Him too at the last, though He may have at first concealed Himself to incite a closer search, according to His own saying, "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." The Bridegroom hides Himself when He is sought, that He may be more eagerly sought when not found, and the searching Bride is put off in her quest, that made more capable by the very delay, she may at length find in manifold more ways that which she sought for.

Ghislerius.

Isa. lii. 8.

S. Greg. M.
Moral. v. 4.

2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

I will rise now. The A.V. here implies a resolve to instant action; but the Hebrew נָא, *na*, does not denote this, but rather, *I will therefore rise*, or, *Come now, I will rise*. Because I cannot find Him on my bed, I will seek Him elsewhere. And observe first that the exertion determined on is considerable. The Bride does not make a small effort, and say, I will go about *my chamber*, but, I will go about *the city*. The Targum, which takes the preceding verse to denote the withdrawal of GOD's presence in the Shechinah from the congregation of Israel when they made the Golden Calf, explains this of the people going round the camp from tribe to tribe, and outside it to the tabernacle of the Covenant, seeking vainly for any trace of the cloud of glory. So too, the primary sense given by ancient Christian writers to the *City* here is that it denotes the Church. Literally, it may be taken of the Apostles preaching in the earthly Jerusalem, but finding Moses, not CHRIST, in the hearts of its people; or, with S. Bernard, of the eager looking of many imperfectly instructed hearers, searching if CHRIST might be seen again in those streets and ways through which He had passed teaching and healing, unknowing that He had gone up from the earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem. And so Jeremiah had spoken, saying, "Run ye to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and

Targum.

Corn. à Lap.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 76.

Jer. v. 1.

see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a Man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." And it was foretold in type that the Eternal Wisdom should so be found, for it is written in another place, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words." Nor are we left in doubt as to the fulfilment of this saying, for in the Gospel we read, "Thou hast taught in our streets." But they did not listen when He was there, and now He must be sought elsewhere, in another city, to wit, the Church Militant here in earth. Some say that the streets and ways denote the two kinds of life within the Church, secular and religious, each having its Saints, and its profitable examples, but the one narrower and more spiritual, the other broader and more carnal. In each of these the Bride seeks for examples and counsels which may help to bring her to her Beloved. Another takes the Holy Scriptures to be the ways of the Church, through which the soul seeks her LORD, but finds Him not, so long as she looks to the letter alone, and not the spirit. Again, remembering that there are two cities, Jerusalem on high, and Babylon below, some think the latter to be meant here, as signifying the whole world. And then the streets and ways denote the weary pilgrimage by land and sea of Gentiles seeking the LORD everywhere, if haply they might find Him, in sects of philosophy, in mysterious rites, in cloudy speculations, yet not discovering Him, save in such rare cases as those of Cornelius and the eunuch of Queen Candace. But that He is not to be found in the pursuit of secular things is a lesson which they enforce with much care. "CHRIST is no haunter of the market. For CHRIST is peace, in the market is strife. CHRIST is righteousness, in the market is iniquity. CHRIST is good faith, in the market is fraud and deceit. CHRIST is a worker, in the market is idle leisure. CHRIST is charity, in the market is disparagement. Then the market is often a place of thieves, CHRIST is in the Church, idols in the market. In the Church the widow is justified,¹ in the market she is cheated. Let

¹ The theological use of this famous term in this passage is noteworthy. It plainly means "justly dealt with,"

Prov. i. 20.

S. Luke xiii.
26.

S. Greg. M.
Beda.
Ricard. Vict.

Theodoret.

S. August.

Cassiod.

S. Ambros.
de Virgin.
lib. 3.

us then shun the market, shun the ways. For it is not only bad for you not to find Him whom you seek, but it is generally hurtful to have sought Him in the wrong place." One cannot but agree with S. Ambrose in the earlier portion of this comment, but a profounder intellect than his takes a widely different view of the influence of the search itself upon the soul. Hear Richard of S. Victor on this point: "The Bride sought her Beloved through the streets and ways, and found Him not at her wish. She did not yet feel His presence, did not yet win the grace for which she longed. But I have no doubt that she gained much by her journey, and greatly increased her inner grace; since no slight longing after righteousness was kindled in her from her recognition of good men and their virtues. For she drew near those who burned with that fire which the LORD JESUS came to send on earth, and willed earnestly that it should be kindled. And in drawing near to them the lukewarm begins to glow, and the fervent takes fire more eagerly." Again, the *city* is taken by some in the yet wider sense of the whole creation, whose streets and ways are all things visible and invisible. The *streets*, narrow, and easily learnt, are visible, tangible, earthly things; the *ways* or *broad places*, (Heb. LXX. Vulg.) are heavenly and invisible things, harder for the mind to take in with its glance, but He Who is Uncreate is not even there, no, not in the highest:

Ricard. Vict.

Psellus.
Gillebert.
Nic. Argent.

Thou art not here, . . . for how should these contain Thee?
Thou art not here, . . . for how should I sustain Thee?
But Thou, where'er Thou art,
Canst hear the voice of prayer,
Canst read the righteous heart.

Southey,
*Curse of
Kehama*,
xix. 10.

Descending with rapid plunge from the contemplation of the whole universe, we come, with the Greek Fathers, to the search in the microcosm of a single human soul. This *city*, "whose builder and maker is God," has its *streets* of action, its *broad places* of contemplation, wherein the Beloved is sought. And thus Saints may look. But sinners have to do it in another

Heb. xi. 10.

Tres Patr.

"fairly treated," and is opposed to injustice and fraud. It is obvious that S. Ambrose understood "justifying faith" to be that which puts a man

in the way of becoming just and righteous, not a quibble which calls him innocent when he is defiled with sin.

- way, by carefully going over every year, nay every action, of past life, with examination of conscience by the rule of Scripture, looking not merely in the *streets*, or their own more personal and private sins, but in the *broad ways* of corporate offences, and of conformity to conventional rules of right and wrong, trying if CHRIST be visible in any part of their old conversation, in order that, learning that He is not there, they may turn utterly away from it, and seek Him in that holiness where only He may be found, "in the city of our GOD, even upon His holy hill." And so the Apostle saith: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light." *I will arise*, then, not from evil works, not from bad habits, but from good to better; from habits to mysteries, from things hidden to things manifest, from calm to sweetness. *I will arise*, for CHRIST hath risen. Why should I not rise when I know of the resurrection of my Beloved? O happy me, if I had risen together with CHRIST, setting my affections on things above, and seeking Him not below, but above, for I should doubtless have found Him at the right hand of the FATHER. When once we enter into the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, there will be no need to seek Him any more, for He, as its Light, will pervade all its streets and ways. And observe that it is well said, I sought Him through the *streets* and *ways*, and found Him not, for there is only one Way to the City where He dwells, and that Way is Himself. And therefore, as we search vainly here, He tells us, "This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow Me, and I will bring you to the Man Whom ye seek." And so, after our journey away from Him, after our vain search in the company, after our retracing every step of our former way, we shall find Him, as His Mother did, in the Temple of God.
- Philo Carp.
- Ps. xviii. 1.
- Eph. v. 14.
- Gillebert.
- S. Bernard.
Serm. 75.
- S. August.
- 2 Kings vi.
19.
- Rupert.

3 The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

The watchmen that guard (Vulg.) the city, who find the soul thus longing and seeking, are the holy Angels, who guard the Church, or the faithful, and by whose guardianship the mercy of CHRIST protects His own.

They are well named *watchmen*, because they watch and are careful about the elect, that they may be defended from temptation, may advance in good, and may attain salvation. And so the Breviary hymn :

Custodes hominum psallimus Angelos,
Naturæ fragili quos PATER addidit
Cœlestis comites, insidiantibus
Ne succumberet hostibus.

Ricard. Vict.
Hymn. in
Fest. Ang.
Cust.

The Angel Guards of men we hail,
Sent by our GOD to mortals frail
As aids, lest we in battle fail
Before the crafty foe.

The soul, then, searching for GOD, is found by these, and after going round the city and making her quest, she attains to the appearance of the blessed Angels, she perceives their approach, and is received by them, for they are forerunners of the Bridegroom, and they disclose their presence, revealing themselves. For they are Angels of light, and come with light, whereby she is flooded and illuminated, and reached all at once, so that she is aware of their approach, and feels their presence. Before, she was blind, and felt only herself, now, the grace given her teaches her more. Then her longing breaks out into words, and she complains that her door is open for Him, and yet He does not enter, that she stands knocking at His door, and He does not open. He has promised to come, and promised to open, yet He seems to fail. Where then is He? for ye, who ever behold His face, must surely know. *They found me*, and set to work to purify me by action, and to enlighten me by contemplation, dead as I was in sin and ignorance, and the pupil of evil spirits. They did this, and more, for me; but they could not answer my question, because my Bridegroom is as incomprehensible to Angels as to men.

Theodoret.

Again, the *watchmen of the city* are the teachers raised up by GOD in His Church at various times. Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Doctors, of whom is written, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night;" and in another place, "Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken unto the sound of the trumpet." With this view, which is the more usual one, agrees the Chaldee paraphrase, explaining the words of Moses and Aaron watching over the congre-

Isa. lxi. 6.

Jer. vi. 17.

Targum.

S. Bernard.
Sern. 76.

2 Macc. xv.
14.

Eccius.
xxxix. 5.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

S. Ans. Laud.

S. Just. Org.

Parez.

Angelomus.
Ps. cxxvii.
2.

S. Thom. à
Villanovâ.

gation of Israel. What good watchmen, exclaims S. Bernard, who keep long watch while we are sleeping, as having to give account for our souls! What good guards, who watching in soul and passing the night in prayers, skilfully track out the ambushes of the enemy, forestall the counsels of the malignant, detect the snares, avoid the springes, break the nets, frustrate the schemings. These are lovers of the brethren and of the Christian people, who pray much for the people, and all the holy city. These are they who, careful for the LORD's sheep committed unto them, give their heart to resort early unto the LORD Who made them, and will pray before the Most High. And though they do all this, and instruct the soul which is seeking CHRIST, yet it is not enough that she should passively drink in their teaching. She must exhibit eagerness, longing, must actively search for herself, not merely let them search in her behalf, and therefore she asks, *Have ye seen Him?* For when the soul fixes herself on these mere teachers and watchmen, looking to them, and setting them up as her standard, and not searching further for her LORD, she does not find Him. She must *pass from, them to Him*. And in saying, *The watchmen found me*, rather than *I found them*, the Bride marks the vigilance and zeal of good pastors of the Church, who themselves seek out souls that are looking for CHRIST, that they may bring them to His feet. They take the whole passage also of the Church of the Gentiles, asking the philosophers and idol priests, who disputed with her, the one unanswerable question, *Have ye seen Him?* It is the Jewish Church also, looking for Him in the City of Holy Writ, in its broad prophecies, and narrow dark types, and accosting its watchmen, the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, with the same inquiry, *Have ye seen Him?* And they get no reply in either case, for "unless the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The world knew Him not, and His own, to whom He came, received Him not. I asked my senses, *Have ye seen Him?* And my sight said, Nay, unless He be an image. But He is Truth itself, and no mere image or phantasm. I asked my hearing, and it replied, Unless He be a sound or a melody, I know Him not. And yet He is this too, the WORD Who is music to His own. I asked my touch, and it answered, Unless He be smoothness or

roughness, I have not seen Him. Yet this also He is, gentle to others, harsh to Himself in His suffering life. I asked my sense of smell, and it rejoined, If He be not a perfume, I know Him not. Yet He is this too, an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour. I asked my taste, and it replied, If He be not a flavour, I cannot tell. This also is He Who is our Food, sweet to our taste. All, and more than all, yet the senses cannot find Him. I asked all creation, Sun, I said, moon, and stars, sky, earth, and sea, *Have ye seen Him?* And they answered, We are not the Beloved, we are but His works, and we cannot contain nor comprehend Him.

4 It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

But a little, whether spoken of time or of place. And yet CHRIST'S coming was nine hundred years after the utterance of this Song; four hundred years after Malachi, the last of the prophetic watchmen, sealed up the oracles of God; but they seemed but as a few days to the Church because of the love she bore to Him. *I passed from them.* That is, observes one Father, when I had learnt fully all they had to teach me, when I had *gone through* this course of instruction, I found Him. But the majority take it more deeply: When I had left them all behind in search of Him Who is above and beyond them all, when I had left Gentile philosophers, as Justin and Cyprian did; when I had quitted Scribes and Rabbis, like S. Paul; when I have found the wisest Doctors, the holiest Apostles, still far beneath Him Who is co-equal with the FATHER: when I have pierced beyond the highest choir of Angels, likest to Him in nature, in beauty, wisdom, and purity; then, and not till then, can I find Him, for love enters in when understanding waits without. It is *but a little*, however, that I have to wait, for He comes Himself to meet me, the very moment I have forsaken self and sin, and have been washed clean from my offences. *But a little*, for the knowledge of God is granted with small toil, since the moment He

Thrupp.

Cassiodor.

S. Just. Org.
Parez.

S. Greg. M.

Ricard. Vict.
Nic. Argent.

Philo Carp.

S. Ans. Laud.
S. Bernard. perceives the affection of the seeker He gives Himself freely, and throws Himself into our arms. *But a little*, for the Creed which sums up the mysteries of salvation is soon communicated, and easily learnt. *But a little*, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. *But a little*, and yet ascending up far above all heavens, from the depth of sin and sorrow to the exalted throne of the SON of GOD, whereon He seats and crowns His Bride.

2 Cor. iv. 17.

Philipp.
Harveng.

Ric. Vict.

I held Him, and would not let Him go. GOD is held, observes Richard of S. Victor, by devotion in prayer, by longing, importunity, memory, intreaty, faith, and expectation of being heard, and He is *not let go* if there be no intermission of intention, if the countenance of the petitioner has not turned any more to other things. She holds her Beloved therefore, though it be morning, and does not let Him go until He bless her. She wrestled with Him all the night wherein she slept; but her heart was waking, because it had ceased from outer cares, and toiled in seeking the Beloved. For though she came through the night unto morning, she ceases not from her wrestling, that is, her steadfastness in prayer, and does not let her Beloved go until He give His blessing that she may go from strength to strength and behold the GOD of GODS in Sion, and be no more called Jacob, but Israel. She wants as her one blessing, Himself, as she holds Him by her love.

Ps. lxxxiv.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 79, 83.
Guillelm.
Parv.Charles
Wesley.

In vain Thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my hold,
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of Thy love unfold;
Wrestling, I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy nature know.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer;
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me if Thy Name is Love.

'Tis Love, 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me;
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure, universal Love Thou art;
To me, to all, Thy bowels move,
Thy nature and Thy Name is Love.

And now that the Bride holds Him, and prevails in her prayer of intercession, as she clasps Him in the arms of love, that she may bring comfort to the feeble of heart, the sorrowing cry of Isaiah is no longer true: "There is none that calleth upon Thy Name, there is none that stirreth himself up to take hold of Thee." Rather she exclaims, in the words of the Apostle: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD." O how the faithful soul holds and, so to speak, constrains Him, whilst it does what is pleasing and acceptable unto Him! For the Bridegroom, like the Bride, delights in the life, the ways, the fellowship, and the familiarity of the righteous, and He is held by virtuous deeds, not by the hands of armed men, not by the pomp of the wealthy, nor the boastfulness of the rich, not by the stateliness of the haughty, not by any who suffer from the disease of gluttony, sloth, avarice, luxury, or envy, but by works of mercy, lovingkindness, continence, humility, temperance, good-will, purity, and by the prayers of the just. Then the Bridegroom comes freely and gladly to be brought into our *mother's house*. And of this *house* they speak variously. First, the speaker may well be the Gentile Church, resolving never to cease her hold on the LORD by prayer and zeal till He turns, and has mercy on the Synagogue, the spiritual parent of Christianity, by entering into the heart of the Jews, and dwelling there. "Great is the might of love. The SAVIOUR had gone forth in wrath from His house and His inheritance, and now, softened by her fervour with Him, He is prevailed upon to return not merely as SAVIOUR, but as Bridegroom. Blessed art thou of the LORD, O daughter, who both restrainest wrath and restorest the inheritance. Blessed art thou of thy mother, for whose welfare anger is turned away, salvation cometh back: He cometh back Who saith, I am thy salvation." Another devout writer, taking the *mother* to be the Christian, not the Jewish Church, explains the words similarly of the resolute zeal with which holy men labour for the reformation of spiritual abuses, not ceasing their labours in their several places, and in Synods, until CHRIST returns to that dwelling whence the sins of

Card. Hailgrin.

Isa. lxiv. 7.

Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M. Beda. Aponius. Rupert.

S. Bernard.

Dion. Carth.

Christian priests and people seem to have driven Him. And observe that it is not enough to bring Him into the *house*. He must come not as a mere visitor, but as the most intimate of guests, into the *chamber*, conferring no common gifts, but His full grace. Again; they explain the grace and wisdom of GOD to be as it were our *mother*, and that the soul is the house wherein this dwells, with an inner chamber for the reception of the deeper mysteries. The soul says, *I will bring Him in*. "Therefore," comments a great mystical writer, "GOD will enter in unto thee that thou mayest enter in unto Him. When His love enters and penetrates thy heart, and affection for Him reaches its innermost recess, then He enters thyself, and thou enterest thyself too, that thou mayest go in unto Him. For He must needs come as far as the chamber and enter the bower itself, arriving at thine innermost habitation, there to rest." And lastly; they take it of the Bride, saying with the holy boldness of love, that she will not let her Bridegroom go until she bring Him into her true mother's house, in the city of "Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of us all." And this, because CHRIST is Himself the dweller in holy souls, which are His temple and habitation, "for ye are the temple of the living GOD: as GOD hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." And so we read in the Acts of S. Ignatius, who, when Trajan asked him, Who is Theophorus?—"God-bearer," a name by which the Saint had just designated himself—replied "He who has CHRIST within his heart." Trajan said, "Dost thou then carry within thee Him that was crucified?" Ignatius answered, "Truly so, for it is written, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them.'" The words then are a pledge on the part of the Bride that she will so tenderly, purely, and jealously guard CHRIST in her soul, that He will have no mind to go thence, but will tarry in it, so that when she presents herself before the gates of the heavenly city, the warders will be fain to admit her, because they cannot refuse her without at the same time repulsing their King. And whereas it is said, *Until I had brought Him*, it is not implied that she then will let Him go. Rather she will hold more closely than ever, because then there will be no temptation to part her from Him, nor any desire on His part to withdraw. She will not let Him go till that other *until* is ended: "Sit Thou on My right hand

S. Bernard.
Serm. 79.

Tres Patr.
S. Ambros.
de Virg. 3.

Hugo Vict.
Expos. in
Hierarch.
lib. 6.

Theodoret.
Gal. iv. 26.

2 Cor. vi. 16.

Act. S. Ignat.
Mart.

Cocceius.

Ps. cx. 1.

until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." These four verses were fulfilled by Mary Magdalene, who sought her LORD during the night of His absence from His Church, came with spices to His tomb, was found there by the Angels, questioned them about Him, passed them, found Him whom her soul loved, and did not let Him go till He sent tidings of His Resurrection back to Jerusalem by her. Accordingly, this passage forms the first Lesson at the Nocturns of S. Mary Magdalene's Day in the Breviary.

Beda.

5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The old versions take these words here, as in chap. ii. 7, to be spoken by the Bridegroom, and it is well to observe again that the Hebrew admits of either construction. It is repeated, says Cassiodorus, because in the earlier verse reference was made to the Primitive Church of the Jews, but here to the Gentile Church, bound far more closely to Him in love. But the same words are used to denote the identity of God's love and care for His Saints under both dispensations. And whereas the Church has just been described not as sleeping or resting, but searching eagerly, she is nevertheless here said to sleep, because search after CHRIST is the sweetest of all sleep. The Church sleeps, therefore, and seeks for CHRIST, sleeps to earthly desires and worldly affairs, but wakes to her Bridegroom and seeks Him, because she clings to contemplation of Him, desires Him only, and strives to reach Him. And it is repeated here for another reason, because the Bridegroom has pity on His Bride, who had been searching and toiling all the night to find Him, and therefore needed repose more than she did before. And, accordingly, the words may well represent to us those seasons of repose and comparative tranquillity which always intervened between the persecutions suffered by the Early Church, giving her time to repair her shattered strength, and to rear up children instead of the fathers she had lost by the sword, or rack, or fire, or the wild beast, man. If taken, as by the A. V., of the Bride, it will then denote the appeal for a brief time of peaceful contemplation, after she has

Cassiodor.

Rosen-
müller.

Cocceius. drawn her Beloved into the inner chamber. Or it may be explained, again, as a warning to the persecutors not to break rudely in upon the calm and silent spreading of the Word, so as to force that LORD Whose still small voice was well-nigh quiet like slumber, to speak to them in His wrathful judgments, in the wind, and fire, and earthquake, taking vengeance for His elect. This point marks the close of the second phase of the action, wherein the search for and discovery of the Bridegroom are described. The third stage of the drama, detailing the espousals, now begins.

6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

Targum. The ambiguity of the A. V. does not exist in the Hebrew, nor in the old translations, which, by employing feminine words here, tell us at once that the Bride is intended. And the Targum, as so often, furnishes a clue, putting the words into the mouth of the Canaanite nations, looking in wonder and awe at the mighty people which came out of the wilderness into the Land of Promise. Similarly too, most Christian writers ascribe the words either to the Patriarchs of the Jewish Church, the old possessors of the spiritual Canaan, looking in wonder on the Gentile Church, coming up out of the wilderness of heathenism, or else to the citizens of a yet holier Land, the Angels, marvelling at the progress of the soul which clings to CHRIST. If it be asked how she comes to be in the wilderness at all, Hosea gives the answer: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." Not unfitly, observes Theodoret, is the devout soul said to be like the smoke of incense, for she, as the Apostle saith, hath presented her members a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and constantly offers the sacrifice of praise, and mortifies her members which are on earth, and is buried together with CHRIST, and presents herself as a whole burnt-offering to God. And she is said to be *perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant*, because she worships CHRIST's Manhood, signified by myrrh, and His Godhead, denoted by frankincense; for she at once believes in the death of her

Cassiodor.
Philo Carp.
S. Just. Org.

Card. Hailgrin.

Hos. ii. 14.

Theodoret.

Rom. xii. 1.

Bridegroom and in His eternal being. Therefore they select for praise the *myrrh* and *frankincense* out of all the powders of the merchant. For she has other virtues drawn from Holy Scripture as though from the merchant's shop, but the myrrh and incense, the knowledge of God and of His dispensation, are chief among them. The Church, or the holy soul, comments a Latin Father, dwells in the *wilderness* in the world, whilst it is an exile from the kingdom, and amongst the wild beasts, that is, the evil spirits. Herein, though she is not altogether deserted by her Spouse, yet while she is in the flesh, she is not yet admitted to the certain vision of Him, during her pilgrimage of exile and temptation. Wherefore she always toils to *come up*, in order to reach Him Whom she loves. For there are some who care nothing for all visible things, and lift up their hearts to the heavens, who strip themselves of their evil habits, despise this world's wealth and desires, and aim in hope at the unseen. They are well said to come up *like a pillar of smoke*, because they have both the sweet perfume of fair fame, and buoyancy of spirit. *Myrrh* denotes mortification of the flesh, *frankincense* purity of prayer; for the one is, as it were, applied to the body dead to the sinful pleasures of the world, and the other burned in the censer of the heart, on the coals of virtue, with the fire of God's love. And the other virtues are called *powders*, to denote the way in which they are spread over every, each, and all the good works of the faithful soul, not lying here and there in lumps, but uniformly distributed, and also because it is needful to grind all our actions down in order to find if any evil thing lies hid in them. And this grinding is contrition.

S. Greg. M.

S. Greg. M.
in Ezek.
Hom. 22.
Ric. Vict.

In mine own conscience then, as in a mortar,
I'll place mine heart, and bray it there;
If grief for what is past, and fear
Of what's to come, be a sufficient torture,
I'll break it all
In pieces small:
Sin shall not find a sherd without a flaw,
Wherein to lodge one lust against Thy law.

Francis
Quarles,
*School of the
Heart*, 14.

All the powders of the merchant also, because every virtue is united in the one fragrance of a holy life, every nation is united in the one Catholic Church, indistinguishably sending up their blended perfume to heaven. The *wilderness*, remarks Hugh of S. Victor,

Aponius.
Beda.

Hugo Vict.
de Erud.
Theol. i. 111.

denotes a good heart, far from noise and tumult, untrodden by the concourse of earthly thoughts, but green and flowery, bringing forth the germs of holiness. There is heard the voice of the turtle dove, the HOLY GHOST, but no sound of man, nor of aught pertaining to man. This is the "barren and dry land" in which the soul thirsteth after GOD, in which the only food is the heavenly manna, the only drink is water from the spiritual Rock. From this, no less than from that other desert of the world, the Church and the faithful soul *ascend*, as the fume of a sacrifice, as a cloud drawn up towards heaven by the warmth of the sun, and as part of the train of the ascended SAVIOUR.

Beda.
Ps. lxxiii. 1.

Like a pillar of smoke, slender by reason of poverty, straight in right intention, buoyant because unweighted by sin, rising through desire of heavenly things. And on the word *pillars*, they note that the word תִּמְרוֹת

Cocceius.
Corn. à Lap.

timeroth, is derived from תָּמָר *tamar* the palm, a tree which, slender and straight below, spreads out a wide crown of foliage, perennially green, amidst which hang luscious fruits; and, because it never bends before the winds, it is a familiar type and ensign of victory. So the Church, beginning with a mere handful of believers, shot up into stately height, spread abroad in perpetual youthfulness and fecundity through the world, and, unshaken by persecutions, stands now as the memorial of CHRIST'S triumph over the grave.

Card. Hugo.

And the holy soul *ascends* from the *wilderness*, in remembrance of her sins, like a *slender wand* (*virgula*) in holy confession of the same sins; and that wand one of *smoke*, because as the fumes of a censer pass up in one column out of the many orifices of the lid, so one act of confession includes the acknowledgment of many sins. There is *myrrh* there, in penitence, *frankincense* in the intreaty for the Divine mercy and pardon, and *all the powders of the merchant* in the minute sifting and examination of conscience. The *merchant* is that same

S. Bernard.
Serm. 59, de
diversis.

One Who came seeking goodly pearls, and gave His all for one pearl of great price, bought with His own Blood, while He sells to us without money and without price. The LXX. and Vulgate, however, looking rather to the context than to the original word רֹכֵל

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 22 in
Ezek.
Cassiod.

rokel, translate it *ointment-maker*. Still it is the same. "The sons of the priests made the ointment of the

1 Chron. ix.
31.

spices," and He Who is both a SON and a Priest, alone makes that unguent which can heal our wounds, that "ointment poured forth" of which we heard in the beginning of the Song. Only *His* powders, all those graces and sufferings which He added in His Life and Passion to His myrrh and frankincense, (as cinnamon, and cassia, stacte and onycha, galbanum and calamus, were blended with the holy oil and the incense of the Temple,) only they are the perfume of the Church, because she puts no trust in herself or her works, but only in the redemption which the Merchant purchased for her at so vast a cost; and she knows that if she strive to ascend from the pillar of her carnal desire, of her own will and presumption, the cold winds will soon drive its smoke back to earth, because its thick, gross vapours are not light enough to ascend into the higher and clearer air. The verse is also applied to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, in a letter printed amongst the works of S. Jerome, in this wise: This festival is peerless amongst the festivals of the Saints, as Blessed Mary is peerless amongst other Virgins, and it is a marvel even to the Angelic powers. Wherefore in the person of the heavenly citizens, the HOLY GHOST saith in the Canticles of her ascension: Who is this that ascendeth through the wilderness as a slender wand of smoke from spices? Rightly as *a slender wand of smoke*, because slight and delicate, as worn with holy discipline, and because kindled within, as a burnt-offering, by the fire of devout love and the longing of charity. As a slender wand, He saith, of smoke from spices, doubtless because she was filled with the perfumes of many virtues, so that the sweetest fragrance, grateful even to angelic spirits, flowed from her. The Mother of GOD once ascended from the desert of this world as a Rod sprung from the root of Jesse; but now the souls of the elect marvel, in very gladness, who she might be that surpasseth the dignity of angels in the holiness of her merits.

Exod. xxx.
Thrupp.

Nic. Argent.

Pseudo-
Hieron. ad
Paulam et
Eustoch.
Ep. 10.

Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced,
Next to His throne her Son His Mother placed;
And here below, now she's of heaven possessed,
All generations are to call her blessed.

Bishop Ken,
Christian
Year, 1st
Sunday after
Epiphany.

7 Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

- Targum. The Targum sees here the sanctuary of Solomon's temple, and the orderly array of priests, standing ministering and stretching out their hands to bless the people, who derive from that blessing strength and protection, as it compasses Israel like a strong and lofty wall.
- Cassiodor. "The *bed of Solomon*," comments Cassiodorus, "is the holy Church, because therein the Saints of GOD, when the tumult of sin is hushed, delight in the embrace of the true Prince of Peace. The *threescore valiant men* are the Doctors, who either protect the Church by their preaching, or desire to attain heavenly bliss through contemplation. The number *sixty* is made up of six and ten. The number six (*senarius*) denotes the completion of work, because GOD finished His work in six days. The number ten (*denarius*, the Vulgate word for a *penny*) signifies the wages and reward which shall be given to the elect at the end: wherefore they who came into the vineyard are said to have received a *denarius*. Moreover, these Doctors who guard the Church are not only called *valiant*, but of the *valiant of Israel*, that is, of all who believe in CHRIST and love Him, Who is Israel, that is, Seeing GOD." They are *threescore* for yet another reason. The chosen guard of David consisted of thirty warriors, and David's kingdom denotes only the Jewish Church. But our Solomon rules over Jews and Gentiles together, and therefore His guard must needs be double that of His FATHER'S Saints of the old Law.
- S. Just. Org. The Church is the bed of CHRIST, observes another, because He rests there, as it is written: "The LORD hath chosen Sion to be an habitation for Himself: He hath longed for her. This shall be My rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein." The
- Ps. cxxxii. 14. bed of Solomon is, in this life, remarks a third in nearly the same spirit, the peaceful conversation of the Saints, withdrawn from worldly noises, which, by checking or lulling the strife of sin, is a type of the happiness of unending peace. Or you may take it, with S. Gregory the Great and various others, to be the devout soul, in which CHRIST is pleased to repose, when it is prepared for Him by the removal of all worldly things, and guarded by the teaching and example of those mighty men who, fulfilling the ten precepts of the moral law in the six days of their earthly labour, are symbolized by the number *threescore*. And this title of Solomon's bed especially fits the soul after sacramental reception
- Beda.
- S. Greg. M. Philo Carp.
- Avrillon.

of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Holy Eucharist, when He is pleased to dwell for a time with His guest. The sixty valiant men who then guard the soul, are holy thoughts and resolutions armed with the sword of the Spirit. They are sixty, because the five senses, ruled and guided by reason, added as a sixth and a supreme sense, are trained in obedience to the ten precepts of the Law, so as to resist all snares and terrors of the evil one. Yet again, the *bed* on which our Wise King lay down to His rest was the Cross, the bride-bed of the Church, where is the true repose of the Saints, which is also the standard of the battle, round which the most valiant men are ranged as a guard. The poet will tell us what are the tokens of these valiant men whom the Wise King chooses as His companions :

Tres Patr.

Corn. à Lap.

A glorious company, the flower of men,
 To serve as model for the mighty world,
 And be the fair beginning of a truce.
 I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
 To reverence the King as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the CHRIST,
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one Maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds.

Tennyson,
Guenevere.

Another and especial bed of our Solomon was that wherein He was first cradled, the hallowed womb of His Virgin Mother, who was fenced about by the Patriarchs, Kings and Prophets of her race, as one tells us, and by a special guard of Angels, as another comments, who did in truth watch around the manger where He first lay after His Nativity.

Aponius.
Rupert.
Dion. Carth.

And, to pass rapidly over such interpretations as those which take the bed to be Holy Writ, or the Manhood of the WORD, or prayer, wherein the tried soul reposes with CHRIST, or the sepulchre round which the Jews posted an armed guard, we may dwell for a little on that last bed of which they tell us, the eternal peace and bliss of heaven. That rest is called a bed, because therein is repose from all the unrest and toil of this life. They who toiled here for God, repose in that rest, for "there" (as is read in Job,) "the weary be at rest, the prisoners rest together."

Theodoret.
Parez.
Corn. à Lap.
Philo Carp.Beda.
Ric. Vict.

Job iii. 18.

There eternal quiet refreshes and rewards those whom toil here in God's precepts and progress in virtue wearied, and they who here were bound in the chains of human infirmity, there breaking their bonds asunder, sacrifice to God the offering of praise.

8 They all hold swords, being expert in war : every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

Ric. Vict.

Richard of S. Victor, in his comment on the preceding verse, bids us observe that the valiant men who compass Solomon's bed in desire, do not ascend it, nor sleep there, and that even to compass it in guard is not for those who must still mourn for their sins and wash the bed of sorrow with tears of repentance, for their bed is a troubled one, and not the peaceful couch of Solomon. But when they have been cleansed from their sins by true repentance, and have been freed, by daily combat, from evil passions, and have been strengthened by grace, passing from fear and hope to perfect love, then they may take their stand, and hope one day to mount the bed themselves, and contemplate the bliss of heaven. And their weapons, he adds when discussing this verse, are Holy Scripture and psalmody. Observe first, that it is not said, They all *have* swords, but They all *hold* swords, because it is no very wonderful thing to know God's Word, but it is so to do it. He who is familiar with the Divine Scriptures has a sword, but if he neglect to live in accordance with it, he does not *hold* the sword, and is therefore not *expert in war*, because he knows not how to wield his weapon or resist temptation. "Why putteth thou thy hand to valiant deeds who art not of the valiant men?" asks Gilbert of Hoyland, addressing ignorant, dull, and worldly preachers: "Why undertakest thou a guard, who shakest not off thy sloth? Why dost thou compass the bed, who hast no sword, or if thou hast the sword of the Word, hast it in the scabbard, not on thy tongue? Thou holdest not in the hands of thy tongue the turning sword of the Word of God. The Word runneth very swiftly, the Spirit is fiery, but I know not how it is that it, contrary to its nature, becomes dull in thy hand. That which is sharper and more piercing than any two-edged sword is blunted and weakened in thy grasp. The Word

S. Greg. M.
Moral. xix.
29.

Serm. in
Cant. xvi.

is not swift in thy mouth, it runs not swiftly, it turns not readily in thy hand according to varying needs, though it is more than enough for all the wants of spiritual combat. Why undertakest thou an office of which thou hast no experience? *All holding swords, and expert in war.* Thou with no reason carriest a sword who hast no adequate acquaintance with warfare, or if thou hast learnt to combat, engagest thyself in preference with worldly tasks rather than with those of CHRIST . . . Thou who art an Evangelical,¹ speak altogether evangelically. Let thy sermon savour of the Law, the Prophets, the Apostles; sharpen thy tongue with their words. Borrow from them the weapons of GOD, mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of GOD? Let the sword of the SPIRIT turn in thine hands, that it may serve thee for every need, nor let the power of sacred eloquence forsake thee when a casual and sudden occasion demands it. Let the powerful and effectual word be on thy lips, and not in the leaves of a book. 'For the Priest's lips,—not his leaves—should keep knowledge.' Take thy purse of money with thee. Let thy sword be at thy side, not out of sight, let it be close to thee. Gird thyself with it upon thy thigh, that thou mayest be mighty and ready, both to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers." Observe in the second place, that the words seem, though not necessarily, to imply the possession of two swords by each warrior. In Japan, at the present day, two swords borne by one person are a mark of superior rank; in the later middle ages the usual weapons of a noble were a sword and a long dagger, almost a sword in dimensions, which was used, instead of a target, to parry, while the sword was employed for attack. So in explaining this passage, we shall do well to recall that saying of the Gospel: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. And they said, LORD, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough." And if we take the two swords, as the commentators so often do, to denote spiritual and temporal rule, then the sword in the hand will denote the active strife of the soul against evil spirits, or zeal for passion and martyrdom, and that upon the thigh the passive restraint of our

2 Cor. x. 4.

Mal. ii. 7.

S. Luke
xxii. 36, 38.Dion. Carth.
in S. Luc.
xxii.
S. Greg. M.
S. Just. Org.¹ "Vir evangelicus."

carnal passions, kept in check by temperance and modesty. Or, rather, as Richard of S. Victor wisely tells us, by the love of God, the only sufficient weapon against the assaults of the flesh. So wearing the sword, the valiant men are conformed to their Leader, of Whom is written, "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty, according to Thy worship and renown." Psellus gives a quaint explanation of the verse, saying that the swords denote the sign of the Cross, which Christians employ against the evil one. And it may be added, in illustration of this view, that the Cross *fitchée*, (that is, with the lower limb ending in a point) borne still on so many shields, is traditionally said to denote the cross-handled sword of a Crusader, when set up in the ground before his eyes as he lay wounded on the battle-field, to bring the emblem of his salvation to his mind. *Because of fear in the night.* That is, because of all the snares of the devil, all the darkness and terror of adversity, of ignorance, of the world's gloom. One sword might be sufficient, did we fight in the day, and not against powers of darkness; but as we know not on which side the attack will be made, there must be a sword ready on the thigh as well as one in the hand.

9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

10 He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

The word אֲפִרְיֹן, *appirion*, here translated *chariot*, ought rather to be *litter* (LXX. φορέϊον, Vulg. *ferculum*.) The Chaldee takes this, as well as the *bed* of the previous verse, to be the Temple, in the midst of which was the Ark of the Covenant, wherein lay the stone tables of the Law, more precious than fine silver and than the purest gold, overlaid with a veil of blue and purple. And whereas the *bed* denotes night and rest, the *litter* implies the royal pomp of a procession by day, a notion partly borne out by the Arabic version, which here reads *throne*. So, with the Christian interpretation that the Church is here described, we see it less as the refuge for the weary than as the trium-

Ric. Vict.

Ps. xlv. 4.

Psellus.

Hugo Card.
S. Brun. Ast.

Targum.

phal car of the Saints. As CHRIST made His own human Body first to be the *litter* in which the God-head is borne, so He made the Church to be that vehicle in which He, the Man-GOD, should be borne in procession among the people to whom He comes as King and Conqueror. The woodwork of this litter is of the *wood of Lebanon*, of incorruptible cedar from the "white" mountain, denoting the holiness, incorrupt truth, and steadfast perseverance of the Saints; though one of themselves reminds us, not inaptly, that as Lebanon is taken often to denote fierceness and pride, so that it is written, "The LORD breaketh the cedars of Libanus," we are to understand here that the very framework of the Church is made up of sinners and idolaters whom GOD has converted to the faith. And one of the very earliest Christian comments on the Song leads in the same direction, pointing out that the LORD took His flesh from Gentiles as well as from Judah, and that the *wood of Lebanon*, lying outside the Holy Land, in an idolatrous region, typifies Ruth the Moabitess, from whom He sprang: and similarly, that we, who spiritually carry Him in our souls, are of Lebanon too, for we were once the wood of the gainsayer, but have been cut down by the axe of the WORD to be made a chariot for our Master. *The pillars of silver* are generally taken to denote the Apostles and other principal Saints, as the stays and props of the Church. So we read of "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars." They are *silver*, not only to denote their purity of life and conversation, but also because to them was intrusted the ministry of that Word whereof is said, "The words of the LORD are pure words, even as the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire." *The bottom thereof of gold*. The LXX. reading ἀνκλιτρον, the Vulgate, *reclinatorium*, come nearer to the meaning of the Hebrew, רִפְדָּה, *rephidah*, which seems to denote the sloping *back* of the litter, against which the rider leaned in a half-reclining posture. They differ as to this. Philo of Carpasia, holding that as one class of Saints is denoted by the cedar-wood, and a second by the silver pillars, takes the golden back to be a third, and to mean the Martyrs. Till they came, the Son of Man had not where to lay His head, but now He has these, of whom is written, "As gold in the furnace

Philo Carp.

Hugo Victorin.

S. Greg. Nyss.

Ps. xxix. 5.

S. Theophil. Antioch. + circ. A.D. 190.

Polychronius.

Gal. ii. 9.

Ps. xii. 7.

Rosenmüller. De Wette. Hitzig.

Philo Carp.

S. Luke ix. 58.

hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering." Cassiodorus, however, will have it that this *reclining-place* denotes the everlasting rest promised to the Saints in the Church, while S. Gregory in his comment here takes it to be Divine contemplation; and in another place, that rest in charity which the devout find even on earth. *The covering of it of purple.* Here again the LXX. and Vulgate differ from the A. V. reading, *The going-up* (*ἐπιβασιν, ascensum,*) while modern critics take it to be the *seat*, with a purple cushion or carpet laid upon it. *The going-up is purple,* tersely writes S. Beda, because no one can enter the Church save by means of those Sacraments which derive their power from the LORD'S Passion, and are purpled with His Blood. Aponius bids us see in the litter the Cross of Calvary bearing the Crucified Redeemer, being itself that Cedar of Lebanon which is the stateliest of trees, and carrying on it the silver pillar of His most pure and spotless Body, which shows the gold of His perfect Godhead, while the purple denotes the precious tide which flowed there for us. And we have all these tersely expressed in the world-famous processional hymn :

S. Venant.
Fortunat.
The Hymn,
Vexilla Re-
gis.

O Tree of beauty, Tree of Light,
O Tree with royal purple dight,
Elect, on whose triumphal breast
Those holy limbs should find their rest.

Henry
Harphius.

Tree of Lebanon, having the *beauty* of fine silver, the rich *glow* of pure gold, and decked in its midst with kingly *purple*. O most happy litter of the Cross, wherein CHRIST descended to our basest depths, that He might draw us to His majestic height! He made this litter *for Himself*, because He voluntarily underwent death for us. He made it of the wood of Lebanon, a Gentile mountain, because He elected to die by a Roman punishment, and not a Jewish one. He *paved* it with love, because He gave Himself to be rejected, and as it were, trampled under foot. Akin to this is the interpretation, already indicated, which takes the litter to be CHRIST'S human nature, whereby He was borne into the world. The silver pillars are the gifts of the HOLY GHOST wherewith He was endued, according to that saying, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." The golden slope is His most pure and holy soul. The

Alanus.

Prov. ix. 1.

purple, as before, is His Passion, and His Heart is full of love, and that for the daughters of Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace, because He gives to holy souls those graces and virtues which bring the peace which passeth all understanding. Now the holy soul is borne on this litter unto GOD, this same litter whereby Elias was taken up to heaven. This is the ladder of sinners by which CHRIST drew all things to Himself, as He foretold. We too may have our spiritual Cross, gemmed with love at its summit, with obedience on the right, patience on the left, and humility below. The Cross of our body will be abstinence, even from things lawful; watchfulness; and diligence in toil. The Cross of our heart, the fear of GOD; sorrow for sin; compassion on our neighbour; and the Passion of CHRIST. The Cross of our soul, perpetual clinging to Divine love; ardent humiliation of self; sincere affection for enemies; and perfect forgiveness of injuries. But a more frequent explanation of the *litter* than either of these two, is that which takes it to be the CHRIST-bearing soul. The *litter* of Solomon, writes Hugh of S. Victor, is a heart trained in the practice of virtue. It must needs be, in the first place, of the *wood of Lebanon*, by purity, and incorrupt truth; of *silver* in precepts and promises. In the whiteness of the silver is seen stainless conversation, in its musical sound the sweet promise of GOD. It has *gold*, too, by reason of heavenly wisdom, which rusteth not for evermore, but is ruddy in love. It has *purple*, when it preaches the Passion, and a *going-up* to glory. *In the midst* there is *spread love for the daughters of Jerusalem*, love set before the feeble and infirm, that they may win salvation. For who is so feeble that he cannot love? If thou canst do nothing else, at any rate thou canst love, and so belong to Solomon's litter. Others limit the reference somewhat by seeing here the Doctors of the Church, by whom CHRIST is borne, as in a litter, in their preaching. Their silver pillars are the words of the LORD, their golden slope the calmness of a peaceful mind, the purple ascent that Heavenly Country where CHRIST robes the victor in kingly raiment. And such a litter was Saint Paul, that stately cedar cast to the ground and broken by GOD, silver in his preaching of CHRIST, golden in his constancy and meekness, purple in his sufferings and martyrdom. Taking the true sense of מֵרָכֶב, *merkab*,

Hugo Vict.
Erud.Theol.
i. 60.

Tres Patr.

Theodoret.
Ghislerius.

to be *seat*, and not *ascent*, as the Vulgate, nor *covering*, or *curtain*, as A.V., Syriac, and Arabic, we get the meaning that for all the Saints, as for CHRIST Himself, the Passion is the only road to the throne of glory. That seat is covered with purple, and with no other tint. And then you may take the Saints of GOD to be that central pavement, costly stones now laid low on the ground, in the humiliation of the Church Militant, but soon, in the Church Triumphant, to be "as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land." The most glorious Virgin, too, is aptly called the litter, that is, the throne or royal seat of Solomon, the SAVIOUR. He made it of the wood of Lebanon, holy and uncorrupt in body and soul. He gave it silver pillars, those seven pillars of the gifts of the HOLY GHOST which support the House wherein Eternal Wisdom dwells. So S. Peter Damiani :

The Hymn,
Gaudium
mundi.

Aula celestis speciosa Regis,
Fulta septenis sophiæ columnis,
Quem totus nequit cohibere mundus
Claudis in alvo.

Beautiful palace of the King of Heaven,
Reared on the pillars sevenfold of Wisdom,
Him Whom the whole world faileth to encompass,
Thou art enshrining.

The golden slope was that most ardent love which prepared her for the Conception of her Divine Son; or, as another hymn will have it, that holy breast on which the Infant SAVIOUR lay reclined :

The Hymn,
Gaude Virgo
principatis.

Gaude sacrum pectus aureum
Vere reclinatorium
Salomonis.

Joy, O sacred golden breast,
Truest Pillow, where in rest
Solomon is lying.

And the purple ascent was her sorrowful union in the Passion of JESUS, wherein she was more than Martyr, crying, like her royal forefather, "O my Son, would GOD I had died for Thee, my Son, my Son."

2 Sam. xviii.
33.

J. Beau-
mont,
Psyche,
xiii, 343.

O Heavenly Mother, never agony
Was more heroic than was this of thine;
Excepting that of thy great Son, when He
His humble patience did prove divine.
Fitting it was that thou shouldst tread alone
The hardest steps of glory next thy Son.

Also her heart, in the *midst* of her body, was *strewed* with tender *love* for all weak and suffering souls, *daughters of Jerusalem*, but in Babylonian exile below. Cardinal Hugo bids us note the contrast between the chariot of Pharaoh, touching earth always, and borne along with rattling speed, and the silent litter of Solomon, raised far from the ground, proceeding noiselessly, types of the carnal and holy soul. There is another explanation given of this passage by more than one author of mark, by mistaking the force of the Vulgate *ferculum*, which is often used in classical Latin to denote a *dinner-tray* or a *dish of meat*. This dish is, one tells us, Holy Writ. The woodwork of its frame are the inspired Seers and Apostles and Evangelists, cedars of Lebanon, who have composed its several books. The silver is the outer form of their words; the gold the inner sense; the purple is the royal cloth of CHRIST'S Passion which covers the whole, and on which the food is served up. That food is mingled of rare and costly ingredients, peace, patience, long-suffering, joy in the HOLY GHOST, and the like, and the name of the dainty so compounded is Love.

The midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The extreme difficulty of this passage calls for separate consideration, rather than for treatment with the remainder of the verse. First, then, let us look at the various renderings of importance. The LXX. has [He made] *a stone pavement within it, love from (ἀπὸ) the daughters of Jerusalem.* The Vulgate, He *spread* (or, *carpeted, constravit*) *the midst of it with love because of the daughters of Jerusalem.* The Arabic reading is, *And the interior of it incrustated with jewels, and that for the daughters of Jerusalem.* Some of the older critics translate, *The midst of it kindled with love for, &c.*; the later ones, *The midst of it beautifully covered* (sc. with tapestry) *by the daughters of Jerusalem.* The general meaning is plain, that the very innermost core of the Church's being is not purity, nor beauty, nor preaching, nor even the Passion itself; but the love of CHRIST for us, and our love for Him. And now let us see what they tell us, obscure though most of their comments be. S. Gregory Nyssen holds that dedicated virginity, the special offering of the *daughters of Jerusalem* to the Bridegroom, is set, as a tessellation of jewels, in the midst of the Church. Others say that

Hugo Card.

Ricard. Vict.
Rupert.
S. Bernard.
de Grad.
Hum.S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Tres Patr.

CHRIST makes, with His example and teaching, a tes-
 sellation, which is love, in the hearts of the faithful,
 beginning with His work in the souls of His first He-
 brew converts, here called Daughters of Jerusalem.
 And the LXX. version, λιθόστρωτον, *pavement*, applied
 here to the love on which the throne of our righteous
 Judge is reared, recalls that other Pavement of earthly
 power, the Gabbatha where the unjust judge Pilate set
 his tribunal. Turning to the Vulgate reading, we find
 the common explanation to be that CHRIST fills the
 hearts of His faithful people with love for Him, in
 return for the love which made Him lay down His
 life for us. And on this S. Gregory the Great remarks,
 "What shall we do, who have no merit, who see that
 we have no place amongst the Doctors, or amongst the
 Martyrs? It follows: *He spread the midst of it with
 love.* Let us then have love, wherewith the midst of
 this litter is spread, which is therefore called a 'com-
 mandment exceeding broad,' because it procures eternal
 salvation for all who observe it. Let us hold effec-
 tually to this, and we shall be saved by it, and that
because of the daughters of Jerusalem, for simple souls,
 knowing themselves to have no strength; which, the
 more conscious they are of their own weakness, the
 more eagerly desire to love their SAVIOUR and Re-
 deemer." Another tells us that there are many ac-
 tions of our lives which are *middling*, neither very bad
 nor very good in themselves, but which, if done in a
 loving spirit, become part of the ornaments of CHRIST'S
 own car. Aponius gives two lovely meanings here.
 Love was the mean, the mid part of union between
 the Godhead and Manhood of CHRIST, between GOD
 and MAN through CHRIST. And He spread the
midst of the Cross with love by hastening the time
 of His Resurrection for the elect's sake, keeping the
 letter of the prophecy of His three days' sojourn in
 the grave, but rising in little more than thirty hours
 from the Nones of Good Friday. This, he says, is
 that love put under our feet, which "beareth all
 things," and though trodden, yields not, but by the
 example of its holiness, uplifts the fallen. The Abbat
 Gillebert, preaching to Cistercian nuns, explains the
 whole verse of the Religious Life. He bids them re-
 member first, how CHRIST provides delights for them
 even on the journey, and next that, precious as the
 litter is for its material, it is yet dearer for its Maker's

S. John xix.
13.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

S. Greg. M.

Ps. cxix. 96.

Dion. Carth.

Aponius.

1 Cor. xiii. 7.

Gillebert.

sake. It is but the vehicle to the bridal bed, and if the Bride be carried on her way with such royal pomp, what will her reception in the King's own palace be? Here, in the toil of earth, He gives His Bride a golden reclining-place to rest her weary frame, what then must be the glory and the utter tranquillity of Heaven? Virginitv is the *wood of Lebanon*, incorrupt, perennial, fragrant, from the Mount of whiteness. The *pillars* of the claustral life are knowledge and memory of the divine law, faith and steadfastness. They are *silver pillars* if trained in holy discourse, if not only at the seven Hours of prayer Religious sing and make melody in their hearts, but if their tongues speak often of CHRIST in the words of Holy Writ. Let your tongues, he says, be silver. Let no mass of lead be cast into your mouth. That mouth is leaden which utters nothing refined, nothing keen, nothing of heavenly things; but is altogether relaxed, feeble, busy with the meanest and, perchance, the most ungodly things. For wickedness sitteth in the talent of lead. The third grade, after purity of body and gravity of speech, is the *golden slope*, where the unveiled Face of the LORD is seen in kingly and golden majesty, and this is a purified and bridled spirit. No need now to cite that saying of the Gospel, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Seest Thou not, O LORD JESU, how many resting-places Thou hast here? Nowhere does Thy majestic Head more gladly lie than on the golden bosom of virginity. Behold these virgin breasts, breasts free for Thee. Here Thou reposest oft, and retest at noon, in the golden stillness of Thy radiance. Foxes have here no holes, nor do the birds of the air make here their nests. These things are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes, who follow the lowly ascent, the purple ascent, and advance in the traces of the Passion of CHRIST. Then come the *purple steps*. If thou scornest, or fearest these steps, remember that they are purple. Lowliness accepted for CHRIST, bestows royal dignity. Tread then, Bride of CHRIST, these purple steps with innocent foot. The path whereon thy Beloved first advanced is noble. How beautiful are those purple steps, which CHRIST first marked out with His snowy feet, with the track of His precious Blood! Follow then with eager zeal. Loose the fleshly shoe from off thy feet, for this is holy ground where thou essayest

Zech. v. 7.

S. Luke ix.
58.

to go up. Tread in these steps with bare and rapid foot, that it may be dipped in the Blood of CHRIST. And not thy foot alone, but dip thou thy hands and thy head too, that thou mayst go up altogether purple, altogether royal, and ennobled with the Passion of CHRIST. And there is something more. The gold and purple would be dull and cold without love, and therefore, while coveting earnestly the best gifts, seek the more excellent way. That is, *Love in the midst for the daughters of Jerusalem*, the sisterly bond of the cloister, the banishment of all spiritual envy, the desire for mutual help, encouragement, affection, which train the soul in that love which casteth out fear, so that CHRIST is to it the source of gladness, and not of dread. This is the wedding-garment which even a priest must wear, and how much more the Bride!

11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Cassiodor.

The *daughters of Sion* are the same as the daughters of Jerusalem, children of the Church, holy souls, citizens of that city on high who with the angels enjoy perpetual peace, and by contemplation behold the glory of God. *Go forth*, the Bride says, *O ye daughters of Sion*, that is, pass out from the troublous conversation of this world, that you may with unburdened soul look on Him Whom ye love. *And behold King Solomon*, that is, CHRIST, the truly Peaceful One, *with the crown wherewith His Mother crowned Him*. As though she said: Consider CHRIST, clothed for you in flesh, which flesh He took from the flesh of His Virgin Mother. For she calls that flesh which CHRIST assumed for us a *crown*, wherein dying He destroyed the empire of death, in which rising again He bestowed on us the hope of Resurrection. Of this crown the Apostle saith: "We see JESUS, by the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." And *His Mother* is said to have *crowned Him*, because the Virgin Mary gave Him the substance of His flesh from her own. *In the day of His espousals*. That is, in the time of His Incarnation, when He united the

Heb. ii. 9.

Church to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle, or when God was united to Man. *And in the day of the gladness of His heart.* For the joy and gladness of CHRIST is the salvation and redemption of mankind, according to His own saying in the Gospel when He saw many flocking to the Faith. "At that time JESUS answered and said, I thank Thee, O FATHER, LORD of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes." And in the Gospel parable, when the sheep was found, He gathered His friends together, saying, "Rejoice with Me." S. Gregory the Great, giving exactly the same explanation, notices the objection that a crown is the mark of glory and honour, whereas the Incarnation of CHRIST was His humiliation. And he replies by saying that the crown and glory are ours, because He is our Head, and that which was His humbling is our boast, and pride, and exaltation.

S. Mat. xi. 25.

S. Luke xv. 6.

S. Greg. M.

Next, to cite Cassiodorus again, all this verse may simply and literally be referred to the Passion of CHRIST. For Solomon foreseeing in the spirit that Passion, warned long before the daughters of Sion, that is, the people of Israel, saying, *Go forth, and behold King Solomon*, that is, CHRIST, *with the crown, the wreath of thorns, wherewith His mother the Synagogue crowned Him in the day of His espousals*, that is, when He wedded the Church to Himself, *and in the day of the gladness of His heart*, when He rejoiced that the world was redeemed by His Passion out of the power of the devil. *Go forth*, then, that is, pass out from the shades of unbelief, and *behold*, that is, understand in soul, that He Who suffers as Man, is Very GOD: or even *go forth* beyond the gates of your city, that ye may see Him crucified on Mount Golgotha. And in this sense more than one hymn takes it, as thus:

Daughters of Sion, see your King!
 Go forth, go forth, to meet Him!
 Your Solomon is hastening
 Where that dear flock shall greet Him!
 The sceptre and the crown by right
 He wears, in robe of purple dight.

The Hymn,
*Exite, Sion
 filia.*

It glitters fair, His diadem,
 But thorns are there entwining,

And from the Red Sea comes each gem
That in its wreath is shining:
Their radiance glows like stars at night,
With precious blood-drops are they bright.

- Eusebius. Go forth from fleshly thoughts, and behold the crown of living stones which is the Church itself, set on the head of CHRIST by love. Like Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a Land that I will show thee."
- Gen. xii. 1.
- Hugo Card. Others take the days of the espousals and gladness to be different, and expound the latter of the Resurrection or the Ascension. Go forth, O ye daughters of Sion, from carnal desire, from evil habits, from blindness of heart, and behold the Glory of our King, the bliss of His celestial gladness, that ye may be drawn on by its sweetness and delight, and advance so far, as to go forth from your very selves. When ye suffer adversities, go forth from your imperfection and impatience, so as to bear readily the sorrows laid upon you, and behold your King suffering for you, and by His Passion crowned with glory and honour. Think on that which is eternal, and cheerfully bear that which is momentary; think on the exceeding weight of glory, and then the affliction will be light, which is accompanied by so great a reward. When ye suffer, look upon that crown, and it will become a diadem for you, wherewith you shall be crowned in the day of festival when you go forth from the body, or when ye pass from the bridal of the Church Militant to the bridal of the Church Triumphant. Therefore, O ye daughters of Sion, O ye wise Virgins, get your lamps ready, prepare the oil of good works, and the flame of love, and so go forth to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride.
- Isa. lxi. 3. Then shall ye be "a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your GOD."
- S. Ambros. And thus comes His last bridal crown, that glorious diadem made up of Saints, living jewels, set in purest gold, which the Church still places on the head of JESUS at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, more perfect than the crown of Love which Judea, unawares, gave Him in His martyrdom, or than that of righteousness, gemmed with joy, love, fear, and sorrow, which Mary placed upon the brow of her Son.
- in Ps. cxix.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
Theodoret.
Hugo Vict.
Erud. Theol.

CHAPTER IV.

I Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

The Bridegroom here begins the praise of His Bride's beauty, and, as has been aptly observed, not like the maidens in Ps. xlv., by dwelling on the richness of her attire, but on the graces of her person. And thus the mystical import is the enumeration of those special tokens of perfection and holiness which are to be sought in every pure Church and every faithful soul.

Doubly *fair* is she, in faith and in works; doubly fair in body and soul, in knowledge of God and knowledge of herself; fair in passive abstention from evil, fair in active performance of good. Fair in that contemplation of divine glory which is *claritas*; fair in that zeal for God's honour, the good of her neighbour, and her own humiliation, which is *charitas*. Fair by nature, fair in grace, fair in the practice of holiness, fair in preaching the Word. And the *doves' eyes* denote, as we saw before, purity, simplicity, the enlightenment of the HOLY GHOST, steadfast contemplation of things divine. But now comes a difficulty. The A.V. adds *within thy locks*, or tresses arranged over the face, which is also the view of Kimchi. And if we take this rendering, we shall find its mystical sense by noting that loosened and uncovered hair was a token of mourning and captivity. But the Bride, freed by her Spouse from the dominion of sin, has her tresses orderly disposed and bound, in token of peace and of subjection to Him. Her calm, pure eyes are in keeping with the rest of her external mien, and look happily and peacefully on Him. But this is not the interpretation given by the old versions, nor yet that of several modern critics. The literal sense of מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתֶּךָ *mibbaad letzammathék*, seems to be *out from within thy binding*, or, *restraint*, from the root צָמַם, *tzamam*,

Corn. à Lap.

Philo Carp.
S. Just. Org.
Hugo Card.Dion. Carth.
Beda.R. Kimchi.
Hengstenberg.
Ainsworth.
Isa. xlvii. 2.

“he tied up;” and the LXX. translate, *without* [making mention of] *thy silence*; while the Arabic, a little more full, is *besides the beauty of thy silence*. That is, as they variously explain, devout silence is an additional grace, which increases the beauty of holiness. It is said of the holy soul, remarks S. Ambrose, *Thou hast doves’ eyes, besides thy silence*, because she sees spiritually, and also knows the time to speak and the time to be silent, that she may utter her discourse in due season, and not incur the risk of sinning by importunate speech. I would, says Thomas à Kempis, that I had oftener been silent, and not been in company. Why are we so ready to speak and talk with one another, when we so rarely return to silence without some wound on our conscience? And again: No man speaks safely, unless he who is silent gladly. The Three Fathers go deeper than this, and explain the phrase of the silent and hidden meditation of the soul on those divine mysteries which are unspeakable, but which she beholds with her dove-like eyes. And Philo takes us yet further, reminding us of that secret and unspoken prayer which goes up from every soul which is rapt in contemplation and kindled with longing after God. And of every such soul may be said in the words of a modern poet, but with deeper meaning:

Tennyson,
In Memoriam, xxxii.
Heb. xiii. 20.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, He was dead, and there He sits,
And He that brought Him back is there.

The Vulgate, however, is quite different. It reads, *without that which lies hid within*. That is, without the glory of that heavenly reward which thou shalt receive at the end of the world; which lies hid within, though thou contemplatest it now by faith; for it cannot be seen in this world, but shall be perfected in that which is to come. It is a noble and beautiful thing, observes another, to dwell in simplicity amongst men, to feel no wish for any of those temporal things which she sees before her eyes. But it is far nobler and more beautiful that she is striving to keep her heart’s desire unspotted, and that she shares in her soul the glory of everlasting bliss. The outer beauty of the soul may be seen, comments Richard of S. Victor, by moderation in food and dress, by rejection of super-

Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M.

Ricard. Vict.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.
Serm. xvi.

De Imit.
CHRISTI, i.
19.

Tres Patr.

Philo Carp.

fluties, by repose in demeanour and language, by friendliness, courtesy, harmlessness, honesty, sympathy, and helpfulness; by a cheerful face, ears which do not itch, eyes not boldly lifted nor prying, an instructed tongue, checked from light and useless talk, uttering good and wholesome words. Further ornaments are freedom from anger, impatience, and spite; aversion from quarrels, detraction, or judgment of others, and even from listening to those so engaged. The soul is fair also when fervent in good works, in GOD'S service, in brotherly love: when active, zealous, and discreet in all her doings. Yet there is an inner beauty which surpasses all this; which is purity of intention, lowliness of mind, and that spirit which ever prompts her to do great things and yet look down upon herself, that perfect humility which walks hand in hand with the love of CHRIST. But the true meaning of the passage appears to be, *Thine eyes are like doves' eyes, from behind thy veil*. The very word which is translated *silence* here by the LXX., is rendered by them *veil* in Isaiah xlvii. 2, where the A. V. again reads "locks." The *veil* may be, as many will have it, that of the Bride's flowing tresses, but it seems better to take it of that covering which maidens put on when in the presence of their betrothed husbands, as did Rebecca: "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master; therefore she took a veil, and covered herself." The wearing of the veil, then, denotes not merely that modesty and reserve which Tertullian urges as the fittest graces of Christian maidens, but is a token of the Spouse's submission to her Bridegroom, and further implies the duty of keeping herself for and to Him alone, because "He is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other." Not unfitly, then, shall we see here a special reference to the delight of CHRIST in the purity of the Religious Life, the doves' eyes behind that veil which consecrated Virgins have worn since the infancy of the Church. And thus runs the ancient English form for bestowal of this veil at the profession of a nun: "Receive, Virgin of CHRIST, the veil, a token of virginity and chastity, whereby may the HOLY GHOST come upon thee, and the power of the Highest overshadow thee against the heat of evil temptations, through the help of the same our LORD JESUS CHRIST." And the

R. Jona.
Rosenmüller.
Hitzig.

1 Cor. xi. 15.

Gen. xxiv.
65.

De Veland.
Virgîn.

Cocceius.

Gen. xx. 16.

S. Ambros.
de Laps.
Virg.

Pontif.
Exon.

response was from the office of S. Agnes : " The LORD hath clad me in a robe wrought with gold, and hath decked me with priceless jewels."

Thy hair is as a flock of goats. As the *eyes* of the Church are sometimes taken to denote her greatest teachers, Prophets, Apostles, and Doctors, who give light to the rest of the body, so too the *hair*, close to the head, and its most comely ornament, is explained of those more perfect members of the Church who are nearest to CHRIST their Head. And as hair in itself is insensible and dead, so too those who have come nearest to CHRIST by following His counsels of perfection, and by adopting the Religious Life, are dead to the world and its desires. Moreover, the Saints are compared to a *flock of goats*, because of their love for ascending to lofty heights. " Let not these animals seem vile to thee," observes a Saint ; " thou seest that this flock feeds in lofty places, to wit, on a mount. Therefore, where there are precipices for others, there is no peril for the goats ; there is the food of this flock, there their provender is sweeter, their pasture choicer. They are seen by their herdsmen, hanging from the wooded cliff, where can be no attacks by wolves, where the fruitful trees minister abundant produce. There they may be seen bending anxiously with milk-laden udders over their tender young : and therefore the SPIRIT chose them as a comparison for the assembly of Holy Church. And, that you may hear the mystical import, the *hair* denotes the exaltation of the WORD, and a certain loftiness of righteous souls, because the understanding of a wise man is in his head. For wisdom, no doubt, lies in the exaltation of human thought. And whereas goats are shorn that they may cast off their superfluous covering, so too Holy Church has her flock of shorn souls, that is, the virtues of many such souls, in which flock you can find nothing insensible, nothing superfluous ; because faith hath made them wise, and spiritual grace hath purged them from all taint of superfluity. Fitly then are the souls of the righteous *revealed* (LXX.), and revealed from *Mount Gilead*, that is, from the ' passing over of witness,' because the Heavenly Witness hath passed from the Synagogue to the Church. In this mountain spring frankincense, balm, and other perfumes. These perfumes, which merchants, gathered by faith and devotion from the Gentiles, have brought, the Church

S. Ambros.
S. Just. Orig.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

S. Ambros.
Hom. 16, in
Ps. cxix.

possesses." And similarly another Western Doctor S. Greg. M. comments: "The hair of the Bride is said to be as a flock of goats, because the peoples of the Church, while chewing the cud of the Law's commandments, contemplate heavenly things in faith, are clean animals, and feed on high. And Gilead is interpreted, 'The heap of witness,' denoting the Martyrs, who, holding steadfastly to the faith of CHRIST, maintained the witness of the truth even by their death. Thus the flock of goats *ascends* (Vulg.) from Mount Gilead, because the people of the Church go up with readier faith towards eternal things according as they know that the holy Martyrs have more boldly borne witness to that same faith." A Greek Father bids us extend Philo Carp. the meaning of Gilead further, so as to include all the Prophets and Apostles who, by word and deed, have borne faithful witness to CHRIST.

A second view of the passage, looking rather to the multitude of hairs in the tresses of the Bride than to their height from the ground, sees denoted here the whole body of professing Christians, rather than the more eminent Saints. For thus saith the Apostle, "If Philo Carp. a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering." Wherefore the hairs 1 Cor. xi. 15. of the Bride of CHRIST are assemblies, gatherings, and congregations of peoples who worship the One God, the true ornament of the Bride herself, and the joy of JESUS CHRIST, Who is the Head of the Bride and the Creator and Redeemer of all mankind, according to that saying of the Prophet, "As I live, saith the LORD, Isa. xlix. 18. thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doth." And then they are called a flock of *goats*, because the Theodoret. bulk of the Church is made up of converted sinners, who feed on Mount Gilead to obtain there wholesome herbs which may cure all the disorders of sin. Or again, the whole body of the laity is implied, as busied Beda. in worldly cares and occupations, with which sin is, for the most part, mixed up. CHRIST Himself is the Heap of Witness on which the multitude of the faithful rests, themselves living stones, clinging to that True Stone, of which Peter saith, "To Whom coming, as unto a 1 S. Pet. ii. 4. living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up." Therefore the flocks of goats go up from Mount Gilead, because the multitudes of the Saints ascend to

the heights of holiness, and aim to follow CHRIST'S teaching and commandments in all things.

Again, as the hair is a superfluity of the body, lifeless, and not essential to life, it may be taken to denote all those purely human cares and occupations in which the Church cannot help being engaged, which are no help to her spiritual life, but in which she can so demean herself as to make them a grace and beauty, and a proof of loftiness of soul. And somewhat in this sense Aponius takes the phrase to denote wealthy Christians, surrounded by luxury, and not self-denying enough to adopt Apostolic simplicity of living, but yet useful and ornamental to the Church by reason of their faith and almsdeeds.

Yet another explanation is that which sees in the hair, springing out of the head, a type of the holy thoughts and words of the devout soul, dead to the world and the flesh, and brought out of the darkness of sin, ignorance, and ungodliness, to truth, knowledge, and piety, by means of the Gospel, revealed from Mount Gilead, the invisible hill of Divine testimony. The thoughts of the Saints are like *goats*, because they never rest from climbing higher and higher even in those very temporal things to which bodily necessity compels their attention. They go up from Mount Gilead which is CHRIST, that Mount of God, that fat mountain, where are the richest pastures, because every holy meditation comes from Him as its true source. He nourishes them in our hearts, makes them arise, and ascend, and that by the way of prayer.

2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

The Targum, while explaining the hair, as many Christian expositors do, to be the whole congregation of God's people, takes the *teeth* to denote the Priests, who eat of the hallowed flesh, tithes, and first-fruits, who are white, and pure from violence and rapine. And the general scope of patristic comment is nearly the same. Thus S. Gregory Nyssen, followed by many others, inclusive of S. Augustine, explains these teeth to be the Doctors of the Church, who grind, as it were,

Theodoret.

Aponius.

Tres Patr.

Cassiod.

Ricard. Vict.

Ps. lxxviii. 15,
LXX. and
Vulg.

Targum.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Greg. M.
Cassiodor.

the hard sayings and dogmas of the Faith down so as to fit them for reception by the body of Christians; and who are themselves, as it were, *shorn*, that is, bare of all clogging matter, *come up from the washing* of conscience, clean from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, and advancing ever in holiness, *bearing, as twins*, calmness of soul, and purity of bodily life, and never *barren* in producing virtues. S. Augustine's comment is nearly the same, except that he refers also to the teachers of the Church cutting away their converts from their former superstitions, as the teeth separate a piece of food from the whole bulk, that he takes the washing to denote Holy Baptism, and the *twins* to be the love of God, and of one's neighbour. And the upper and lower rows of teeth wherewith this work of incorporating sinners into the body of the Church is effected, are, says Aponius, the books of the Old and New Testament. The righteous preachers of the Church, comments S. Albert, who are the teeth whereby men are incorporated into her body, should not decay through luxury, but be white with innocence, joined in charity, even in justice, firm in constancy, bony in vigour, biting into sin with doctrine and truth. Of such is written, "Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which come up from the washing." S. Bernard accommodates the metaphor of teeth with much boldness and ingenuity to the Religious life. As the teeth are whiter than the rest of the white body, so Religious are the purest members of the Church, because of their more self-denying and devout life. Teeth have no flesh, like other bones; and Religious, while in the flesh, have forgotten it, hearing the Apostle say, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." They have no skin; and so true monks do not suffer even a trifling scandal or obstacle to abide amongst them. They are cloistered by the lips, as Religious are by the walls of their convent. They should not be seen, save in occasional mirth, and so Religious ought only to appear when intending to do some deed of charity, which will bring a smile of cheerfulness to the sad. They have to masticate food for the whole body, and Religious are bound to pray for the whole estate of the Church, both for the living and dead. The teeth taste no savour from the dainties they chew, and so, true Religious take no glory to themselves for any good thing they effect. Teeth do not easily con-

De Doct.
Christian.
xx. 6.

Aponius.

S. Alb. M.
in Ps. iii. 7.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 63,
de parvis.

Rom. viii. 9.

sume away, and perseverance is a quality of the cloistered life. They are ranked in fixed and even order, and nowhere is there so much orderliness of rule and life as in the convent. They are upper and lower, as monasteries have their dignitaries and ordinary members, united in harmonious toil. And even when the lower ones are moved, the upper remain still, denoting the calmness with which Superiors should rule, even when there are disturbances in the lower ranks of their community.

Ric. Vict.

Again; the teeth are explained to denote the operations of the soul, whereby it gradually assimilates divine truth, or discerns the spirits, to ascertain whether they be good or evil. While the devout mind ponders and discusses all matters, notes the Prior of S. Victor, it does as it were crush and grind them with the teeth of discernment. These are the teeth of the Bride, which are likened to flocks of shorn sheep, for the shearings are innocent meditations, which cut away outer things, that is, the love of earth, and the desire of possessing worldly wisdom. Shorn in this wise, they more readily take hold of spiritual things and discern them. They come up from the washing, to wit, that of compunction and penitential tears. They are *even*, not because every Christian is equally given to practising every virtue alike, but because all virtues spring from one common source, which is charity, so that each merit that can be observed is this same charity under one form or other. They produce *twins*, as one tells us, because they develop both contemplation and action; or, as another will have it, because they teach others by precept and example.

Theodoret.
S. Bernard.

3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

S. Epiphanius.
Theodoret.
Josh. ii. 8.

By the *thread of scarlet* He reminds the Bride of Rahab, the harlot, who was a type of her in the Old Testament. The Bridegroom beholds this sign in the mouth of the Bride, as in a window, and saith, *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely*, for it hath received its tint from My Blood, and brings forth the words of truth, wherewith the hearers are caught and bound, as with a cord; for thy comely speech soothes, and persuades them, nor suffers them to depart, but compels them to abide by thy lips. The

scarlet colour denotes preaching of the Passion, but the thread is love. Scarlet is also the colour of fire, and thus the words denote that ardent preaching of the Apostles which they derived from the tongues of flame which came down upon them at Pentecost. It denotes the blood of Martyrs too, as well as that of CHRIST, and therefore preachers persuade their doubting hearers by the example of those who died for the Faith, showing what must have been the prize for which they so strove. The Latin commentators dwell much on the Vulgate word *vitta*, which means properly a *fillet* or *head-band*. For the Doctors of the Church, by their eloquent preaching, bind the multitude of the faithful, like the tresses of a head, into one orderly body in the Church. And the holy soul, too, binds and restrains her many thoughts with the discipline of the fear of GOD. She does more, for she practises silence, which the cord on the lips denotes, though she can speak too, when needful, in comely fashion. Therefore the lips of the Bride are not compared to every sort of fillet, but to one of scarlet, which is more precious, because her restraint of her speech is the higher and nobler, since it comes not from human wisdom, nor natural temperament, but from divine love. *Thy speech is comely*, is pleasant, and edifying, because it springs from charity, and flows out of the fount of grace, for it tastes how sweet the LORD is, and gives out again that sweetness which it enjoys. Its words are sweet also, because the conscience is cleansed from the bitterness of sin, and the dregs of fleshliness. And thus they have no savour of rancour, indignation, wrath, envy, or any hurtful thing, but only of kindness, meekness, patience, humility.

Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate. The old versions, taking the word רַקַּח *rakkah* in its widest meaning, translate *Thy cheeks*. And these, as the seat of blushes, resembling the ruddy tint of the pomegranate, denote the modest shamefastness of the Bride, and that, as before with her gentle eyes, *from within her veil*. Therefore this praise denotes the Virgins of the Church, imitators of the ruddy Passion of CHRIST the Virgin-born, white, like the grains of that fruit, in purity, and that in a life as hard and austere as the rind of the pomegranate. Some, however, less happily, see here as in the preceding verse, a reference to preachers of the Word, and others, somewhat better,

Cassiod.

Beda.

S. Ambros.

Aponius.

Cassiodor.

Ric. Vict.

Psellus.

Ric. Vict.

Theodoret.

Psellus.

Aponius.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

S. Just. Org.

Beda.

Ricard. Vict. prefer to take it as applying to the Martyrs, reddened with their own life-blood without, and white within, like the Virgins, in their purity. The penitent soul, which blushes for its sins, and guards all the good things it contains with the rind of humility, is lovely in the eyes of God. And it is not said to be like a whole pomegranate, but a *piece* of one, because as a piece of the fruit partly discloses and partly hides its grains, so the Saints try to hide their virtues so that only God may know them, but cannot altogether conceal them from men. When the rind is torn open by adversity, the virtues appear; patience in peaceful endurance of wrong, humility in cheerful acceptance of contempt; obedience, charity, with love of God. A *piece*, too, because the most suffering amongst them has never borne the like of CHRIST'S sorrow. Rupert, who explained the previous verse of the burning love which made the lips of the Blessed Virgin break out in the *Magnificat*, so that the words, "Full of grace are thy lips," are especially true of her, takes this one to denote the perfection of her modesty, and the yet higher graces that *lay hid within*. (Vulg.) S. John Chrysostom, dwelling on the LXX. translation, *besides thy silence*, singularly explains this whole passage of secret almsgiving, doubtless because the pomegranate, embracing many grains in one fold, is typical of charity.

4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Cassiodor.
Aponius.
Ric. Vict. They agree, for the most part, in explaining the *neck* of the Church to denote her Prelates and Doctors, but differ widely in the reasons assigned for this view. The most obvious one, that the prelacy occupies the highest place, under the Head, in the body of the Church, and is the link of union between CHRIST and the corporate assembly of the faithful, is given by only a few expositors. The other reasons alleged for the simile, are that the neck transmits food to the body, just as preachers are the channel of the Word, and that as the neck is stretched out when we are on the watch against enemies, and see them coming from a distance, so the Doctors are the sentinels of the Church, posted on high to keep a look-out against our spiritual foes. They are

S. Ans. Laud.
S. Greg. M.

like the tower of David, first, by reason of their strength, because they are stablished in CHRIST; next, by reason of their height, because they soar upward in their aim after heavenly things; and thirdly, because they are foremost in the brunt of battle. They are no common tower, but *David's*, for the strength they possess is not their own, but derived from CHRIST, of Whom David is but the type. When the tower falls, observes Cardinal Hugo, it is not for its own ruin alone, but for that of the entire city; for if the tower be taken or razed, the whole city is easily stormed. So, when the assembly of the Doctors falls into sin, the city of the Church lies exposed and defenceless before its enemies. That they may be the better guarded against any such peril, it is added, *buildded for an armoury*. Truly so, says Aponius, (taking for the moment the true sense of the passage, though following the Vulgate,) for as King David built his tower in the citadel of Sion for his armoury and guard, so the true David, the WORD of the FATHER, when He ascended into heaven, stored up for us in our Sion, the Church Militant, our true supplies and weapons, the strength of our souls, His Cross, His Body, and His Blood. But the Vulgate reading is, *buildded with its outworks (propugnaculis)*. And these outworks or bastions are variously interpreted. One explains them of the mysteries of Holy Scripture; another, of the gift of miracles; a third, more happily, takes them to be the examples given us of love, mercy, patience, and other virtues, in the life of CHRIST; and the view that chosen sentences of Scripture are intended is maintained by more than one. The LXX. rendering is different. It simply transliterates the Hebrew word for *armoury*, and reads *buildded to Thalthioth*. The Greek Fathers, accordingly, have fallen back on the reading of Aquila, *ἐπάξεις*, which is practically the same as the Vulgate; or upon that of Symmachus, which is *ὑψη*, *heights*. The *tower of David*, observes one of them, to which the holy Doctors are likened, is CHRIST, sprung from David according to the flesh. And if any one desire to know the *height* of that tower, he must not look at it only in its human building in Mary, the Mother of GOD, but pray that he may likewise behold it above the heavens, set on the right hand of the FATHER.

Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers. That shields were hung in this wise as ornaments on the

Cassiodor.
Beda.
Ric. Vict.

Hugo Card.

Aponius.

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Aponius.
S. Ans. Laud.
Ric. Vict.

Philo Carp.

Ezek. xxvii.
11.

outer walls of fortresses, we have learnt from the bas-reliefs of Nineveh. And a similar custom existed many ages later, when the sides of the war-galleys of the Norse Sea-kings were adorned in the like manner. These *bucklers*, high in air, are taken by S. Gregory Nyssen to denote the Angel-guards of the Church, a view which he believes enforced by the succeeding words, *all darts (LXX.) of the mighty ones*. And he cites the Psalmist, "The Angel of the LORD shall camp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them." A commoner opinion is, that Christian virtues are intended, the fences of the soul against assaults of sin. These are a *thousand* in number, to denote universality and perfection, and they are supplemented by all the *armour of the mighty*; every example of holiness given us by Saints of old. And we may not unreasonably assume the blazoning of some device on each such shield, by which its owner may be known, his own especial bearing and motto, as a rallying-point for his followers in the battle. The keys of S. Peter, the sword of S. Paul, the various instruments of torture by which the Martyrs went to their crown, mottoes such as *Humilitas*, the chosen badge of S. Carlo Borromeo, and the like, recall the valiant deeds of these captains in God's host to the thoughts of the mere rank and file in that great army, nerving them to similar daring. But of all the glorious escutcheons hanging on that tower which rises from the valley of weeping up to the Mount of Paradise, there is none like the King's own shield, on which the Cross is blazoned. "Safe under the shelter of that buckler, the Saints fear no darts of the evil spirits, but say, as Paul did with smiling pride, 'Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS.' And again; 'GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' These are those true and strongest arms which can keep CHRIST's soldier unhurt as he fights against the cohorts of the powers of the air, which war daily with the faithful, hurling at them the missiles of sins. But a soldier of this kind is valiant, to whom a glorious life of victory is promised by the Prophet, saying, 'A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand.' This is the armour wherewith all the world was rescued, with which the Martyrs routed

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Ps. xxxiv. 7,
LXX.

S. Greg. M.
Ric. Vict.

Aponius.

Gal. vi. 17,
14.

Ps. xci. 7.

the kings and princes of the earth, and all the legions of evil spirits." And so a poet of our own :

And on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying LORD,
For Whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead, as living, ever Him adored :
Upon his shield the like was also scored,
For sovaine hope, which in His help he had.

Spenser,
*Faery
Queene*, i.
1, 2.

Again, some take the towering neck of the Church to be Holy Scripture, hung round with the bucklers of testimony. And, not dissimilarly, it has also been explained of preaching the Gospel, as the neck is the channel whence the voice comes from the chest to the lips. Upon this neck of the Church, that is, in her preaching of Holy Writ, which for strength and height is likened to the tower of David, hang a thousand bucklers, because as many as are the precepts therein, so many are the fences for our breasts. For, behold, as we hasten bravely to the fight against the powers of the air, we find in this tower the arms of our soul, that we may take thence the commandments of our Maker, the examples of our forerunners, whereby we can be invincibly equipped against our adversaries. And note, that it is said to be built with its outworks, for the outworks are of the same use as the shields, because both shelter the combatant : but there is this difference between them, that we can move the shield at our pleasure for defence, while we cannot move the outworks, though we may be defended by them. The shield is in our hand, but we do not lay hold of the bastion. What is then the difference between these two, save that in Holy Writ we read both of the wonderful deeds of our forerunners, and of the power of good works ? How truly they spake of God, their miracles testify ; for they could not have done such things through Him, unless they spake truth concerning Him. And their works testify how gentle, how lowly, how kindly they were. What then are their miracles, save our bastions ? since we can be guarded by them, and yet have them not in the hand of our will, because we have no power to do the like. But the shield is in our hand, and defends us, because the virtue of patience, the virtue of mercy, through forestalling grace, is in the power of our will, and guards us from peril of adversity.

Eucherius.
S. Just. Org.

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 15 in
Ezek.

S. Ambros.
Hom. 4, in
Ps. cxix.

The holy soul has her tower-like neck too, lifted up to GOD, and fitted for the yoke of CHRIST, bent by no curve towards the allurements of earth, as it is the royal tower of CHRIST, on which Nebuchadnezzar cannot impose his yoke, for David, strong in battle, built that tower, and set battlements upon its walls for a defence and a glory, for a defence, because it discovers and repels the enemy; for a glory because it soars up not only amongst lowly buildings, but even amongst lofty ones. And it is thus for a defence or a glory if it have in it the doctrines of the Word, as though its jewelled necklets, and also have the darts of the mighty prophets, which are hurled with the sinews of faith against every high thing that lifteth itself up. Again, not only constancy, as here, but prayer, may be taken as the neck of the Church, through which her voice goes up in petition, and wherein, as in a tower, are stored her surest weapons against all her enemies. A third will have it that humble obedience is intended, since the neck is the part which bears the yoke. And others again hold that charity, which is our true link of union with our Divine Head, is denoted by the neck. It is a tower, because the loftiest of all virtues, and the strongest too. Its *bastions* are the Evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience; its *shields*, humility and patience, multiplied a thousand-fold.

Corn. à Lap.

Rupert.

Hugo Card.
Joann.
Carmel.

5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies,

6 Until the day break and the shadows flee away.

Philo Carp.

Theodoret.

S. Greg. M.

The *two breasts* of the Church, whereat her children are fed with milk, are the two Testaments, and the Prophets and Doctors of the Circumcision and the uncircumcision, who teach the faithful, who are likened to *two young roes* because of their clear vision in divine mysteries and their swift speeding in their daily course to reach their LORD, and which *feed among the lilies* of a pure conscience and holy life, until, when the day breaks and the shadows flee away, they attain the prize which He has prepared for them. They are *twin roes*, because of the perfect accord between the Old and New Testament, the one being rich in

type, and the other in fulfilment. Another view sees in the two breasts the precepts of love to GOD and love to our neighbour, while Psellus stands alone in his explanation that they denote the Blood and Water which flowed from the crucified SAVIOUR. The outer and inner man, united in one sentient being, visible and invisible, is, S. Gregory Nyssen alleges, the basis of the comparison here, whether applied to the whole Church or to the individual soul, but no other Father has followed him. Richard of S. Victor, after assenting to the view that the teachers of the Church are designated by her breasts, and dwelling on the tests of motherly tenderness, proceeds to distinguish the two breasts into the contemplative and active, both yielding the same spiritual nutriment. Again, the two breasts denote the building up of faith, and the training in holiness; the shunning of evil and the practice of good. They are twins, because they are born at one time, that is, the time of grace, of one and the same Father, which is CHRIST, and one Mother, the Church. They feed among the lilies, in the flowery pastures of the Scriptures, until the day break which has no evening. They feed therefore among the lilies until the day break and the shadows flee away, because the preaching and doctrine of holy teachers is needful only in the present life, for in the life to come, so soon as the everlasting day has appeared and the night of this world has ended, there will be no need to teach any one, for all shall with open face behold the glory of the LORD. Therefore the LORD saith also by the prophet Jeremiah, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD."

There is also a moral exposition, according to which the breasts of the Bride are her fellowship in joy and sorrow with those who rejoice and those who mourn. These are likened to young roes, because in compassion there should be quickness and cheerfulness of help, and in congratulation there should be clear-sighted acuteness to guide us aright in knowing what things ought to be subject of rejoicing.

6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee

Aponius.

Psellus.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Hom. 7.

Ricard. Vict.

Hugo Card.

Cassiodor.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

Jer. xxxi. 34.

Henr.
Harphius.

away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense.

The majority of the commentators take the first clause of this verse with the preceding words, as denoting the time during which the young roes feed amongst the lilies. But the Masoretic pointing reads it with the succeeding clause, and it will be convenient to consider it in this connection. And it is no marvel that the great mass of comment on the verse sets before us the Passion of CHRIST as the mystery hidden under the types here set down. "The Bridegroom," comments Theodoret, "having eulogized the beauties of His Spouse, saith, 'I will go for Myself (LXX.) to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.' Seeing thou art so fair, so lovely, so bright in comeliness, and so wounded with love of Me, I accept death for thy sake, and will go of Myself to the *mountain of myrrh*. But I will rise again, and return to the *hill of frankincense*. We said above that myrrh denotes death, and frankincense the Divine nature. There is need therefore to ask why He speaks of a mountain, when referring to His death, and of a hill, when to His Divinity. And the reason is, because it is so great, unspeakable, and unsearchable a thing that He Who was in the form of GOD, and thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, should have humbled Himself, and taken the form of a servant, and be found in fashion as a man, and be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. But for Him to return to His own glory, and to be glorified with that glory which He had before the world was made, was no great or toilsome thing, rather it was most easy. Wherefore He saith, a *mountain* of myrrh and a *hill* of frankincense, showing thereby that one of these things was light for Him, but the other very hard because of His Manhood. So, when He draws near to His Passion, He saith, 'Now is My soul troubled,' and 'FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' And yet again He added, 'And what shall I say? FATHER, save Me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour.' This is what He means here in saying, *I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense*. For I do both willingly, not constrained nor compelled by aught. 'Because I lay down

Theodoret.

Phil. ii. 6.

S. John xii.
27.
S. Mat.
xxvi. 39.

S. John x. 17.

My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Or by the mountain of myrrh may not inaptly be understood the human Body of the Bridegroom, which He offered voluntarily to death. For that is the *mountain* of which is read: "A stone was cut out without hands, and smote the image, and became a great mountain." It is of *myrrh*, because of that Joseph by whom the mountain was anointed and laid in the tomb. To this mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense the Bridegroom willingly came, not only that He might die and be buried for the Bride, but that He might rise again immortal, and therefore His Flesh is likened to a *hill of frankincense*, because after His Resurrection it was to give forth living tongues, that is, Saints. And it is to be noticed that the Chaldee suggests a connection of ideas between this mountain of *myrrh*, *הַר הַמִּיָּרְר*, *har ha-mor*, and that Mount *Moriah*, *הַר הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ*, *har ha-Moriah*,¹ whereon the typical sacrifice of Isaac took place, and whereon Solomon built that Temple which foreshadowed the true Tabernacle wherein the WORD of God tarried amongst men. Thither the Bridegroom betook Himself till the dawn of the Resurrection morning, till the shadows and types of the Law vanished along with the dark cloud of sorrow which had settled upon the mourning hearts of His Mother and His Apostles. And still, evermore, till the dawning of the Great Day, when all the shadows and unrealities of earth shall flee from the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, or, for each soul, till the evening of life close in, the Bridegroom comes to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. For myrrh denotes mortification of the flesh or endurance of suffering for CHRIST's sake, and frankincense implies the devotion of holy souls. The mount and hill, then, are the souls of the Saints, lofty in contemplation. The Bridegroom there-

Philo Carp.
Dan. ii. 34,
35.

Targum.

Cassiodor.

¹ The Targum therefore takes these latter words as if meaning, *Mount of the myrrh of the Lord*. There is a similar play of words in *גִּבְעַת הַלְבָנוֹת*, *gibeath ha-lebonah*, "hill of frankin-

cense," which suggests the name of Mount Lebanon, *לְבָנוֹן*, the "white" hill. And so, as will be seen presently, it has been taken by an old commentator.

- S. Greg. M. fore promises that He will come to this mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense, because He vouchsafes to bless with His visitation those souls which mortify their members with their affections and lusts, and which offer themselves a sacrifice acceptable unto God by zeal in devout prayer. One expositor, admitting the truth of this view, differs so far as to suppose the Bridegroom to speak, not to the Bride, but to Himself, because of the delight He takes in what He is about to do. *I will go for Myself.* He goes for Himself, because His singular love admits no partner of its secret. He goes for Himself, because He will have no companion in His journey, any more than He suffers any one to share His love. *Myrrh*, which is bitter to the taste, and preserves the bodies of the dead from corruption, signifies mortification of the flesh, *Libanus*,¹ which name is by interpretation "whiteness," signifies purity of the flesh. This then is the way by which the Bridegroom comes to the Bride, the mount of myrrh and the hills of Lebanon, because He first slays concupiscence by abstinence of the flesh, and then cleanses the ignorance of the soul by purifying the heart. And observe too, that we know in another way that such must be the preparation of the Bride before she is ready for the King, for it is written, "Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to King Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) then thus came every maiden unto the King." And note, says Cardinal Hugo, that He calls the bitterness of repentance a *mountain*, and the devotion of prayer a *hill*, because penitential sorrow surpasses devout prayer as a mountain does a hill. Not without cause does Wisdom say, "I yielded a pleasant odour like the best myrrh," which perfumes not only the Church, but all Paradise. Whence is written, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." And it should be known that there is a valley of myrrh, and also a plain, a hill, and a mountain of myrrh. The valley of myrrh is repent-

¹ He reads, "hills of Libanus."

ance for sins, which are a deep valley; whence the Psalmist, "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O LORD." The plain of myrrh is the endurance of bitterness in defence of one's country, and in zeal for justice, which is compared to a plain because of the level of equity. The hill of myrrh is the endurance of bitterness for the protection of one's own innocence. The mountain of myrrh is the endurance of bitterness through longing for the Heavenly Country. And to all these the Bridegroom promises to go when He says, *I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh.* For there is no getting to a mountain save by the valley, the plain, and the hill. So too there is a valley of frankincense, and also a plain, a hill, and a mountain of it. The valley of incense is prayer for the remission of sin, as, "Forgive us our trespasses." The plain is prayer for the bestowal of grace, "Give us this day our daily bread." The hill is prayer for the gift of perseverance, "Lead us not into temptation." And the mountain of frankincense is prayer for the bestowal of glory, which is, "Thy kingdom come." And He significantly says, *I will get Me to the hill,* not to the mountain, *of frankincense,* because the LORD gives us the three first by coming to us in this present life, but He will give the fourth in the next world to those who come to Him. Wherefore He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the Kingdom." Ps. cxxx. 1.
S. Mat. xxv. 34.

Another interpretation sees here the calling of the Jews and Gentiles. *I will go,* in the person of My preachers, and therefore they *must go.* *To the mountain of myrrh,* that is, to nations in bitterness, salted with no salt of doctrine. *And to the hill of frankincense,* to the Jews who keep to the incensings of the Law. And in the Church, I will go to the Martyrs, who endure the bitterness of death, and to the Confessors, who offer devout prayers; bestowing patience on the first, and perseverance on the second. Gloss.
S. Ans. Laud.

It is to be noted that some commentators ascribe the words to the Bride, but the mystical meaning is the same, whether she gets to the mountain, there to meet her LORD in prayer, or He comes to it, because He knows He will find her waiting for Him. "O happy is the mountain to which Thou goest, good JESU, to which Thou comest, which Thou traversest, wherein Thou dwellest, yea, and inhabitest for ever, wherein Thou dwellest alone, and that to its utmost bounds." Gillebert.
Serm. 28.

Come, JESU, begin to possess this mountain. Let no man question Thee, let no man say, Wilt Thou dwell in this mountain alone? A fertile mountain, a great mountain, an abundant mountain, a mountain flowing with unguents. These unguents cannot be exhausted, for great is the plenty of them in the mountain of myrrh. They will not fail therein, and therefore he who goes to the mountain of myrrh will lack no unguents, nor shall he lack perfumes who goes to the hills of Lebanon. For the frankincense of Lebanon will not fail. Come, good JESU, to these hills, that the incense may flow down before Thy Face. O what smoke of incense goes up from these hills, when kindled with Thy fire, yea, with Thyself. Thy fire hath abundant matter to feed on, and great fuel of incense. This incense will not be quickly consumed, its smoke will not readily vanish. Its plenteous abundance cannot be grasped in the hand, nor held in a censer, no vessel can contain it, it knows not measure, because it knows not intermission. Come then, good JESU, to the hills of frankincense, for the mountains which Thou touchest, send up the copious incense of prayer."

7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Beda.

These words cannot, in the fullest sense, be spoken of the Church Militant here on earth, compassed with weakness, and stained with the sins of her children. But they hold good of the Church Triumphant, that "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,"

Eph. v. 27.

Phineas
Fletcher,
*Purple Is-
land*, xii. 69.

The fair Eclecta,¹ who with widowed brow,
Her absent LORD long mourned in sad array,
Now silken linen clothed as white as snow,
Whose silver spanglets sparkle 'gainst the day;
This shining robe her LORD Himself had wrought,
While He her love with thousand presents sought,
And it with many a wound, and many a torment bought!

Rev. xxi. 11.

And thus arrayed, her heavenly beauties shined,
(Drawing their beams from His most glorious face,)
Like to a precious jasper, pure refined,
Which, with a crystal mixed, increase his grace;
The golden stars a garland fair did frame,
To crown her head; the sun lay hid for shame
And yielded all his beams to her more glorious flame.

¹ The poet is referring to the "Elect Lady" of the Second Epistle of S. John, by whom many commentators understand the Church.

But even the Church Militant is *all fair* in her Bridegroom's sight, fair in all the ranks and orders of her Saints, great and small; not only in her Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, but in her temperate, almsgiving, and penitent members. There is *no spot* in her, because she keeps herself free from mortal sin, and washes away with daily penitence those stains of venial guilt which she has contracted through her frailty. She is all fair, remarks a later commentator, fair with the beauty of the Gospel Law; fair with the knowledge of GOD, and of true faith and worship; fair in the outward beauty of her Sacraments and stately rites; fair in the grace and righteousness of her members; fair in the holy deeds of her Saints.

And spoken of the holy soul, it is true that the words cannot have their highest and noblest application during her probation here, but only when she has come close to her Bridegroom, and so has received the blaze of all His splendours, being made radiant by Light itself. Still she may be all fair even on earth, in mind, and soul, and flesh. In flesh, because purged by action from all passions, and adorned with the practice of holiness; in soul, as parted from all evil concupiscence, and decked with the words of the Commandments; and in mind because set free from frivolous thoughts, and made glorious and Godlike by grace in the HOLY GHOST. There is no perfect beauty without colour, observes Richard of S. Victor, and a pale face lessens the charm of lovely features, and the fairness of the Bride is completed by the blush of penitence for her sins, as she washes away those sins by daily confession and contrition. And it is especially true, observes S. Ambrose, of those who live a life of virginal consecration. For what greater loveliness can one fancy than her beauty who is loved by the King, approved by the Judge, dedicated to the LORD, consecrated to GOD? Ever a bride, ever unwedded, so that love has no ending and modesty no peril. This is true loveliness, which lacks nothing, which alone merits to hear from the LORD, *Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.* And, above all, it is true of her, of whom the Church exclaims in the Greater Antiphons of Advent, "O Virgin of Virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any like thee: nor shall there be any after;" of whom the Doctor of Grace, when dwelling on man's universal sinfulness,

S. Just. Org.

Philo Carp.

Corn. à Lap.

Theodoret.

Tres Patr.

Ric. Vict.

S. Greg. M.

S. Ambros.
de Virgin.
lib. i.

Brev. Sarisb.

S. August.
De Nat.
Grat. 36.

observes, "Excepting the Holy Virgin Mary, touching whom I would raise no question, for the honour of GOD, when treating of sins. For we know that abundant grace was given to her to overcome sin in every wise: to her, who merited to conceive and bear Him, Who, it is certain, had no sin ;"

S. Joh. Dam.
Canon for
Christ. Day,
Ode vi.

For from that sin which could not touch Himself,
He kept His Virgin Mother undefiled.

Horologion.
Little Comp.

And so the Holy Eastern Church heaps up all epithets of purity in her praise: "Stainless, immaculate, spotless, unblemished, holy Virgin, Bride of GOD, Our Lady." Thou art *all fair*, exclaims Hugh of S. Victor, preaching on the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, fair without and within, in heart and body. Ruddy with charity, white with purity, graceful with humility; fair by nature, fairer by grace, fairest of all by glory. *There is no spot in thee*, for, as we read,

Hugo Vict.
Instit. Mon.
Serm. ix.

Donne,
Divine
Poems.

In that, O Queen of queens, thy birth was free
From that which others doth of grace bereave,
When in their mother's womb they life receive,
God, as His sole-born daughter, loved thee.

Nor does her praise cease down the centuries, as poet after poet hands the torch on to a successor in the race. Let us hearken again:

Words-
worth, *Eccl.*
Sonnets.

Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncroft
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
Woman! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost;
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With fancied roses, than the unblemished noon
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse,
with me from Lebanon: look from the top of
Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon,
from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the
leopards.

"CHRIST, in the person of Solomon, summons the
Bride to Himself, by the calling of the Gentiles. For
thou hast read, *Come, My spouse, from Lebanon*. The
name of Mount Lebanon is appropriately introduced,
for the word is in use amongst the Greeks to denote
incense. For He will betroth the Church to Himself

Tertull. c.
Marcion.
iv. 11.

from idolatry." So wrote an ancient Father, when three of the Ten Persecutions had yet to run their terrible course, and when Paganism still ruled with all but undisputed sway in every province of the Empire. The LXX. reads instead of, *Look from the top of Amana*, thus, *Thou shalt pass over from the beginning of faith.*¹ On this Theodoret observes that the verse accords with that passage in the Psalms, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty, for He is thy LORD God, and worship thou Him." He calls her then from *Lebanon*, which, lying outside the Land of Promise, typifies Gentile idolatry, and also from *Shenir* and *Hermon*, which denote the Law. *Shenir*, observes Theodoret, means the "path of lanterns,"² and denotes that light which illuminated the night-season, before

S. Athan.
Synops.

Theodoret.
Ps. xiv. 11,
12.

¹ This curious variant, whereby the mystical sense is denoted, requires some explanation. In the first place, though the wording of the A. V. implies that *Amana* is a mountain, yet the Chaldee takes it to be a river, and the "top" is therefore its fountain-head, and *beginning*. Next; the word אַמָּנָה (derived from the root אָמַן, "he stablished," "he was faithful," and akin to *Amen*, "verily,") is used twice as a common noun in Nehemiah, in x. 1, (ix. 38, A. V.) to denote a "covenant," and in xi. 23, a "sure ordinance" (A. V. marg.) The meaning given by the LXX. is thus tenable, but it seems better to explain it as a summons to the Church to pass not only from Gentilism, but from Judaism, the Old Covenant, as is practically done by some of the commentators.

² Theodoret apparently derived שְׁנִיר from the root שָׁנַר, *splenduit*, but the etymon now accepted is שָׁנַר *he clashed*, spoken of the sound of weapons, and the name *Shenir* is

diversely explained as "cata-ract," from the noise of falling water, or as "breastplate," from its form and glittering appearance. *Hermon*, הַרְמוֹן, a part of the same range, and sometimes used for the same mountain (Deut. iii. 9,) is also variously explained as meaning simply "lofty hills," or else as the "devoted" or "accursed" place, akin to *Hormah* (Numb. xxi. 3,) from the Hiphil הִרְמִיתִי ("devoted by curse to destruction,") of the root חָרַם, *he shut up* from common use, or *dedicated*. The mystical force will then be a summons to pass from the earthly Jerusalem, a bondwoman, encompassed with strife and the clash of arms, and doomed to utter overthrow, unto the heavenly Jerusalem, the "Vision of Peace," free, tranquil, and eternal, which the Bride beholds spread out before her view as she stands on the summit of those mountains which she is called on to abandon, seeing it as Moses beheld Canaan from Pisgah.

the Sun of Righteousness arose with the glory of day. And *Hermon* is the mountain of which the Psalmist speaks, mentioning "the dew of Hermon which fell upon the hill of *Zion*," denoting the precepts of the Law. From these, and from the *lions' dens* of fierce and persecuting Jews, as well as from the *mountains of the leopards*, the subtle and deceitful sophists of the Gentiles, the Bride is urged to hasten away. She must come *from the beginning of faith*, observes one Father, because her earliest training was in the rudiments of the Law, from which she is to pass into the fuller light of the Gospel; she must come thence in another sense, remarks a second, because faith must be her own beginning ere she can undertake the work of converting the world; then she will *pass over*, as the Chariot of GOD, amidst rejoicing thousands, out of this world to the FATHER, that her Bridegroom's words may be fulfilled in her: "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." The Latin Fathers take *Lebanon*, "whiteness," to be the laver of Baptism, as the starting point of the Church's career. Besides the occurrence of the title *Spouse* here first in the Song, the Vulgate has two peculiarities to be noticed. First, the invitation to *come* is thrice repeated, thus, *Come from Lebanon, My Spouse, come from Lebanon, come.*¹ Next, the following clause runs: *Thou shalt be crowned from the head of Amana.* This triple calling is variously explained. It denotes, says one, that the Bride must be perfect in thought, word, and deed. *Come*, first, by faith; *come*, freed from the body, to receive a heavenly reward; *come*, at the general Resurrection, taking that body again, to be crowned with double glory. *Come*, another takes it, in faith, hope, and charity. *Come*, from merit to reward, from faith to sight, from the chariot to rest, from time to eternity, from the struggle to the prize, from the way to the country, from peril to safety, from misery to salvation. *Come*, renouncing the devil, *come*, renouncing the world, *come*, renouncing thyself. *Come*, in the Name of the FATHER, Who made thee, *come*, in the Name of the SON, Who redeemed thee, *come*, in the Name of the HOLY GHOST, Who sanctifieth thee. *Come*, to the crown of that blessedness which is three-

¹ Reading $\nu\eta\sigma$, the fem. imper. from $\pi\eta\sigma$, *he came*, instead of $\nu\eta\sigma$, *with me*.

fold, in vision, in fruition, in perpetual security. Not only so, but come and be crowned in this world too, by the conversion of kings and rulers, of persecutors and heretics, typified by the mountains and the wild beasts, now become thy children and thy crown, according to that saying of the Wise Man, "Children's children are the crown of old men." Not less does the verse apply to the devout soul, which is summoned from *Lebanon*, and from *Shenir* and *Hermon*, whence the *Jordan* flows, to pass on from the baptismal flood wherein she was cleansed, away from the sins and passions of her unregenerate life. Go forth, cries *S. Ambrose*, go forth from the body, and strip thyself completely, for thou must not be with Me, until thou art a pilgrim from the body, because they who are in the flesh, are pilgrims from the kingdom of *God*. Come, He saith, *Come*, fitly repeating it, because whether present or absent, thou shouldst be at hand and please the *LORD* thy *God*. Come present, come absent, though thou be still in the body, for all are present with Me whose faith is unto Me. He is with Me, who goes forth from the world. He is with Me, who thinks of Me, looks at Me, hopes in Me, whose portion I am. He is with Me who is absent from himself; he is with Me who denies himself. He is with Me who is not within himself, for he who is in the flesh is not in the spirit. He is with Me who goes forth of himself. He is close to Me, who is without himself. He is safe and sound with Me, who for My sake hath lost his life. Therefore, come, My Spouse, thou shalt pass over, and throughly pass over from the beginning of faith. She passes over and throughly passes over others who arrives at *CHRIST*. She passes over by the merit of faith and brightness of works, who shines like *Shenir* and *Hermon*, that is, who passes by the way of the lantern, conquering the temptations of the world, and overcoming spiritual wickedness, seeking the crown of a lawful contest, and therefore attains the glory of praise from *CHRIST* the Judge. She comes from the *lions dens*, from the palaces of earthly kings, all the temptations of rank, power, and wealth; she comes from the *mountains of the leopards*, from her variegated and powerful sins, to the poverty of *CHRIST*, to the snowy pureness of a holy life. And as "a man is not crowned, except he strive lawfully," so the crown promised to the *Bride* must be won by victory over the world, and over all

Philo Carp.
Beda.Prov. xvii.
6.S. Greg.
Nyss.S. Ambros.
de Isaac 5.

S. Epiaph.

2 Tim. ii. 5.

Gillebert.
Ric. Vict.

Dion. Carth. evil spirits and bad passions, denoted by Shenir, the place of strife, and Hermon, the place accursed, and by the lions and leopards. And this crown of life promised to them who are faithful unto death, is of twelve stars. They are the twelve joys of heavenly bliss, to wit, radiance, surety, sweetness, calm, brightness, impassibility, subtilization, swiftness, renewal unspeakable, loving fellowship, gladness in the Manhood of CHRIST, joy ineffable in the goodness of GOD. On all these Henry Harphius dilates with deep fervour, but at too great a length for citation. What he has said in the terms of mystical theology, has been said before him by a Christian poet in the more acceptable form of verse.

S. Pet. Dam. To their first estate return they, freed from every mortal sore,
The Rhythm, And the Truth, for ever present, ever lovely, they adore,
Ad perennis Drawing from that living Fountain, living sweetness evermore.
vita fontem.

And they drink in changeless being as they taste those waters
clear,
Bright are they, and swift, and gladsome, no more perils need
they fear,
There the youth can know no ageing, never cometh sickness near.

Thence they draw their life unending, passingness hath passed
away,
Thence they grow and bloom, and flourish, freed for ever from
decay,
Now that deathlessness hath swallowed up the might of death for
aye.

They know Him Who knoweth all things, nothing from their ken
may flee,
And the thoughts of one another in the inmost heart they see,
One in choosing and refusing, one are they in unity.

S. Ambros.
de Virgin.
lib. 3.

This summons, and this crown, belong especially to virgin souls. And therefore one, who trained many such, speaks to them: "Dedicate the first-fruits of thy vigils to CHRIST, sacrifice to CHRIST the first-fruits of thine actions. Thou hast heard that He called thee, saying, Come from *Lebanon, My Spouse, come from Lebanon, thou shalt pass over: and thoroughly pass over from the beginning of faith.* Thou shalt pass over as a creature into the world: thou shalt thoroughly pass over to CHRIST, triumphing over the world. Thou hast heard that He hath parted thee from the attacks of lions and leopards, that is, from all spiritual wickednesses." And finally, the verse has been applied to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and is used as an

Rupert.

Antiphon on that feast in some French Breviaries. "I will open my mouth," exclaims the Eastern Church on the same festival, "and will breathe a word to the Mother Queen. And I shall be seen praising her gloriously, and will sing with exultation her Repose. O youthful virgins, with Miriam the prophetess, uplift now the Song of Exodus, for the Virgin, the only Mother of GOD, passes unto her celestial heritage. The divine tabernacle fitly received thee, all-holy One, thyself a living heaven; and thou tookest thy stand, gloriously adorned, as a spotless Bride, beside thy GOD and King." She is thrice called, says Vieyra, the FATHER calls His Daughter, the SON calls His Mother, the HOLY GHOST calls His Spouse, to her crown. Thrice was she crowned even on earth; in the Incarnation of her SON, in His Passion, and in His Resurrection.

Brev.
Ambianens.
S. Johan.
Damasc.
Meneæ,
Aug. 15.

Vieyra,
Serm. 2, de
N. S. de
Graça.

9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

Ravished. That is, as the margin reads, *taken away mine heart.* The LORD's words are more true of Himself than of any other, that where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also, that while His bodily Presence is in Heaven, the longings and affections of His human Heart are on earth amongst His kindred. And the especial way in which the constraining force of His love compels Him to abide within the faithful soul, is beautifully typified in the legend of a Virgin Saint, of whom is told that He appeared to her once in vision, and took her heart from out of her side, replacing it with His own: so that she, whose daily prayer therefore had been, "My LORD, I commit my heart to Thee," thenceforward said, "My Spouse, I pray Thee to guard Thine own Heart:" in accordance with the prophecy, "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call Me Ishi (my Husband) and shalt call Me no more Baali (my Lord)." But the Vulgate, agreeing substantially with the Chaldee, reads, *Thou hast wounded my heart.* They refer it, generally, not only to the love which CHRIST bears to the Church, but to the proof of that love which He gave by suffering Himself to be pierced upon the Cross. "Hence," observes the Illuminate Doctor, "appears CHRIST'S

S. Mat. vi.
21.

Vit. S. Cath.
Senens.
Acta Sancto-
torum,
Apr. 30.

Hos. ii. 16.

Tauler,
De Vita
CHRISTI,
c. 53.

boundless love to us, in that He gave Himself wholly for us. What more could He do than He has done? He unlocked His Heart for us as His most secret chamber, to bring us in thither as His elect Spouse. For His delight is to be with us, and to rest with us in silent calm, in peaceful silence. He gave us His Heart, sorely wounded, that we might abide there, until, thoroughly purged, cleansed, and conformed to that Heart, we might be fit and worthy to be drawn, together with Him, into the Divine Heart of the Eternal FATHER. He gives us then His Heart, that it may be our dwelling, and asks for ours in turn, that it may be His abode. He bestows His Heart on us as a bed decked with the ruddy roses of His purple Blood; and requires instead our heart, a bed adorned for Himself with the white lilies of good works." There is yet another sense of the word **לִבְבַתִּי** *libbattini*, which is simply "to hearten," exactly represented by the word here coined by the LXX., *ἐκαρδίωσας*, (although most Greek Fathers accept the idea of wounding) and turned by the Syriac *strengthened, made confident*, as though giving a double heart, or as denoting the trust and reliance CHRIST has in the love and fidelity of the Church to Him, asking her, as it were, in the words of Jehu to Jonadab, "Is thine heart right, as My Heart is with thy heart?"

Corn. à Lap.

Thrupp.
2 Kings x.
15.

S. Athan.

My sister, My spouse. Wherefore does He call her both spouse and sister? A bridegroom generally does not give the name sister to his spouse. That name, however, He bestows here, in order to show that it is before no carnal bridechamber that the marriage-song is here being chanted. In calling her *spouse*, He means that the WORD has wedded to Himself the human soul; in styling her also *sister*, He witnesses that He Himself has worn our flesh. Again, as kings and queens entitle one another brothers and sisters, so here the Bridegroom uses the name *sister* to denote the royal station of His Bride, that she is no mere inferior companion, but one decked, as Esther was, with the crown and title of a queen. *Thou hast wounded My heart.* It is said twice, of the Jewish Church, because she wounded Him living with the nails, and dead with the spear. It is said of evil Christians, because they wound Him daily with their sins; it is said of the faithful Church, for whose sake He was

Hitzig.
Weissbach.
Esth. ii. 17.

Hugo Card.

wounded in His Passion and in His compassion. Every wound, every blow He suffered was twofold, for hate smote Him in His Body, and love in His Heart. *With one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.* The Targum explains the *eye* to be even one of the least amongst the righteous, the *chain* or tress of the neck to be one of the princes of the House of Judah, wearing the kingly diadem. And the Christian interpretation of this will be the direct personal love which CHRIST bears to each faithful soul in particular, as well as to the whole Church corporately. But the commentators adopt a different view. The eye whose glance has attracted the Bridegroom is, as the Greek Fathers allege, the faculty of Divine contemplation, the tress lying on that neck which bears the yoke of God's commandments, is active performance. The right eye is that which looks at heavenly things, the left that which is fixed on earth, and therefore the spiritual Nahash (by interpretation "serpent,") the enemy of our souls, desires to pluck out our right eye, even if we voluntarily yield ourselves as his slaves. But the LORD, on the other hand, tells us, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." With this single eye, that is, with the sole and undivided contemplation of thy salvation, of My love, and of its fruition, thou woundest My Heart, and also with one tress of thy neck. The neck joins the head and members. Thou art a neck to Me, when thou strivest to convert souls and unite them unto Me. The one tress of thy neck is the single thought and fixed intention wherewith thou toilest for this end. In this twofold care, that for thine own salvation and for the salvation of others, thou winnest My peculiar love for thyself, and makest thy way unto the depths of My Heart. S. Jerome takes the two eyes to denote the virginal and the married lives. "I reject not marriage, thou hast a left eye, which I have given thee because of their weakness who see not aright; but the right eye of virginity is dearer to Me, which, if blinded, leaves the whole body in darkness." Spare not, O Bride, to aim at thy spouse with such weapons as these. Use thy loving glances as darts. Be not slack in this matter, be not content to wound thy Beloved once only, but smite Him with wound on wound. Happy art thou, if thy shafts be fixed in Him, if thy love wars in CHRIST, if thine eyes be steadfastly fastened

Vieyra,
Serm. de las
Chagas de
S. Francisco.

Targum.

Theodoret.
Tres Patr.

S. Ambros.
1 Sam. xi. 2.
Luc. Abb.

S. Mat. vi.
22.

Ricard. Vict.

S. Hieron.
in Jovin.
lib. i.

Gillebert.

S. Luke viii.
44.

upon Him. Good is the wound out of which power goes. A woman touched the hem of His garment, and CHRIST perceived that power had gone out of Him. How much more, when His Heart is not lightly touched, but wounded, does He cause grace to flow from Him! That wound is not insensible. Therefore aim the darts of a pure glance at Him, count Him as a mark set up for such arrows. He receives them gladly, because He hurls the like Himself. He looked on Peter, and smote his heart, and pierced him to repentance. Tears give signs of a wounded heart. And then with His merciful glance He wounds the heart which He urges to any holy affection. Would that He might multiply such wounds in me, from the sole of my feet to the crown of my head, that there might be no soundness in me. For that is an evil soundness where are none of those wounds which the loving glance of CHRIST inflicts.

Cassiod.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.

The commoner explanation, however, of the Latin Fathers, is that the eye denotes the Doctors and preachers of the Church, and the tress, bound together, and not left dishevelled, the multitude of the laity. One eye, because of unity of doctrine; one tress, because of unity of fellowship, in the Catholic Church, for which Church the Bridegroom was content to be wounded unto death.

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

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Theodoret.
Psellus.

For *love* the LXX. and Vulgate read *breasts*. But the LXX., reading the second clause, *Thy breasts are fair from wine*, give rise to a peculiar treatment of the verse by the Greek Fathers. Explaining the breasts to be the doctrine of the Church, they for the most part agree in saying that these breasts no longer yield milk for babes and imperfect believers, but the immortal wine of the Saints, the fuller teaching which is reserved for those of full growth. Philo of Carpasia, however, gives a better interpretation of the same reading, by saying that it is wine which the Bride has drunk which makes her breasts fair and plenteous, and that wine is the Blood of CHRIST, which fills the two

Philo Carp.

breasts of the love of GOD and the love of man with the milk of charity, the gift of the HOLY GHOST. The Three Fathers, also taking the wine to be the efficient cause of the loveliness of the breasts, explain them to be the active and contemplative states in the Church. But the Vulgate reading is more consonant with the Hebrew, and implies comparison. The more usual Western interpretation is that the breasts are the Doctors of the Church, who supply spiritual nourishment to her children, giving them in the form of milk that which they themselves have received in the form of heavenly Bread. And this milk is better than the wine of the ceremonial Law, which wine failed at the mystical marriage of the Church, and was replaced by CHRIST with a more generous vintage. Richard of S. Victor, applying the words to the faithful soul, takes the two breasts to be spiritual and corporal compassion, whereby the sufferings of all, whether in soul or body, are shared by the true follower of CHRIST. And He is better pleased in this manner than with the wine of rigorous judgment, because it is written: "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment;" and mercy flows from the breasts of heavenly wisdom and knowledge of GOD, the fairest ornament of the Bride. They note further that the Vulgate uses two distinct words in this verse to represent breasts, *mammæ* and *ubera*. The former is used of mothers, feeding their children at the breasts; the latter word is of general application. *Mammæ*, then, observes Aponius, denotes the blessing of fruitfulness, *ubera* the glory of virginity. With these the Church is shown to be fair at the time of CHRIST's appearing, in that she daily conceives, daily brings forth, daily suckles, and is yet a virgin. And that is an unhappy man who does not believe that GOD does by the Church what He did by the Virgin Mary.

And the smell of thine ointments than all spices. So the Vulgate, but the LXX. read *the smell of thy garments*. And these garments they take to be the works of mercy wrought by the Church, or the graces with which she is decked, under the Gospel, as sacrifices to GOD, more pleasing to Him than the incensed oblations of the Law, because they are perfumed with CHRIST Himself, Who is, indeed, according to Theodoret, not merely the fragrance of these garments, but Himself the raiment of the Church, which saith of

S. Greg. M.

Tres Patr.

Cassiodor.

Beda.

Ricard. Vict.

S. James ii.

13.

Dion. Carth.

Henr.

Harpius.

Luc. Abb.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Tres Patr.

Theodoret.

Isa. lxi. 10. Him, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." The Western expositors differ little from this, taking, as they do generally, the words to denote the grateful perfume of the virtues and good deeds of the Church, spread over the world by the preaching of the Gospel, and superior in diffusion, number and fragrance, to the observances of the Law, the lore of philosophy, and the vanities of the world. And that because they spring out of charity, which is lacking in mere earthly virtues, but which gives them that especial odour which is a sweet savour unto God. They are called *ointments*, moreover, because they are derived from the unction of the HOLY GHOST, and they were typified under the Law by the compound "oil of holy ointment" made of four principal spices mingled with olive-oil, and designed for the consecration of the priests and the furniture of the Sanctuary.

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

Theodoret. *As the honeycomb.* This denotes the Doctors of the Church, who bring forth her holy teaching, and have as it were the combs of bees upon their lips, which drop honey. And they have not only honey, but milk also, providing for each his proper food, as well that which suits infants, as that which befits the perfect. And the honeycombs which are borne on the lips of teachers are the Divine Scriptures, containing bees which make wax as well as honey, that is, the sacred Prophets and Apostles, who, flitting over the meadows of the HOLY GHOST, and, as it were, framing the cells of Holy Writ for us and filling them with the honey of instruction, confer their benefit on us. The letter is like wax, and the meaning hidden in it like honey. This *drops*, because as the honey drips from the comb when it is too plentiful to be retained in the cells, so Holy Scripture has manifold senses, and is diversely explained, sometimes literally, sometimes allegorically, sometimes morally, and sometimes by anagoge, which is the highest sense of all.

Cassiodor. And these four senses are exemplified in the fourfold

Beda.

meaning which Jerusalem bears in Scripture. Literally, it is the earthly city in Judæa; allegorically, it is the Church throughout the world; morally, it is any Christian soul which has become the city of God; anagogically, it is the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church Triumphant. The preachers of the Church are compared to honeycombs also for another reason, because the sweet doctrines of the Gospel come from men themselves weak and frail as the waxen cells of the bee, according to that saying of the Apostle, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men." This honeycomb the soul gathers from divers flowers of Scripture; she seeks them out, settles on them, and draws from them the sweetness of spiritual delights. She puts aside and despises the knowledge that puffeth up, and seeks rather for edification; she chooses fragrant texts, not ornate eloquence. She searches also for the examples of the Saints and their spiritual sayings, and ponders them in her mind, for the Saints were flowers too, and flourished like the palm-tree. And as their life was holy, so what they produced or taught was sweet and pleasant. She flies then to these flowers, and draws from them spiritual honey, but above all from that especial flower which came forth from the stem of Jesse, the flower of the plain and not of the garden. And the perfume of this flower is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed. This is the field wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwells, wherein are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, wherein the righteous flourish and bring forth fruit in sanctity of life as well as in holiness of knowledge. This is that flowery field wherein are as many blossoms as there are righteous ones bringing forth fruit in good works, and outside which there is no flowering, but only withering. To this flowery and abundant field the Bride flies like the prudent bee: she runs after the perfume of this Flower, speeds to It longingly, clings to It in love and faith, sucks the honey of grace from It with the importunity of prayer, receives graces from its plenteousness, grace so diffused upon her lips that they breathe forth the savour of heavenly sweetness, and offer it to others that they too may quaff. And there is no inconsistency between the epithet here applied to the lips of the Church, and that a little before, when they were compared to a scarlet thread.

S. Greg. M.

2 Cor. iv. 7.

Ric. Vict.

Beda.

For the same teachers are cords in salutary precepts and honeycombs in heavenly promises: cords, when they bridle us from giving way to the glow of carnal pleasures; honeycombs, when they offer us the gifts of celestial joys. They are cords also when they teach openly what has to be done or avoided; honeycombs, when they disclose the majesty and salvation which lie hid in typical words and action. And observe that they are said to *drop*, not to pour, because the teaching of the Doctors and preachers of the Church should be carefully proportioned to the capacity of their hearers, and not all poured out at once, according to that warning of the Wise Man: "Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it." Philo reminds us that honey is food, and wax gives light, and both are to be found in Holy Scripture. Another most beautiful interpretation is that which sees in the honeycomb dropping from the lips of the Church, Him Whose Name is ever in her mouth in prayer and praise, in the pure virgin wax of Whose most pure Body, taken of the Blessed Mary, is stored the golden honey of the Godhead, ever pouring forth its grace and giving to each according to the measure of that grace.

Honey and milk are under thy tongue. That is, refreshment for the robust, and comfort for the little ones, solid food for the perfect, and the milk of easy doctrine for the weak. For she had a foretaste of the sweetness of the life to come, where souls are refreshed with the fruition of CHRIST'S Godhead, and with the milk of His Manhood. She had a foretaste of that blessedness, because she is refreshed with "the rivers, the floods, the brooks, of honey and butter," which the wicked and the hypocrite shall not see, that is, understand or taste. This twofold sweetness, as the rivers of a flood, makes glad the City of God on high, but it visits with its brooks the righteous who are still exiles and pilgrims, and gently bathes and refreshes them. *Under thy lips*, not merely on them, but coming from the depth of the heart. For false preachers carry honey on their tongue which they have not under their tongue, who preach of heavenly joys, while they are yearning after mere temporal benefits with all their might. But not so they who imitate the Great Teacher, Whose inner love was as perfect as His outward words and deeds, and of Whom His own Virgin

Hugo Card.

Prov. xxv.
16.

Philo Carp.

Hugo Vict.
Erud. Theol.
i. 15.

Ric. Vict.

Job xx. 17.

Ps. xlvi. 4.

Beda.

Martyr said, "I have received honey and milk from His mouth, and His Blood hath adorned my cheeks." And it is not only the Doctors of the Church who can have the honey and milk under their tongues, but every faithful soul which utters prayers and praises to God in simplicity and sweetness of heart, with devout affection, and with meditation on the simple doctrines of the Faith. Say then evermore most earnestly, "Thou shalt open my lips, O LORD, and my mouth shall show Thy praise." It is to but little or no profit for me to open wide the lips of my mouth, unless Thou open these lips of my heart. Open these lips of mine, O LORD, and then they shall drop, like the honeycomb, Thy sweet praise. Open these lips of mine, O LORD, and then honey and milk shall be under my tongue. So that becomes true which the heathen poet said :

*τὸ στόμα δ' ἦν πακτῆς γλυκερώτερον· ἐκ στομάτων δὲ
ἔρρεέ μοι φωνὰ γλυκερωτέρα ἢ μέλι κηρῶ.*

Mart. 8.
Agnetis ap.
S. Ambros.
S. Ambros.
de Virgin.
lib. 1.

Ps. li. 15.

Theocrit.
Idyll. xx. 26.

Sweeter than milk-curd is my mouth, and from my mouth
there wells

A voice more sweet than honey is from out the waxen cells.

That is but a feigned sweetness which does but sound on the tongue, and is not felt under it. That is but scanty, which is all on the lips and tongue, and not the greater part of it underneath. Some have only honey under the tongue, and no milk; others have only milk, and no honey. But both honey and milk are under the tongue of the Bride. Nor does the honey flow, but rather drops. For she does not commonly and recklessly pour forth the august and hidden meanings of the heavenly secrets and mysteries of the Godhead, nor offer milk when there is no pleasure in the draught. She, under whose tongue are honey and milk, is ready to speak sweet things. Blessed is the tongue which drops as the honeycomb, and is full of milk like the breast given to babes. All crying, and bitterness, and blasphemy is banished far from lips like these. Nor is there ungodliness and vanity under this tongue, but honey and milk. "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil." But there is no honey and milk under her tongue, nor in her heart, nor yet in her last end, for "her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword." But of a virtuous woman is said also in Proverbs,

Gillebert.
Serm. 34.

Ps. x. 7.
Prov. v. 3.

Prov. xxxi.
25.

“Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Her mouth is even now bringing forth that spiritual and blessed rejoicing, and its sweetness is lying hid under her tongue. And the honey and milk now there shall burst forth in full exultation at the last day.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. So the LXX., but the Greek Fathers practically agree with the Vulgate in taking the last word to be *incense*. That is, as S. Gregory Nyssen observes, the holy acts of the Church in the devout soul imitate the divine blessedness itself, and their fragrance is like that of the frankincense burnt in honour of God. And he dwells at some length on the fitness of *garments* as a simile for a holy life, because the cloth of which they are made is composed of countless threads crossing and re-crossing each other, and so holiness of life does not consist in a single virtue or a single good deed, but in the union of a multitude of them woven together in the daily course of existence. Theodoret, as noticed

Theodoret.

already, declares that CHRIST Himself is the only true covering and vesture of His Church, and that the incense denotes His Godhead. The garments of the Church, says a Western Father, are the ornaments of good works, as S. John saith in the Apocalypse, “the pure linen is the righteousness of Saints;” and it is

Cassiodor.

said in Job, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and diadem.” And by incense the beauty of holy prayer is denoted. Therefore the garments of the Church are compared to incense, because all her works are of the nature of

Rev. xix. 8.

Job xxix. 14.

prayer. And observe: that good works are called garments for three reasons: first, they cover sins, as

Prov. x. 12.

1 S. Pet. iv.
8.

it is written, “Love covereth all sins;” and again, “Charity shall cover the multitude of sins;” next, they give spiritual heat, when done to help others;

Ps. cxxxii. 9.

thirdly, they are marks of honour and distinction, and so it is said, “Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness.” He who does not bring forth fruits meet

Rev. xvi. 15.

for repentance does not clothe himself as he ought, and of this is said, “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked.” Of the

1 Kings i. 1.

second, when there is no true charity, we read, “They covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.” And

Lev. xxi. 10.

of the third is written, “He that is the High Priest

shall not rend his clothes." These good works, acutely observes Beda, as being external and done by men, are compared to incense, itself made of spices; but of the inner anointing of the HOLY GHOST, whereby the will to do these works is given us, is said, "How much better is the smell of thine ointments than all spices!"

Beda.

ver. 10.

The incense smells sweetly in the garment of outward abstinence. And that is in truth a seemly garment, when the soul is not so much clothed with flesh as with fasting from carnal things and restraint in pleasures.

Gillebert.

Serm. 34.

Virginal purity is a seemly garment, and sends forth a pleasant odour of incense as well to the Beloved as to her who loves Him. For it cannot be that what is offered with love should not yield delight to her who offers it. What then is the perfume of these garments. Is it not incense? So the heavens are clad in radiant light, but the heavens declare, not their own glory, but the glory of GOD. O happy me, if but one or other of my garments could give forth the pure fragrance of incense, not marred by any foreign admixture! For I hold that none hath yet attained to this measure, that every garment should smell like incense, who hath not yet merited to be ranked in the bridal lot by the LORD JESUS, the Bridegroom of the Brides.

It is enough to say of the A. V. reading, that it seems to denote two things, the perfume of the incorrupt cedars of Lebanon, and that of the wine produced from the mountain grapes, strong and fragrant, denoting the mingled purity and zeal, the contemplative and active states, which are the "vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours," that decks the queenly Bride.

Hos. xiv. 7.

Ps. xlv. 10.

12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Inclosed, that Satan may not enter, but ever open to the Bridegroom. The Church, once His handmaid, now His *sister*, and betrothed to Him as His *Spouse* with the dower of the HOLY GHOST, is a *garden*, because she brings forth the buds of spiritual virtues, which, in a subsequent passage, are called by the name of spices. This garden is *inclosed*, because the Holy Church, fortified by the protection of her LORD and Redeemer, and fenced by the guard of the angelic hosts, lies not open to the snares of evil spirits. This same Church is also a *fountain sealed*. A *fountain*, be-

S. Epiphanius.

Cassiodor.

cause she flows with the streams of heavenly doctrine, wherewith she washes all believers in CHRIST from their sins, and gives them the knowledge of truth to quaff. This fountain is *sealed*, because the word of the Gospel creed is protected with the seal of truth, so that neither heretics nor evil spirits may be able to violate or break in upon the Catholic Faith. And so the Apostle saith, "I planted, Apollos watered, but GOD giveth the increase." I planted the spices of virtues, as in the garden of GOD, Apollos watered, as from the sealed fountain of heavenly teaching, but the LORD helped His labourers, lest they should toil in vain. Others severally take the flowers of the garden to be various orders of Saints, and the wall which incloses the garden to be charity, or the union of faith and works, or, again, the discipline of the Church. And whereas the A. V. translates in the second clause, *A spring shut up*, following the received text $\zeta\eta$, *gal*, all the old versions with one voice accept the variant $\iota\zeta$, *gan*, (found in more than fifty MSS.) and repeat, *A garden inclosed*. It is said twice, as one will have it, because the garden of the Church was first made of the Jews, and then of the Gentiles. It is, remarks another, because of its faith and works, and its division into the active and contemplative lives. A fountain is *sealed* when covered with a stone, and that stone marked with the signet of the owner, that no stranger may approach to draw water from it, but that it may be kept for its lord alone, as the water of the Choaspes was for the kings of Persia.¹

The seal of this fountain is said by some Fathers to be the sign of the Cross impressed at Holy Baptism, but S. Augustine, writing against the Donatists, combats this view on the ground that the fountain is within the one inclosed garden of the Church, whereas Baptism is common to heretics as well as Catholics, and observes: "To this peculiar fountain, of which no

¹ I know not why Mr. Thrupp defines a sealed fountain to mean one diverted by a subterranean channel to a place different from that in which it springs. Such is the case, no doubt, with Solomon's pools near Bethlehem, to which he refers, following Maundrell and

Hasselquist, but he does not add that there is a local tradition that they were literally closed by the king's signet, and that Maundrell states that the very small size of the opening makes it quite possible that they were so closed.

Beda.

1 Cor. iii. 6.

Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.
S. Ans. Laud.
Hugo Vict.

S. Ans. Laud.

Hugo Vict.

Gen. xxix. 2.

Dan. vi. 17.

Athenæus,
ii. 45.Philo Carp.
Aponius.
S. August.
in Crescon.
ii. 15.

stranger partakes, to this sealed fountain, that is, to the gift of the HOLY GHOST, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, none of them draws near, unless changed, so to be thoroughly cleansed, that he may be no more a stranger, but thus a sharer in heavenly peace, a partner in holy unity, and, full of undivided love, a citizen of the City of the Angels."

The holy soul is a garden inclosed, because in putting forth virtues, it gives birth to flowers, and in refreshing itself with the gladness which those virtues yield, it guards the fruits it has produced. The garden is called *inclosed*, because it hedges itself round with holy resolve, as it hides its own good things with that resolve for eternal life, and altogether despises the praise of men, so that the ancient enemy cannot break in to plunder its hidden treasures. It is also called a fountain, because while constantly pondering heavenly things, and ever gathering knowledge of Scripture in the storehouse of memory, the holy soul ceases not to produce living waters within itself, to give to its thirsty neighbours for their refreshment. Whence it is written that the LORD said, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Yet why is that fountain said to be *sealed*, save because the spiritual sense is hidden from unworthy souls? But in the case of a faithful man the LORD saith, "The SPIRIT bloweth where He listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence He cometh and whither He goeth."

The soul is a garden wherein the plants of virtue and the seedlings of spiritual pursuits are cultivated. This garden is dug, when vices are rooted up in it, and the habits of life are turned over. And it is dug yet deeper when a man strives to learn the nature and cause of his sins. For no lukewarm labourer, ignorant of the nature of sins, can successfully mortify his vices. It must then be dug with the memory of the LORD'S Passion, and those nails wherewith the ungodly pierced His hands and feet pierce it too, when we remember those things, and sorrow with His sorrow. This garden is inclosed with the lock of silence, and with bars set to both sight and hearing, lest aught evil should enter by them. It is inclosed even from praise, and it is a fountain sealed with the signet of the HOLY

S. Greg. M.

S. John iv.
14.

Theodoret.

S. John iii.
8.

Ricard. Vict.

GHOST, and the precepts of Scripture, and walled with the examples of the Saints.

And it may well be asked, Who can be a fitting gardener for such a garden as this? S. Mary Magdalene gives us the answer, "She, supposing Him to be the Gardener." And He had one peculiar garden, wherein He abode, inclosed for Him alone, sealed with His own signet, and fenced by the overshadowing SPIRIT, His own most blessed Mother. In the first garden He planted He put a Virgin, yet sin entered, and she fell; but into this garden none entered save Himself:

S. John xx.
15.

Rupert.
S. Just. Org.
Phillipp.
Harveng.

J. Beau-
mont,
Psyche, vii.
103.

O Paradise, how poor a soil art thou
To the rare richness of this virgin bed!
That Tree of Life which in thy heart did grow,
Itself but as the shade of this was spread:
Here is the Garden where the noble Tree
Of everlasting Life would planted be.

Dion. Carth. That princely Lady is the sweetest, most blooming, and most fruitful Garden of the LORD, wherein are planted all manner of spiritual trees, wherein rested the Tree of Knowledge, wherein all virtues were planted, all divine graces blossomed; where the Sun of Wisdom poured His brightest rays, wherein no winds, nor rains, nor floods of sin could ever find a place, which brought forth Him Who is the Maker of all things, and bare the SAVIOUR of the world; and which was inclosed and sealed evermore with the signet of inviolable virginity; which is the fountain of grace, and, after GOD Himself, the source and author of all blessings bestowed on us. Accordingly, this verse formed the Antiphon at the First Vespers of feasts of the B.V.M. in the old English Use. And what holds of the Virgin of virgins, holds also, in its degree, of the maidens of her court, which be her fellows. So, following the clear leading of the Targum, many of the Fathers have delighted to tell us. For the Chaldee paraphrase runs thus: "And thy women, who are wedded to husbands, are honourable spouses, and as a pleasant garden, to which no man hath entrance save the righteous whose souls are sent thither by the hands of the Angels. And thy virgins are hidden, and clustered within, and sealed like a fountain of living waters, which springs beneath a tree, and is divided into four river-heads, and unless it were sealed in the great and holy Name, it would go forth, and flow, and inundate

Brev. Sarisb.

Ps. xlv. 15.

Targum.

the world." And similarly that great Saint who ruled the convents of Milan: "Thou, O virgin, art a garden inclosed, preserve thy fruits, let no thorns arise in thee, but let thy grapes flourish, let not any take from thee the fence of thy modesty, for it is written, 'Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.' Thou art a sealed fountain, O virgin, let no one defile or trouble thy waters." And again, the same Saint observes: "A virgin is as a garden inaccessible to thieves; she has the perfume of the vine, the fragrance of the olive, the glowing beauty of the rose; as religion grows in the vine, peace in the olive, and the modesty of holy virginity in the rose. Gird thyself then, O virgin, and if thou desire that thy garden should yield thee such odours, inclose it with the counsels of the prophets. Set a watch before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips." So too, S. Jerome, writing to the Abbess S. Eustochium, tells her that consecrated virgins ought to be shut up and sealed, not given to leave their home and wander, not even to seek their Bridegroom in the streets, lest they fall like Dinah, though she had patriarchs for her brothers and Israel himself for her father.

S. Ambros.
de Inst.
Virg. c. 8.

Eccles. x.
8.

S. Ambros.
de Virg. 1.

S. Hieron.
Ep. 22, ad
S. Eustoch.
de Cust.
Virg.

That all this is no mere fanciful treatment of the words appears from the exact coincidence of idea in a heathen poet, by no means of an ascetic turn. Hear Catullus:

Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro,
Quem mulcent auræ, firmat sol, educat imber,
Multi illum pueri, multæ optavere puellæ.
Idem quum tenui carptus defloruit ungui
Nulli illum pueri, nullæ optavere puellæ,
Sic Virgo, dum intacta manet, tum cara suis est,
Quum castum amisit polluto corpore florem,
Nec pueris jucunda manet, nec grata puellis.

Catull. lxii.
39.

As a hid flower within closed gardens grows,
By plough uninjured, and by herds unknown,
And fed by winds, sun, rain, in beauty blows,
Till youths and damsels wish it for their own:
And yet, if it be lightly plucked, and fade,
No youths nor damsels wish for it again;
So, dear and honoured is a spotless maid,
But if she lose her virgin bloom through stain,
On her no youths are bent, for her no damsels fain.

13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegra-

nates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard.

14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.

Thy plants. More exactly, *thy shoots*, and accordingly the LXX. and Vulgate read *thy sendings-forth* (*ἀποστολαί*, *emissiones*.) Further, the word translated

Cassiodor.

orchard in the A. V. is *פֶּרְדִּיִּם*, *paradise*, and is rightly

Corn. & Lap.

so rendered by the old versions. The apostolates, then, or emissions of the Bride, are her augments of faith

and spreading of preaching, that is, her planting local Churches throughout the world, each of which is a

paradise, resembling that first and central one which is their source and model. Or you may take them to

Philo Carp.

be the Apostles themselves, ruddy, like the pomegranates, with the blood of martyrdom, and bringing forth

many spiritual children to CHRIST by their toils and sufferings, answering to the grains within that fruit.

S. Greg. M.

Luc. Abb.

S. Gregory takes the *sendings-forth* to be the holy words and works of the Church, whereby she produces

offspring, and trains up some for martyrdom, and others for holy continuance in life. And another view,

which takes the emissions to denote the flow of irrigating water, sees here all the devout baptized. How-

ever the word be explained, there is much depth in the thought of some Greek Fathers, that this sending-forth

does not barely denote emissions, but the gifts and offerings which the Bride sends to her Spouse at the

time of her betrothal, in token of her love and faith, and especially the Saints she presents to Him.

Origen.

Theodoret.

Hugo Vict.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

S. Ambros.

Beda.

Ricard. Vict.

Spoken of the holy soul, they take, for the most part, her *sendings-forth* to be all the words she utters for

God's glory. But a fuller interpretation is that of Richard of S. Victor, who sees here all the virtues of

devotion, putting forth their shoots and sending up their fragrance to Heaven, and that especially in the

case of her who was that Paradise wherein God put the Man Whom He had formed to dress it by His

labours and to keep it by His grace and power. The words of Gilbert of Hoyland, who follows some Rab-

bins and also Aponius in taking the word *emissiones* to denote irrigating waters, merit citation. After

Rupert.

R. Ishaki.

Gillebert.

Serm. 34.

dwelling on the sealing of the fountain as denoting the partial concealment of Divine mysteries even from those who dwell in the garden, he adds: "That fountain is sealed indeed, but not dried up, whose sendings-forth are so gracious. The fountain of wisdom is sealed, but you may know it by its sendings-forth. 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.' The one is open, the other sealed; the one washes, the other waters; the one cleanses sins, the other produces pleasant things; the one belongs to many, the other is the Bride's alone. There are remissions, here emissions. Yes, good JESU, yes, it is even so. Her sendings-out are Thy sendings-in, sent in by Thy good Angels. She would never send forth such pleasant things unless Thou sentest forth within her the delightful waters of life. Thou hast both,—a paradise inclosed, and a paradise sent forth. The one is in pure affection, the other in loving actions. The one is inward, the other comes forth from it, and proves its existence."

Zech. xiii. 1.

So much, in brief, for the general scope of interpretations. But the various fruits and spices enumerated have given rise to a garden, not less various, of mystical exposition, and it will therefore be needful to enter into somewhat fuller detail.

Pomegranates. Spoken of the Church, these, as observed before, denote martyred Apostles, containing in them the seeds of many faithful souls won to God by their toils, or other martyrs endowed with many inner virtues. Again, the pomegranate, with its thorny branches, and the hard and bitter rind in which its fruit is inclosed, that fruit itself being red with white seeds, denotes an austere and mortified life, ruddy with suffering, white with purity and good works. Or, once more, it signifies, as noted previously, charity, because uniting many seeds in one receptacle. Especially does it signify the fraternal union of the members of one Religious order or house. Would, exclaims a Cistercian Abbat, that we imitated these seeds, agreeing together in unity of heart, as though in the inclosure of an Order. The seeds of this fruit cling to one another with a nearly unbroken surface, and their difference is rather that of separate number than of aspect. Let us in turn learn to differ from one another in number, not in mind. These seeds do not quarrel with each

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Ricard. Vict.

Theodoret.

Hugo Card.

Gillebert.

other, they do not murmur against the rind, they do not strive to break through it, they patiently bear being inclosed within it, so that they almost seem to say, "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity." And does not the ruddy colour glow in this our Order, brethren, through imitation of CHRIST, as within the rind of the pomegranate? And they are like the seeds of this fruit, who think it natural to be restrained by the outer discipline of the Rule, and count themselves not oppressed thereby, but protected.

Pleasant fruits. Here the LXX. and Vulgate are directly at variance. The former reads *μετὰ καρποῦ ἀκροδρύων*, *shelly fruits or nuts*; the latter has *cum fructibus pomorum*, which properly denotes all fruit with a soft rind, though it may sometimes be used more widely. The Greek Fathers pass lightly over the phrase, but from coupling it, as they do, with the pomegranates, they show that their view is that the *nuts* denote souls guarded by rigid external discipline, which shelters them from all outward troubles, and keeps them safe till they are fully ripened by the Sun of Righteousness. The Latins take the fruits as something of less note than the pomegranates, sweet, indeed, and fragrant, but not ranking with the Martyrs, and rather denoting the less exalted Saints who busy themselves in good works. Or again, the slightly acid and astringent flavour of the pomegranates, contrasted with the sweeter taste of apples, denotes the austerer Christian virtues of justice and temperance, compared with the softer and gentler ones, mercy and loving-kindness. Another, and the truest, way of regarding the latter clause, *pleasant fruits*, is that it is meant to include all the productions of the garden, and that the catalogue which follows is not additional, but explanatory of what these divers fruits are, denoting either various classes of Saints, or various spiritual graces.

Coming from the fruits to the spices, the LXX. and Vulgate, both reading *Lebanon* where the A. V. has *frankincense*, count up exactly seven aromatic plants, the mystical number. And accordingly, the Fathers see here the seven gifts of the HOLY GHOST, the seven Sacraments, the seven virtues, three of them theological, faith, hope, and charity, and four cardinal, justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance, and the seven orders of Saints in the Church.

Ps. cxxxiii.
1.

Tres Patr.

Cassiod.

Hugo Card.

Luc. Abb.

Cassiod.

Philo Carp.

Luc. Abb.

Angelomus.

Parez.

Of *camphire*, or *henna*, it has been already observed that it denotes propitiation or atonement (chap. i. 14,) but this is not a view put forward here by any of the elder commentators. Cassiodorus, stating that the plant has seeds like coriander, white and semi-transparent, takes it as a type of the manna, and thus as denoting heavenly grace, the more that it was used in the chrism for anointing kings. For this latter cause another writer sees here those Saints who bring forth good works wherewith God is, as it were, anointed; while a third understands it of the gift of ruling, and therefore as denoting all Prelates and rulers in the Church. Philo, who takes it to signify faith, rests on the lowliness of the plant and its white clustering blossoms as bearing out his view. And others hold this whiteness to denote purity, as the first of graces, especially as manifested in the Religious life.

Spikenard. Because this was the chief ingredient of the ointment wherewith CHRIST was anointed just before His Passion, the plant in the garden of the Church denotes thankful remembrance of that Passion, and all it has obtained for us. Another, referring to the same anointing, draws the different conclusion that the spikenard signifies the unction of GOD'S love in the heart, whereby we are refreshed, and strengthened for the combat. Philo takes it to be hope, because it is warm, fragrant, and medicinal, and it is twice mentioned, coupled first with camphire and then with saffron, because hope is the link between faith and charity.

Saffron, because of its golden hue, denotes charity, for charity is among the virtues what gold is amongst metals. And others dwell on its elasticity when trampled under foot (a cause assigned by some for calling it humility,) and the custom of mingling it with wine as additional arguments for the sense. And as the golden stamens of the plant, which alone are used for flavour and perfume, are three in number, they signify the threefold love of the devout soul for the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and the fulfilment of its triple duty to GOD, to its neighbours, and to itself. One more circumstance, on which they do not dwell, may be added, that it was an ancient custom to sprinkle a bridal couch with saffron wine, or with the flowers of the plant.

Conscia jam Veneris nova sarta parate Napææ,
Crocumque lecto spargite.

Cassiod.
Exod. xvi.
31.
S. Ans. Laud.
Hugo Card.
Philo Carp.
Hugo Card.
Nic. Argent.
Honor. Aug.
S. John xii. 3.
Cassiod.
Ric. Vict.
Philo Carp.
Luc. Abb.
Cassiodor.
Joann.
Carm.
Philo Carp.
Corn. à Lap.
Philo Carp.
Tryphiodorus.

Martianus
Capella.

Prepare fresh wreaths that know the Lesbian queen,
And strew the couch with saffron.

And, as is more familiarly known, the bridal veil of ancient Rome was of saffron hue. Wherefore we may add that the mutual love of the Bridegroom and Bride is denoted in this place. Finally, several dwell on the real or supposed effects of saffron as a cooling febrifuge, and take it to be justice, or the Divine grace whereby the desires of the flesh are quenched.

Tres Patr.
Theodoret.
Cassiod.

Isa. xliii. 24.

Ps. xlv. 2.

Theodoret.

Tres Patr.

Nic. Argent.

Calamus, the "sweet cane" of another book of Holy Writ, from being the same word as the reed or pen in the verse, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer," is taken by Theodoret to denote the Doctors of the Church, whose writings are full of sweet instruction. Other Greek divines dwell on the slenderness and loftiness of the reed, as a type of the virtue of temperance, which lightens the soul of much of the burden of the body, and uplifts it to spiritual things. Again, the straight uprightness of the reed, and its use as the sceptre of CHRIST, make it a type of justice. The hard bark and inner sweetness of the calamus have led also to its being taken here as a type of religious poverty, or of the contemplative claustral life. Cassiodorus and some others, mistakenly identifying calamus with cassia, a totally different plant, give further explanations which need not be detailed.

Cassiod.
Ricard. Vict.

Tres Patr.

Cosm. Dam.

Nic. Argent.

Gillebert.

Cinnamon, because of its outer ashen-grey bark which incloses the inner brown spice, denotes those Saints who are lowly and penitential in their outward conversation, while warm within through the heat of Divine love. Others in this same warmth see fortitude, and also loving-kindness, because of the fragrant and penetrating odour of the plant. And the ashy tint is also explained of obedience, whereby the self-will of man is consumed into dust and ashes. Gillebert, contrasting the tall calamus with the lowlier cinnamon, observes, applying the whole verse to CHRIST, Who suffered as our propitiation in the camphire, was buried with the spikenard, rose again in golden beauty like the crocus, and ascended like the reed, that the cinnamon when broken gives forth a gush of fragrance. That, he says, was JESUS, when He took bread, brake, and gave it. The Bride is like the calamus when she goes up towards GOD in prayer from the waters of weeping; she is like the cinnamon, when she humbles herself for the

sake of man. The ascension is beautiful, but take care that the descent be like to cinnamon; when any reasonable cause calls thee back and restrains thee from that ascension and going forth, be like the cinnamon. Let thy conversation, thine ordinary life breathe grace. If thou be sometimes turned aside from thine own will and resolve, and that will be bent, and as it were broken at the bidding of an elder, let there be no murmuring, no complaint. Be cinnamon, give forth a breath of grace, not a complaint of injury.

Gillebert.
Serm. 36.

With all trees of frankincense. That is, since incense is offered to God only, all those Saints who in every part of their lives aim at likeness to Him and conformity to His will. Others, dwelling on the stately trees of Lebanon, explain it of the more eminent Saints, compared to the cedars for strength and beauty. Or, remembering that Lebanon means whiteness, you may take it of the Virgins, pure in snowy chastity and rising boldly up towards heaven.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Cassiodor.
S. Ans. Laud.

Hugo Vic-
torin.

Myrrh and aloes. At once we recall that "mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight," which Nicodemus brought for the burial of the LORD, and are taught hereby the need of being conformed to the likeness of His death, before we can share in His Resurrection and glory. Myrrh, as noted before, is mortification; aloes, yet more bitter, the pain of trial and temptation. Others see two degrees of suffering, as martyrdom and confessorship, or two degrees of temperance, as continence and abstinence.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. John xix.
39.

Theodoret.

S. Ans. Laud.
Cassiodor.
Hugo Vic-
torin.

With all the chief spices. That is, as they for the most part explain, the spiritual gifts of the HOLY GHOST. Or, with S. Gregory Nyssen, all the great doctrines of the Church, pure from any heresy or adulteration. Or, yet again, as Cassiodorus aptly puts it: "After myrrh and aloes fitly come the chief spices, because after continence of the flesh comes that true love which is God Himself, and whereby God is loved above all things. For they who are changed by the love of the world, that is, who still delight in pleasures and allurements, cannot be partakers of this love."

Tres Patr.
Ricard. Vict.
Hugo Vic-
torin.

Cassiod.

And having gone through the list of the chief plants in that Paradise of God, let us hear how S. Bernard applies the whole parable to the Religious Life: "Count not this paradise of inner delight to be any tangible place. Not the feet, but the affections enter here. It is no orchard of earthly trees which is set before thee, but

S. Bernard.
de Convers.
ad Clericos,
cap. 13.

a sweet and lovely park of spiritual virtues. A garden inclosed, where the sealed fountain is parted into four heads, and from one source of wisdom virtue goes forth in a fourfold stream. There the glittering lilies bloom, and when the flowers appear, the voice of the turtle is heard. There the spikenard of the Bride sendeth forth its most fragrant smell, and the other spices flow out, as the south wind breathes, when the north has fled away. There, in the midst, is the Tree of Life, that apple-tree of the Canticles, fairer than all the trees of the wood, whose shadow refreshes the Bride, whose fruit is sweet to her taste. There the whiteness of continence and the gaze on truth undefiled irradiate the eyes of the heart, and the soft voice of inward consolation gives joy and gladness to the hearing. There the pleasant odour of that rich field which the LORD hath blessed reaches the nostrils of hope. There the peerless cates of love are eagerly tasted, and there the soul, anointed with the unction of mercy, rests happily with a clean conscience, when the briars and thorns, which once pricked her, have been cut down." And in the same spirit runs that mystical old Dutch hymn, written by one of those Brethren of the Common Life who sat at the feet of Thomas à Kempis.

The Hymn,
Heer Jesus
heeft een
Hofken.

Our Master hath a garden which fair flowers adorn,
There will I go and gather both at eve and morn ;
Nought's heard therein but Angel-hymns with harp and lute,
Loud trumpets, and bright clarions, and the gentle soothing
flute.

The lily white that bloometh there is Purity,
The fragrant violet is surnamed Humility.

The lovely damask rose is there called Patience,
The rich and cheerful marigold Obedience.

One plant is there with crown bedight, the rest above,
With crown imperial, and this plant is Holy Love ;

But still of all the flowers the fairest and the best
Is JESUS CHRIST, the LORD Himself, His Name be blest ;

O JESU, my chief good and sole felicity,
Thy little garden make my ready heart to be ;
So may I once hear Angel-hymns with harp and lute,
Loud trumpets, and bright clarions, and the gentle soothing
flute.

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living
waters, and streams from Lebanon.

They agree, for the most part, in explaining this *fountain* to denote, first, either Holy Scripture itself, or the Church as the preacher and expounder thereof. It is a fountain of *gardens*, because it irrigates not only the various local Churches which are derived from the one centre, but also all holy souls, which are God's pleasancess. It is a fountain, again, by reason of its ready accessibility, because its stream of love breaks out so freely that man can drink of it as he stoops, or can turn its fertilizing channels among the beds of his garden to water his fruits. But it is also a *well*, because of its profound depth and the hidden mysteries it contains, which have to be searched out with toil, and drawn forth with humility. For Holy Writ is a stormy sea to the proud, and a fordable river to the humble, and sometimes appears as the tiniest rill to water the unlearned and simple, while it is, nevertheless, deepest in the spots which seem to mark the easiest fords; so, as a Saint has truly said, an elephant needs to swim where a lamb can ford easily. It is a fountain of *living waters*, because it flows from the perennial source of Divine wisdom, not like the teaching of heretics, stored in tanks of human construction, and sure to dry up when the sun is hot. Of these the Prophet saith, "They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." But of him who hearkens to the voice of the LORD JESUS is said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is He of whom the Psalmist saith: "Thou shalt give them drink of Thy pleasures, as out of the river. For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light." And as He, the Eternal Wisdom, is the Source of both well and fountain, they are rightly called *streams from Lebanon*. He is Lebanon, the mountain which fills the earth, the stone cut out without hands, "whiteness" in His absolute holiness and purity, "incense" in His atoning Sacrifice and perpetual intercession. His Bride is Lebanon too, washed white by Him in His own Blood, and from her pour down those waters of Baptismal grace and Apostolic teaching, which descended with irresistible power upon the earth, so that the rivers of the flood thereof make glad

S. Ambros.
de Isaac. 4.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

Cassiodor.

Jer. ii. 13.

Beda.

S. John iv.
14.

Ps. xxxvi. 8.

Luc. Abb.

Ricard. Vict.

Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M.
Beda.

Ps. xlvi. 4.