

the city of GOD. And observe the gradual magnifying of the one idea, how the *fountain* deepens into a *well*, and the well widens into *streams*, denoting the continual growth and advance of GOD'S grace in the Church and in the soul, so that the latter things are greater than the former. And so it is written, "I also came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed: and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea." This is what Ezekiel beheld in vision, when the waters issued from the temple eastward and grew into a mighty torrent swarming with fish, and bordered with green and fruitful trees.

Cocceius.

Eccles. xxiv.
30.

Ezek. xlvii.
1—12.

Ricard. Vict.

Gen. xxvi.
22.

The devout soul is a fountain which glides and flows, and which ever springs up anew, because it is renewed in GOD. It never ceases to bubble forth, and break out in love for Him, to swell for its own needs, and to expand itself in affection for its neighbour. It is also a well of living waters, because it contains the deep grace and knowledge of the HOLY SPIRIT, enough to supply itself and to pour forth again for others. This is the third well which Isaac dug, and which he called "Room," because the LORD has spread it over the earth. For man is spread over the earth when he arrives at the perfection of grace, and having passed over servile fear, ascends from the beginning of love to the affection of a son. Man digs the first well when he casts earth, that is, earthly sins, out of himself through fear of punishment. He digs the second when he avoids sin not only through fear, but also through love of good. He digs the third when he abandons evil and does good from love alone. And while digging the two former ones, he endures the slanders and enmity of the herdsmen of Gerar, that is, the evil spirits who behold our "sojournings," while we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, and who strive to encourage carnal passions in us. But when we attain to perfect charity and spiritual fervour, the inner struggle and the outer attack of evil spirits cease, because they are no longer a match for us in the fight. Then the soul expands so much in love and grace, and is so enriched with their fulness, that it can pour forth its streams on others also.

They take the Religious Life also to be the fountain, watering the garden of many a famous Order, Bene-

Hugo Card.

dictines, Cistercians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and the like. And each such Order in its turn is a fountain watering the gardens of the various devout souls gathered in them. Each Society is one garden, because of its unanimity, many gardens by reason of the varying gifts and graces of its members. And note, that before any one member can be truly called a garden, he must cultivate more than one grace or virtue, for that is no garden which contains but one flower, however lovely. "Follow, then, after the wells of heavenly delights, the wells of faithful and of living waters which pour in a flood from Lebanon. Be a flower in the garden, and that garden inclosed, that thou be not plucked, and thou shalt see how the LORD will make fountains and streams spring up for thee. Dwell in the garden, that thou too mayest perchance become a well, and out of thy belly living waters may flow. O that one would give me these waters for my little garden, the well of gladness to my heart. 'Cleanse me, O LORD, from my secret faults, keep Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' Make me to be Lebanon, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' 'So shall I be undefiled and innocent from the great offence. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy sight.' Make me Lebanon, and I shall ever pour these streams forth to Thee."

Gillebert.
Serm. 37.

Ps. xix. 12.

Ps. li. 7.

Ps. xix. 13.

And finally, they take the verse to denote the Blessed Virgin, as the earthly source or fountain, whence the Divine River of Mercy (as the Holy Eastern Church calls her Eternal Son,) went forth to water the earth, parted into the four sacramental channels of His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, without the confession of which our paradise cannot exist, without which the world cannot be saved. And yet she is not the first source of these sacred waters. They flow from a height far above her lowly garden, from Lebanon itself, the mysterious height of Godhead, pure, majestic, awful, clothed in shadowy darkness.

Rupert.

Alanus.

Ord. Ol.
Sanct.

Guiliel.
Parv.

Cantacuzene.

16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

- Theodoret. Throughout Holy Scripture, the north, as the region of darkness and cold, is typical of the powers of evil, according as it is written of Lucifer, "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north." And twice in Jeremiah, "Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon the inhabitants of the land;" and again, "I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction." So too, when the LORD promises mercy, He saith, "I will remove far off from you the northern army." And accordingly a frequent exposition of this verse by the Fathers is that it is a summons to the powers of evil to begone from the garden, and a prayer to the HOLY SPIRIT, denoted by the moist and warm south wind, to enter in instead. For it is said in Habakkuk, "God came from Teman," which is "the south." S. Gregory Nyssen reminds us also that the north is on the right hand of him whose back is towards the east, and who is journeying westward, and so Satan is friendly to those only who turn away from the Day-spring from on high, and set themselves towards the sunset, where the powers of darkness prevail. Also, the second clause, the prayer which was answered when the rushing mighty wind came down on the disciples at Pentecost, notes the great change which then passed over the Church of God, when the prophetic streams of waters of the Old Testament, of which we read, "He bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow," were changed into the more glorious streams of fragrant spices, diffused throughout the world in such channels as the mighty S. Paul, or the Evangelist S. John, both of them a good odour of CHRIST.
- Others, however, take both winds to be diverse operations of the same HOLY SPIRIT, the north bringing coolness to the fevered, the south softening the hard and frozen. And because these two are but one Spirit, the verb is singular, not plural. Again, the north and south may be taken to denote the nations of different parts of the earth, alike invited to enter the garden inclosed, and the north, signifying the more distant lands, is therefore bidden to *awake* from its sleep, to arise from the dead, that CHRIST may give it light. Further, they take the two winds to be various forms of trial, for which the Church prays, that she may be
- Isa. xiv. 13.
- Jer. i. 14;
iv. 6.
- Joel ii. 20.
- Hab. iii. 3.
- S. Greg.
Nyssen.
Hom. 10.
- Ps. cxlvii. 18.
- S. Paulin.
- S. Just. Org.
- S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.

tested for her LORD. For when the virtues of the Church have been counted up under the name of spices; the LORD, Who is the Bridegroom and Redeemer of His Church, knowing that it would be increased by persecution, afterwards, as it were, directs that persecution to come, not enjoining, but permitting it. The north and south winds signify troubles and persecutions raging against the Church. The north is a very cold wind, the south a warm one, and therefore terrors and threats are denoted by the north, and guileful flatteries by the south, by both which kinds of trial the Church is proved. And in saying, *Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south*, He does not command nor urge wicked men to do evil, but permits them, and gives them power to rage against the Church, that it may be tested by their malice, and they be the more severely punished. For the more cruelly the Church is smitten, the greater fragrance of holiness does she give forth.

Others differ so far as to see the bane and antidote summoned together, the north wind of sorrow and trial, the south wind of grace and comfort to refresh and restore the Church or soul wearied with its combat. But the north wind is not suffered to stay long. When it has sufficiently exercised its chilly power, then the south comes, and not only blows, but *blows through* (so, correctly, LXX. and Vulg.) the garden, occupying the whole of it, so that no sorrow can abide there, but all the spices flow out together in abundance and gladness. And in this sense S. Anselm tersely comments: "The north wind, shaking the trees, makes them bud, that the south which follows may cause them to bear fruit. And so persecution, followed by the fervour of charity, makes the Church bear fruit through the grace of the HOLY GHOST."

Rupert, diversely, following the view which identifies the north wind with Satan, holds that the verse is a challenge to him to arise from his secret ambush, and to advance to do battle with the south wind of the HOLY SPIRIT for possession of the garden. And it has been taken, not only of the Pagan persecutions, and of the struggles of heretics to overthrow the Faith, but also of the last great effort of Antichrist, when God will permit him to awake against the Church, but will ere long send His refreshing and warm wind to restore the lapsed, and to give new strength and beauty

to His enfeebled and mourning garden. It should be observed that while the majority of the Fathers take the words to be the Bridegroom's, dealing with the garden and the winds as their absolute LORD, some few, amongst whom are Theodoret and S. Gregory Nyssen, will have it, that it is the prayer of the Bride. The application of the verse to the Blessed Virgin is twofold; first, that she was guarded from evil, repelled from her by the grace of her perfect obedience and purity, and that she was filled with the Holy Spirit, whereby not only her virtues flowed forth in beauty, but He came forth from her, Who is the source of all beauty and holiness. And so runs the hymn :

Corn. à Lap.

The Hymn,
*Imperatrix
gloriosa.*

Auster levis te perflavit,
Et perflando fecundavit,
Aquilonem qui fugavit,
Sua cum potentia ;
Florem ergo genuisti,
Ex quo fructum protulisti,
Gabrieli dum fuisti
Paranympho credula.

That soft south-wind, through thee going,
And thus fruitfulness bestowing,
Put to flight the north-wind's blowing,
With his breath of greater might ;
Therefore thou hast borne the Flower,
Yielding fruit within thy bower,
When to Gabriel, in that hour,
Thou didst hearken with delight.

And again; no life ever so mingled joy and sorrow as hers did, none ever felt such woe and desolation, nor yet such consolation and rejoicing, as she who knelt by the cradle of the Most High, and who stood later by His Cross.

Keble,
*Christian
Year.*

Thou wept'st, meek Maiden, Mother mild,
Thou wept'st upon thy sinless Child,
Thy very heart was riven,
And yet, what mourning matron here
Could deem thy sorrows bought too dear
By all on this side heaven ?

Philipp.
Harveng.

Even against her, His Mother, He permitted the evil one to rage, to threaten, to storm, either through the means of the evil Jews, or through the sufferings which she could not but share with her Son, but He knew well what would be her victory and her crown, what will yet be the triumph and the reward of those who

take her for their pattern, and bear the chilling blast with patience, knowing that, cold as it is, it will clear the sky, and drive away the clouds which hide the sun, and then the warm breeze will spring up, and the heart be gladdened to its inmost core. Cocceius.

Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits. These words of the Bride are assigned by the present copies of LXX. and Vulgate to the following chapter, with which they have a closer connection. But the juxtaposition of the A. V. is also that which some Greek Fathers and not a few Westerns have accepted. And the first thing to be observed is that one phrase in this address of the Bride seems to prove that all the earlier part of the verse is uttered by the Bridegroom. She says, "Let my Beloved come into *His* garden." She does not say *my* Philo Carp. garden, as the previous speaker does, because she knows that she herself and all that she has are utterly and entirely His, and not her own. On the other hand; if the words be taken as the Bride's, this variation of language will denote that in her humility she calls the garden hers, so long as the bleak, dry, nipping north wind is blowing, and no sign of fertility is visible, but the moment that endurance has been crowned, and the spices begin to flow out, then, because the garden is productive and beautiful, she calls it His. Next; the LXX. and Arabic version read, Let my Beloved come *down* into His garden, which the Syriac amplifies further, Let Him come through my garden into His garden. And on the LXX. rendering, S. Gregory Nyssen observes, that as the Bride cannot reach the Most High unless He condescend to her lowliness; she, while soaring to the utmost limit of her power, intreats Him to meet her, by coming down from His majesty to earth. She calls Him all the more, because hearing that He is going to try her by persecution, she cannot rest till He is in the midst of her, to support her in her struggle, and to be the glad S. Greg. Nyss. spectacle of the holy deeds she means to do for love of Him. The Church invites Him also to see the children she has brought up for Him, the newly-baptized converts won to Him from unbelief. These are, according to the LXX. rendering, *fruits of nuts*, because safely closed in by the strong shell of His commandments. Or, as S. Ambrose, writing of and to Virgins, Cassiodor. says, following the same text, the WORD of GOD is S. Ambros. de Sacram. v. 3.

- Tres Patr. invited into the garden of nuts, wherein is the fruit of the study of prophecy, and the grace of the priestly office, compared to a nut, because bitter at first with trial and sorrows, then hardened by toil, and finally fruitful in hidden virtues. And this verse is more directly applied to the virginal life by another, following the Western rendering, *apples*. The Bride invites CHRIST to hallow for Himself, as the firstlings of good works, the produce of the fruits of virginity, that He, Who proceeded from a Virgin, may taste thereof, and may send by the hands of angels into heaven that fruit of penitential joy which He receives from the Church.
- De Virg. 3. He hath said of Himself, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work;" and therefore He tastes His pleasant fruits whenever He visits and enters any holy soul to see its progress in sanctity. And He was especially invited by S. Mary, when she said, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD, be it unto me according to thy word." Eve offered her bridegroom an apple which was none of hers to give, nor of his to accept, but Mary called her GOD to eat His own fruits, that is, to unite and incorporate His elect with Himself, calling Him into herself, His garden, because while fields or plains often lie fallow or barren as the seasons change, a garden has always some fruit or flower to please its master's eye, and she was not merely a Saint as others, but full of grace. And whereas Rupert goes on to represent the words as those of the Virgin Mother desiring her Son to call her from the world to Himself; so too some of the commentators have seen here the cry of every soul which longs to flee away and be at rest, to be dissolved and be with CHRIST, that He may enter the garden, and bear its fruit away with Him to Paradise. And it is all summed up in the one petition of the Our FATHER, "Thy kingdom come." Let Him come then. Why does He invite the south wind to come? Let Him come to me Himself, and it is enough. He is my south wind, He is my fragrance. He is my south wind, He is my Love. God cometh from the south, and the south wind comes with Him. And then He is full of grace and truth. Truly He is my south wind, Who brightly shines, Who softly glides upon me. My CHRIST is my south wind, He blows through my garden, He eats my fruit.
- Luc. Abb.
- Philo Carp. S. John iv. 34. Guiliel. Parv.
- Rupert.
- Delrio.
- Card. Hallgrin.
- Beda.
- Hugo Vict.
- Gillebert.
- Hab. iii. 3.

CHAPTER V.

I I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

The Bride has scarcely formed her wish, scarcely uttered her prayer, before it is heard and answered, according to that saying, "Thou shalt call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am." For God did come into His garden, the creature, took flesh of the Virgin, and was made man. The Body He took was mortal, but united with the fragrance of the All-Holiest WORD. They dwell, too, in another way on the *myrrh*, as denoting suffering, and say with S. Cyril of Jerusalem, as he tells his catechumens of the place where the LORD was crucified, "Of this garden I sang long ago in the Canticles to My Bride, and I said thus to her, *I have come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.* 'Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden.' And what thence drawest thou? *I have gathered My myrrh*, when He drank the wine and vinegar mingled with myrrh, and having received it, said, 'It is finished.'" And on this a Spanish writer says very well: As Adam committed his sin in the garden of Paradise, so CHRIST, the Atoner for that guilt, willed to enter the garden of Gethsemane, and there He prayed for Adam and all his posterity, there too He willed to be taken, bound, dragged away, and smitten by the servants of the chief priests. Also, as Adam stretched out his hands to the tree and seized the forbidden fruit, therefore CHRIST stretched out His hands and arms on the Tree of the Cross, and there was nailed by hands and feet, and pierced with a spear. Moreover Adam ate the fruit which was sweet to the taste, but CHRIST drank the bitter vinegar mingled with myrrh on the Cross.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Isa. lviii. 9.

S. Athan.

Cat. Myst.
xii. 32.S. John xix.
41.S. John xix.
30.

Parez.

And though that Passion was as the bitterest myrrh to CHRIST, to us it was as the sweetest honey in effect, and fragrant as all restorative spices, intoxicating as wine, nourishing as milk. Yet, as one of our own poets has taught us, the first interpretation is deeper than the second one.

- Keble, *Lyra Innocent.* And surely not in folds so bright the spotless winding-sheet
Inwra^{pt} Him, nor such fragrance poured the myrrh and aloes
sweet,
As when in that chaste bosom, His awful bed, He lay,
And Mary's prayer around Him rose, like incense, night and
day.
- Luc. Abb. He gathered His myrrh too in another fashion, by
converting the fierce thief upon the cross, as He had
gathered His spices a little before when He drew the
sinful woman to Him. He gathered His myrrh and
Philo Carp. His spice when He was borne dead into the garden
where Joseph's new tomb was, and when they wrapped
Him in fine linen with myrrh and aloes. He gathered
S. Just. Org. myrrh indeed in His death, but when He went into
that other garden of His, in Hades, He gathered
thence His spice, when He brought back into the light
of Paradise the spirits that were in prison. And this
Rupert. coming is not all past and over. Daily He comes still
Cassiodor. into His garden, daily does He visit His Church and
Beda. every soul that loves Him, to gather fruits for Him-
Theodoret. self. He gathers myrrh in His martyrs, spice in His
other Saints, myrrh in all who mortify their carnal
passion, spice in all who yield the odour of devotion
and good works. Myrrh denotes the Baptism whereby
we are buried with Him, spice the graces of the HOLY
SPIRIT which He breathes on His disciples. And thus
Delrio. He speaks to the soul unto whose garden He comes :
Ricard. Vict. "Thou hast borne, O My spouse, the sorrow of pe-
nance ; the strife, the trial, the toil of correction, and
thou hast come to the harvest of perfection in virtue,
from the life of toil to the calmer state of contemplation.
Therefore have I gathered in the myrrh with spice,
because the spices of virtue have been prepared and
perfected in thee with the bitterness of toil, and wis-
dom hath made progress through keeping the com-
mandments. For when fleshiness and self-will have
been mortified, then the spices of holiness flow out,
and by the fulfilment and triumph of this toil the sum-
Dion. Carth. mit of perfection is reached." And why is He said

to gather His myrrh, instead of letting it grow still in the garden? Why, but that He may give it as a posy to His Bride, that bunch which lies all night between her breasts, for her delight and refreshment.

I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. And this He did when He stored the golden sweetness of His Godhead in the frail, pure shrine of His human Body. He hath *eaten* the honeycomb, that is, taken it to Himself, in raising it to Heaven by His Ascension. And in precisely the same sense is it added, *I have drunk My wine with My milk*, wherein the hypostatic union of the Two Natures in His Person is similarly shadowed forth. But as the phrases *eating* and *drinking* denote bodily refreshment, they are more usually explained of the pleasure which CHRIST derives from the holiness of His Saints. By the *honeycomb* and *wine*, comments Cassiodorus, holy preachers are figured, and by *honey* and *milk* devout hearers. For preachers are honeycombs who bring forth the secret and hidden mysteries of Scripture like honey out of the comb, when they disclose them to others by preaching. And devout hearers are the *honey*, because they delight to receive eagerly and to be fed pleasantly with the sweetness of GOD'S Word. The same preachers who are honeycomb are also *wine*, because they declare the mighty Sacraments of the Scriptures. The hearers, as weaker, are *milk*, in that they need the mysteries to be explained and simplified for them. And whereas all these spend their lives in different ways, the Redeemer is fed and gladdened with the holy resolutions of them all, and thus does, as it were, eat His honeycomb with His honey, and drink His wine with His milk. And we may refer it also to the death of the elect, whom the LORD eats, when He calls them by death to eternal life, and unites them to His Body, that is, to the fellowship of the elect who already rejoice in that heavenly bliss. And if we do so take it of the death of the Saints, we should understand them by *wine* whose souls now are exulting in heavenly bliss, and by *honeycomb* those who rejoice both in body and soul in that blessedness, such as they who arose together with the LORD. Again, He accepts all kinds of holiness,—that which is solid, denoted by the comb; that which is sweet, signified by the honey; that which is strong and vigorous, typified by wine; that which comes from weak and imperfect Christians, shadowed

S. Athan.

Rupert.

Cassiod.

Theodoret.

forth by milk. Another will have it that the honeycomb with its honey fitly signifies those Saints who delight in the study of Holy Writ, and who make their hearts and memories the cells wherein they, like bees, store up the sweet food drawn from all the flowers of Law and Prophet, Psalm and Gospel. And another writer reminds us that we too may eat and drink in this wise in imitation of our LORD, when we digest not merely the outward letter of Holy Scripture, which is the comb, but its inner spiritual sense, which is the honey; when we drink not only the stinging and powerful wine of compunction, but the soothing milk of trust in the mercy of GOD. He drinks His *wine* too in another manner, the new wine of His kingdom, in His delight in those of His Saints who have kept the faith and finished their course, and come to Him where He no longer weeps for Lazarus, where He is no more sorrowful unto death, where He drinks not vinegar and gall again. He drinks His *milk* in His love for His Saints yet militant and imperfect, who are still in the way, and need daily refreshment and food. He eats His honeycomb when He delights in the inner capacities of the soul for good. He adds His honey to that feast when those capacities develop into action, like the comb pouring out its golden streams. He drinks wine and milk when He looks on a soul delightedly contemplating Him in His double aspect of perfect Godhead and glorified Manhood. And the soul too eats and drinks in its turn, nay, in the same order. For amended ways and good works must come before the grace of contemplation is bestowed. A various reading of the LXX. and Arabic, *bread for honeycomb*, has pointed more directly a further sense also latent here, and thus some of the Fathers have bidden us see here a prophecy of the Holy Eucharist, that Food which is all sweetness and strength. And Cornelius aptly notes that it was the custom of the primitive Church to give the Blessed Sacrament to the newly-baptized, and immediately thereafter, honey and milk, typical of the gentleness, sweetness, and simplicity of the Law of CHRIST. And as He is not only LORD of the feast spread upon His Altar daily, but fellow-guest, in that His own members are they who feed there, He is said to share in the repast, as He did on that first Maundy Thursday amongst His Apostles.

Luc. Abb.

Irimbert.

Hugo Card.

Ricard. Vict.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Philo Carp.

S. Ambros.

de Sacr. v. 3.

Corn. à Lap.

Eat, O friends,¹ drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. The first question they ask here is, Who are these friends? And the Targum helps us to the answer. As it takes the invitation of the Bride to be the invocation of GOD unto His Temple, and His reply to denote His sending down fire to consume the oblations, so it explains this clause of His summons to the priests to draw near in order to eat their share of the sacrifices, which He leaves for them. And thus we shall see here CHRIST'S invitation to those Apostles whom He then called no more servants, but friends, saying, "Come, eat of My Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have mingled." And not only they, but all Christians of whatever degree, who are in a sense His priests, are called to that same banquet. *Drink abundantly.* The marginal reading, more exactly, with LXX. and Vulgate, *Be drunken.* For, as a great Saint and Martyr teaches us, the intoxication of the LORD'S Chalice and Blood is not like that of this world's wine, therefore the HOLY GHOST when saying in the Psalm, "My inebriating chalice," addeth, "How good it is!"² because, no doubt, the LORD'S Chalice in such wise inebriates those who drink of it, as to make them sober, and recall their souls to spiritual wisdom, so that each may turn from the savour of the world to taste the knowledge of GOD: and just as the mind is relaxed, the soul loosened, and all sorrow cast aside by means of ordinary wine; so when we drink the Blood of the LORD and the Cup of Salvation, the memory of the old man is laid aside, forgetfulness of our former conversation comes upon us, and the sad and mourning heart, which just now was oppressed with torturing sins, is freed by the gladness of GOD'S merciful pardon. Accordingly that ancient morning hymn, once daily used in the Western Church, but now for many centuries restricted to the Lauds of Monday, runs:

Targum.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.
S. Ambros.
S. John xv.
15.
Prov. ix. 5.S. Cyprian.
Ep. 63 ad
Cæciliūm.

¹ The word רֵעִים, *friends*, is the same which is translated in the A. V. of Ps. cxxxix. 17, as "thoughts," and in the Prayer Book as "counsels," whereby the force of its ancient use and beautiful Antiphon, as employed in the Common of

Apostles, "How dear are Thy *friends* unto me, O GOD," is lost.

² This is the LXX. and Vulgate reading of Ps. xxiii. 5, where the A. V. translates (as do modern critics) "my cup runneth over."

S. Ambros.
The Hymn,
*Splendor
Paternæ
Gloriæ.*

And CHRIST shall be our daily Food,
Our daily drink His Precious Blood,
And thus the SPIRIT'S calm excess¹
Shall fill our souls with holiness.

Cassiod.

S. Luke
xv. 6.

Philo Carp.

S. Ans. Laud.

S. Greg. M.

Ric. Vict.

But this is only one out of a variety of expositions. One Father tells us that it is an invitation to all God's faithful and loving servants to behold and imitate the examples of His Saints, and that if we interpret the passage of Saints departed, then the *friends* called on to rejoice are the angelic spirits, delighting in seeing the elect translated from this life to the rest of everlasting blessedness, according to that parable of the Gospel, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost." Another sees in the friends called on to eat, the Patriarchs and Prophets, summoned to share in the Word of Life and in the Passion of the LORD, and in the stream of the HOLY GHOST; and the beloved, called to drunkenness, the Apostles, so inebriated with the torrent of the HOLY GHOST poured on them from heaven, that they were thought to be full of new wine, while preaching the wonderful works of GOD. S. Anselm of Laon tells us that preachers are called on to *eat*, that is, to incorporate sinners into the body of the Church with pains and care, by converting their hearers, and to *drink*, in the case of those who are more readily won over and quickly give in adhesion, while the term *be drunken* denotes their zealous pleasure in their work, and their heedlessness of all temporal things so long as they may carry it on. Not very dissimilarly, S. Gregory the Great, taking the banquet to be Holy Scripture, says that they eat of it and are CHRIST'S friends, who, though not attaining perfection, do yet strive after holiness in their degree; but His beloved, who are drunken with its delights, are those who have cast away all thoughts of earth in their eagerness to quaff His cup. And this is true also of divine contemplation, wherein GOD feeds His friends, but more abundantly refreshes His beloved, though both receive in that banquet spiritual consolation, as they are fed with the love of CHRIST, are enlightened in faith, comforted in hope, kindled in charity, gladdened with righteousness, truth, purity, and all other graces. And finally, they take it of the summons to the un-

¹ "Sobriam ebrietatem."

ending festival of heaven. There, exclaims Gilbert of Hoyland, there all are friends, all beloved. All drink, and all are inebriated. Not so in this vale of tears, not so, but there are many friends, few beloved; many drink, not all are inebriated, and they who are so, become sober again. For a moment they pass forth in ecstasy, and then return again to the wonted soberness. There it is different:

Ever full, yet ever craving, they desire, and yet possess,
But their fulness brings no loathing, and their hunger no distress,
Eagerly they eat for ever, ever eat in joyfulness.

Gillebert.
Serm. 41.

S. Pet. Dam.
The Hymn,
Ad perennis.

And with this last interpretation we may couple that other version of the clause, *Be drunken with love*, with all the unspeakable gladness of the Home of eternal joy.

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Here begins another main division of the song, the fourth in order, and marking the central time of the action. It typifies, as some of the commentators tell us, the trials of the Bride after her union with the Bridegroom; her failure, yearning, and search for Him after He had again withdrawn Himself for her better probation. It is thus taken of the Church after she relaxed in her first love and zeal, after the days of Pagan tyranny were over, and of the soul which yields to spiritual negligence even after true conversion to God. The Chaldee paraphrase is quite in keeping with this view, in that it explains the sleep of the Bride to be the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, whence Israel was awakened by the voice of the HOLY GHOST, warning them by the Prophets, and rousing them from the slumber of their heart. And similarly one or two are found who explain this sleep of the Bride to denote a season of negligence and indevotion, soon to be shaken off, and prevented from working fatal results because her *Heart*, her *Love*, her *Bridegroom*, is watching over her slumbers, and guarding her from all fear of the enemy, according to that saying, "Behold, He that

Hon. Aug.

Targum.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Ps. cxxi. 4.

- keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." But the great majority take the words in a good sense. Her LORD has just given her His inebriating chalice, which closes her eyes to all earthly cares and anxieties, and she now slumbers in the deep repose of perfect trust, and divine contemplation, while her heart is waking in eagerness of love for Him. She sleeps, because sleep is a type of death, and she has learnt to die to the world and its affections, whilst she wakes in contemplation of heavenly things. And therefore S. Ambrose thus addresses a Virgin, "Let thy flesh sleep, let thy faith wake, let the allurements of the body slumber, let the prudence of the heart keep watch, let thy members breathe the odour of CHRIST'S Cross and grave, that slumber bring no heat, and arouse no passions." And this mingled condition of sleep and wakefulness involves, S. Gregory warns us, a perpetual struggle, that contemplation may not sink into torpor, nor evil passions take possession of the soul whence secular occupations have been banished. How this struggle is to be carried on, another Saint will tell us: What means, *I sleep, but my heart waketh*, save that I so rest that I may hear? My repose is not devoted to encouraging sloth, but to acquiring wisdom. I sleep and my heart waketh, I have time for thought, and I see that Thou art the LORD, for "the wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise." I sleep, and my heart waketh; I rest from the cares of business, and my mind is busy with divine affection, but while the Church is peacefully delighting in them who thus sweetly and humbly rest, behold One knocketh Who saith, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."
- And in this sense of peaceful contemplation of the pure and untrammelled soul, they delight to recall her who "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." Desire for sleep came not on her, says a great Saint, before its need, and yet when her body was at rest, her mind was waking, busy even in dreams in recalling what she had read, continuing in sleep what had been interrupted, or carrying out plans, or else declaring what should be carried out. And in imitation of her the ancient English Church prays in one of her Compline hymns and antiphons:
- Gillebert. Tres Patr. Theodoret.
- S. Greg. Nyss.
- S. Ambros. Exhort. ad Virg.
- S. Greg. M. Moral. v. 22.
- S. August. Tract. 57 in Johann.
- Ecclus. xxxviii. 24.
- S. Mat. x. 27.
- S. Luke ii. 19.
- S. Ambros. de Virg. lib. ii.
- Brev. Sarisb.

O let our eyes due slumber take,
Our hearts to Thee for ever wake!

The Hymn,
CHRISTE,
*Qui lux es et
dies.*

And again; "Save us watching, O LORD, and guard us sleeping, that we may watch with CHRIST, and sleep in peace." This we may do, observes S. Cyprian, by being earnest in prayer, for he who recites prayer carelessly, wakes with his body, but sleeps with his heart. Cassiodorus tells us that the words are those of the Church, saying that she sleeps, because she is enjoying comparative peace, and not suffering the persecutions endured by the primitive Church, and therefore her heart waketh because she is able to devote herself to the love of her Bridegroom in greater security than before. But as she errs in supposing this time to be one of peace, rather than of toil and strife, she is quickly roused by His voice, calling her to labour and striving to spread His kingdom. Again; the words have been taken to denote the condition of the faithful departed, sleeping indeed bodily in the grave, but with the affections alive and active in worship of GOD and intercession for the loved on earth. And in this sense they form the noble motto over the tombs of the kings of Spain in the Escorial.

S. Cypr. de
Orat. Dom.

Cassiod.

There is a further interpretation of the words, ascribing them to the Bridegroom. And first; they take it of His sleep in the grave, where His Body rested, but His Godhead was ever wakeful, and, as another adds, His soul was even then engaged in harrowing hell, and spoiling it of its prey. Again; He sleeps in the sense of His perfect rest in the bosom of His FATHER, and yet labours there that all who love Him may come to Him. And thus He, as it were, sleeps in bodily absence, while He watches over us in ever-present and loving Godhead. Once more, He sleeps, so far as all outward sign of life is concerned, in the great Sacrament of His love, where He is hidden under the forms of Bread and Wine, but His heart waketh there in the love wherewith He gives Himself to be our Food.

Hugo Vict.
Pselius.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

Luc. Abb.

Vieyra.

I rise from dreams of time,
And an Angel guides my feet,
To the sacred Altar-throne,
Where JESUS' heart doth beat.

The lone lamp softly burns,
And a wondrous silence reigns,

Only, with a low still voice,
The Holy One complains :

“ Long, long I’ve waited here,
And though thou heed’st not Me,
The Heart of God’s own SON
Beats ever on for thee.”

In the womb of Mary meek,
In the cradle, on the Tree ;
Heart of pure, undying love,
It lived, loved, bled for me.

Ever pleading, day and night,
Thou canst not from us part,
O veiled and wondrous SON,
O love of the Sacred Heart !

S. August.
Tract. 57 in
S. Joann.

Cassiodor.

Honorius
Augustod.

It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh. And this knocking, as S. Augustine told us but just now, is that the Church may rise to the life of action from that of contemplation, may understand that it is her duty to go forth and compel the multitude of the Gentiles to come in. The words, observes a Western divine of a later age, denote CHRIST’S anxiety for the neglectful and erring, that they may be corrected by spiritual persons, and imply at the same time the eagerness of the Church in contemplation, and the irksomeness to her of external activity. The Voice of CHRIST knocking at the door of the faithful is this : O Church, *My sister*, because through Me co-heir of My kingdom, *My friend* (Vulg.) because through Me versed in heavenly mysteries ; *My dove*, filled by Me with the HOLY GHOST ; *My undefiled*, because cleansed by Me from sin ; *Open to Me* by exhortation the door of their hearts, who have fastened it with the bar of wicked works, and who have become like the *drops of the night*, that is, members of the evil spirits, and thou shalt be My sister, if thou make those now disinherited through sin, My fellow-heirs through grace ; thou shalt be My friend, if thou make them, now Mine enemies through unbelief, My friends in steadfastness of faith ; thou shalt be My dove, if thou make the double-hearted simple ; and thou shalt be My undefiled, if thou make those stained with guilt undefiled through virtues. For how, (as S. Augustine puts it,) shall I enter into them who have shut the door against Me, unless there be some one to open ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ? He knows full well that He is setting

S. August.
loc. cit.

her a task which seems hard to her; that He is, for once, telling Mary to leave His feet and her own better part, and go forth to help Martha in her service, and therefore He heaps up all loving epithets, that she may be well assured that it is from no slackening of His affection that she is summoned from her secret converse to the troubles of the world. She would fain say with Peter on Mount Tabor, "LORD, it is good to be here," but she must go down to the plain, from the glory of the Transfiguration to the group around the struggling demoniac, from the vision of GOD to the strife with Satan. And she, who had barred herself in lest the prowling wolf should enter the fold, hearing the words of love, each title of affection being a fresh knock at the door of her heart, knows the Voice of the Good Shepherd, and exclaims, even before she sees Him, "My LORD and my GOD," for she is aware that He only can call her *sister*, who is her Brother by His Incarnation, His *love*, Who gave Himself for her; His *dove*, to whom He gave the seven-fold gifts of the SPIRIT; His *undefiled*, whom He washed in the waters of Baptism. One writer suggests that the unsheltered condition of the Bridegroom tells us of His rejection by the Jews, and that this is an appeal to the Gentile Church to receive and house Him.

Philo Carp.
Corn. à Lap.

S. Just. Org.

And as He is still in truth despised and rejected of men, as too often He wanders in this world not finding where to lay His head, so in the chill night of spiritual coldness and darkness, He knocks at the door of the faithful soul, asking that there at least He may be sheltered. Open, He says, My sister, thy heart to Me, Who have opened My side for thee by My Passion, and heaven by My Ascension. And on this S. Gregory Nyssen comments at much length, bidding us notice four points in particular. First: God presents Himself to him who sleeps to the world and watches to God, heeding that saying of the Gospel, "Be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their LORD, when He returns from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately." Next; although GOD has often opened to the Bride, yet as she never can arrive at full knowledge of Him, she delights in every fresh opportunity of gaining some fresh knowledge, of beholding some new manifestation, and therefore she exults in hearing His voice asking for admittance. Thirdly; that this longing of hers makes

Gillebert.

Henr.
Harphius.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Hom. 11.

S. Luke xii.
36.

her advance both in knowledge and love of God, for she first hears merely the knock, but does not recognize it, till she is informed by the tones of His voice. Fourthly; that the door which He calls her to open is that of inquiring search after divine mysteries, and contemplation of them; and as she has no power to open this of herself, He gives her four keys, signified by the four titles He bestows on her, as though saying, If thou desire that thy door should be opened and thy gates lifted up, that the King of Glory may come in, thou must first become My *sister*, by doing the will of My FATHER Which is in heaven; thou must draw near the truth, and thus be so exactly My *nearest* (LXX.) that there may be no interval or barrier between us; thou must have in thy nature the perfectness of a *dove*, and be full of all innocence and purity. Again; you may take the door to be devotion, as S. Ambrose teaches: "Even though thou be sleeping, yet if CHRIST do but know the devotion of thy soul, He comes and knocks at its door, and saith: Open to Me, My Sister, for the spiritual bridal of the WORD and the Soul is come. Open to Me, but shut the door to strangers, shut it to the world; nor yet come forth thyself to those earthly concerns, nor quit thine own light to seek another's. Open thyself to Me, be not straitened, but expanded, and I will fill thee." And the same Saint tells us elsewhere that the soul has other doors too, at any of which her LORD may knock. He may choose the door of prayer, and desire to have it opened that He may hear her voice uttering His praise in a psalm, or confessing His grace and Passion in the Creed. Or He comes in by the door of faith, or by that of righteousness. A Greek Father tells us, truly enough, that our bodily senses are doors of the soul, and by these we may admit CHRIST, just as we may also admit His foe, if we keep them not barred with due custody. However it be taken, at any rate, we can be sure of this, that the knock, whenever and wherever given, is a call to greater exertion, contemplative or active. Whoso obeys God and zealously keeps His commandments, feels himself daily summoned to the door of his heart, and ever urged to accomplish better and loftier works of charity, which the very knocks denote. And He knocks in another fashion, at the hour of death, when He calls on the faithful soul to arise and follow Him. Then we open

S. Ambros.
de Isaac. 6.

Exhort. ad
Virgines.
Serm. 12, in
Ps. cxix.

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.

Cassiodor.

Beda.

at once to Him, if we accept death gladly, and fear not to be led before His judgment-seat, because we remember that we have striven to please Him, and have ever had Him in honour. And, as S. Gregory aptly tells us, every sickness which tells us that the hour of death is drawing near, is one of these knocks of the Bridegroom at the door.

S. Greg. M.
Hom. 13, in
Evang.

S. Bernard, preaching on the Incarnation, tells us that the words may well denote the call made to the Blessed Virgin to signify her assent to that mystery when revealed to her by the Archangel, whom the Saint represents as saying in effect: "Open, O Blessed Virgin, thy heart to faith, thy lips to confession, thy womb to the Creator. Behold, the Desire of all nations knocks without at thy door. O, if He should pass by through thy delay, and thou shouldest again begin with sorrow to seek for Him whom thy soul loveth! Arise, haste, open. Arise by faith, haste by devotion, open by confession." Another writer, keeping more closely to the first explanation given, takes this as an appeal to the Mother of God after her Son's Resurrection not to withdraw, as her own desires would prompt her, into secret retirement and contemplation, where only the Angels would be her companions, but to remember that He was still shelterless, rejected by the Synagogue, and not yet accepted by the Gentiles, and that she therefore should open her mouth to confirm the teaching of the Gospel, and thus help to find Him a home in the hearts of men. But it is not to His Church alone, nor to His Saints, nor yet to His Mother only that He thus speaks. To all, even to sinners, He addresses these words: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." When CHRIST, the Lover of all souls, sees any soul at ease, busied with carnal pleasures, allowing entrance for the devil at the heart, and being fenced round with the snares of the enemy; then He comes back in the dead of the night, that is, by hidden compunction, and knocks at the door of her understanding, that, roused from her fatal sleep, she may see that she is beset with perils, and implore His aid. And the doors by which He then seeks entrance are repentance and faith, as He came into the heart of S. Thomas, when he doubted concerning the Resurrection. So He calls to us in the night, that we may

S. Bernard.
Serm. 4,
sup. *Misus.*

Rupert.

Rev. iii. 20.

Luc. Abb.

Cassiodor.

Philo Carp.

open and take Him in ere the dawning of the Great Day.

Kynaston.

● The night is far spent, and the day is at hand,
There are signs in the heaven, and signs on the land,
In the wavering earth, and the drouth of the sea—
But He stands and He knocks, sinner, nearer to thee.

His night-winds but whisper until the day break
To the Bride, for in slumber her heart is awake :
He must knock at the sleep where the revellers toss,
With the dint of the nails and the shock of the Cross.

Look out at the casement ; see how He appears,
Still weeping for thee all Gethsemane's tears,
Ere they plait Him earth's thorns, in its solitude crowned,
With the drops of the night and the dews of the ground.

Will you wait? Will you slumber until He is gone,
Till the beam of the timber cry out to the stone,
Till He shout at thy sepulchre, tear it apart,
And knock at thy dust, Who would speak to thy heart?

For My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night. This is the reason which the Bridegroom gives why the door should be quickly opened to Him; and it may therefore be taken diversely, according as it is understood to be an appeal to the Bride's compassion for His forlorn state, or a promise of the reward which her compliance will bring to her. There is no reason why both interpretations may not hold, for the LORD JESUS blessed those who wrought a good work on Him during His earthly life in ministering to His bodily needs. The woman of Samaria who gave Him drink, the sinful woman who anointed Him, the publican who made Him a feast, all obtained from Him rich payment for their care. Let us then take first the Man of sorrows, before we kneel to the rewarding King. He saith then: Open to Me, My sister, My spouse, My dove, My undefiled, for My head is full of dew, and My locks with the drops of the night, as though He implied, Thou art at ease, and the door is shut against Me, thou art careful for the repose of a few, and because iniquity prevails, the love of many waxes cold. For *night* denotes iniquity, and its *dew* and *drops* are they who grow cold and fall, and chill the Head of CHRIST, that is, cause that God, Who is CHRIST's head, should not be loved. And these are carried in the *locks*, that is, they are admitted to outer Sacraments, but they do not reach the inward meaning. He knocks, therefore, that He

S. August.
Tract. 57 in
S. Joan.

may rouse the restful Saints from their repose, and cries, Open to Me, preach Me. Cassiodorus, agreeing with nearly all this exposition, differs on one point. He takes the *locks* adorning CHRIST the Head to be His Saints, filled with the drops of the night when persecuted by cold and unloving and unbelieving souls. Or again; the locks adhering to the head, yet full of dew, may well denote those who yield a partial obedience to CHRIST, who believe in His Godhead, and have faith so far, but not love, in that they are full of darkness and iniquity. And in this sense other writers have limited the phrase more particularly to careless and ignorant bishops and clergy, who do not preach CHRIST of sincerity. On this there is a legend recorded by S. Thomas of Cantipré, that a Cistercian monk in Brabant once saw the LORD JESUS in the form of a little child shivering in the snow, and crying with cold and pain. When asked the cause, He replied, trembling all over, "Alas, alas, why should I not weep? why should I not wail? Lo, thou seest that I sit needy, alone, and in the cold, and there is no one to take Me in, and give Me shelter." Hereupon the monk took Him up, and set Him on his horse, but the Child, leaping from his arms, suddenly disappeared, darting a great pang of suffering and love into his heart. This quaint legend (and indeed the whole verse) receives a curious illustration from a poem of a heathen bard :

Once at the midnight tide,
 While swept along the Bear
 Boötes' hand beside,
 And when, worn out with care,
 Lay all the tribes of men :
 Love reached my door, and there
 He plied the knocker then.

Who knocks so loud, I said,
 And drives my dreams away ?
 "A child, be not afraid,
 But ope the door, I pray,
 For I am wet in plight,
 And I have lost my way
 In this dark moonless night."

With pity at his cry,
 I light my lamp, and so
 I open, and descry
 A winged child with a bow
 And quiver, near me stands :
 Close by my fire's glow,
 I seat him, chafe his hands,

Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M.

S. Just. Org.
S. Ans. Laud.S. Thomas
Cantip.
Apum ii.
1, 13.Pseudo-
Anacreon.
Μεσομακρίοις
πρόβ ἄραις.

And from his hair the rain
 In dewy drops I wring,
 But he, when warm again,
 Cries, "Let us try the string,
 Lest wet have hurt my bow."
 He drew it, and the sting
 Sent through my heart its blow.

He laughed with merry voice,
 And, leaping with a bound,
 Cried, "Host, with me rejoice,
 My bow is safe and sound,
 No harm its horn hath ta'en,
 But, as for thee, thy wound
 Will give thy heartstrings pain."

S. Ambros.
 de Isaac. 6.

Id. Serm. 12,
 in Ps. cxix.

Again, the dew and drops of the night typify sorrow and trouble, which the LORD endures even still throughout the world, finding no place of rest. But it is just then, when His Body is suffering in this wise, and when He, as the Head, shares its affliction, that He knocks at the door to visit those who are in distress, lest they should faint and yield, if not sustained by His Presence.

S. Greg.
 Nyssen.
 Luc. Abb.
 Tres Patr.

But it is now time to turn to the other school of interpreters, who see here the blessings which the Bridegroom brings with Him as He enters. First, taking the locks of His head to denote His chief Saints, whether Angels, Apostles, or Prophets, they explain the drops of dew to be the holy doctrines which they possess and impart to men, lofty and glorious indeed, as being on the head, and seeming to us very rivers and seas of knowledge, yet only drops when compared with the abysmal ocean of Divine wisdom. Then, the dew may be explained of heavenly grace, moistening the dry heart during the darkness of the world, to make it glad and fertile.

S. Ambros.
 de Virgii. 3.

Ric. Vict.
 Targum.

S. Paulinus,
 Ep. 4, ad
 Severum.

Or, again, it is mercy falling on the darkness of human sin and blindness. And this may be coupled with the view of the Targum, that the drops in the locks of the LORD are the tears of repentant sinners. And another, reminding us how the dew-drops glitter in a clear night, says that these shining drops amidst the locks of the Bridegroom denote the starry virtues with which His Saints were decked, when the full moon of the Church shone down on the conversion of the Gentiles. Finally, the Bridegroom's Head filled with dew, typifies His Resurrection very early in the morning, while those locks of His, wet with the drops of night, signify the souls of His redeemed and the nations won over to the

Faith, but still in the cold of their sins and the darkness of imperfect knowledge, soon to be lightened and warmed by the life and teaching of their pastors, through the grace of the HOLY GHOST. Philo Carp.

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

On this verse also there is a great discrepancy of exposition. That which is the most obvious meaning also has on its side the names of highest authority, to wit, that the Bride, lately so eager for her Bridegroom's presence, has now relaxed in her zeal, is resting in ease and comfort, and is reluctant to put herself to the inconvenience of rising, dressing, and opening the door. In the spirit of the man asked at midnight for the loan of three loaves, she answers her LORD, "Trouble me not; the door is now shut: I cannot rise and give Thee." She has, of course, some excuse to put forward as a cloak for her ingratitude and sloth, and she pleads the difficulty and unpleasantness of compliance. She says, "I have washed my feet," not knowing that her LORD saith, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me," much less asking Him, as S. Peter did, to wash her hands and her head also. The *coat* she had put off, is, as some will have it, the very bridal robe given her but now as a marriage present, whose smell was like Lebanon, denoting the love of God, which, as involving self-denial, she now postpones to love of self. And then we know what must follow,—that terrible warning to a once faithful and toiling Church, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." S. Augustine, taking the words to denote the lull in the missionary zeal and vigilance of discipline which overtook the Church after its establishment under Constantine, represents her excusing herself in this fashion: "O CHRIST, Thou biddest me, Thy Church, to soften and open for Thee the hearts of men, harder than rock, and I would gladly do it, but I have no fit workmen; at any rate, I do not yet clearly know what they can endure, and what they will refuse. The former ones, whom I knew S. Luke xi. 7.
Sanchez.
Luc. Abb.
S. Greg. M.
Hom. 38 in
Evang.
Rev. ii. 4.
S. August.
Tract. 57 in
S. Joan.

to be competent, whom I sent boldly into the fight, the late storm of hostile wrath, the past violence of Maximian, Maxentius, Diocletian, and the almost ceaseless cruel persecution by Licinius, have swept away. These my warriors, closely united to me, hemmed me in, sheltered me, and veiled me like an inner robe; and, whilst obeying Thee, and sparing not my champions, I have been, and remain, all but stripped and naked. Of those who remain, some are broken down by age and toil, others by wounds and tortures, and the youthful residue, by whose zeal Thou willest that I should speed, as on feet, through the world, being but lately washed [in baptism,] are yet but tender, and I therefore fear lest they faint under the burden, or lest they should again be soiled, and I be thus once more defiled in my feet." Or it may, as several others represent, denote an undue exaltation of the contemplative life over the active, when the Church, or any individual soul, pleads its own spiritual advantage as a reason for refraining from the task of converting others. Thus Cassiodorus says: "I have stripped myself of the cares and occupations of this world, without which the task of preaching can scarcely or not at all be carried on, and how can it be that I should return again to what I have abandoned? For he who sets himself to undertake the office of preaching, must also see to the temporal needs of those placed under him, which cannot be done without much anxiety. And that the *coat* does signify the anxiety and cares of the world, the LORD shows in the Gospel, saying, 'Neither let him that is in the field return back to take his clothes,' which means, that he is not again to be entangled in the things of the world. Therefore the Church or any faithful soul, which has stripped off this coat, fears, when resting in contemplation of its Creator, lest it should be clad in it again, and busied in secular concerns." But GOD is not willing that souls should perish for any such cause as this, and therefore He compels His Bride to bestir herself, and to act on that saying of a Saint, "It is needful that even religious hearts should be defiled with earthly dust." And therefore, though she has washed her feet, those affections of her heart which guide its path, with penitential tears, and dreads to soil them again, she must needs leave her bed, and tread the floor a second time. There is, however, a good sense in which the Bride may utter

Cassiodor.

S. Mat.
xxiv. 18.

Ric. Vict.

S. Leo.

Hon. Aug.

these words, and that sense is pressed by many of the Fathers. They take it to be a resolution against any relapse into sin, that having put off the old man and his deeds, and washed herself in the Blood of the Lamb, she determines that nothing shall draw her back to her former conversation. She casts off that coat of skins, type of dead works, which clothed Adam after his fall, and she puts on CHRIST Himself for her raiment. She will not keep both together, for she remembers the precept given to the Apostles, "Neither two coats;" nor will she endeavour to blend them into one, for the LORD hath also said, "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment." And she has washed her feet, too, in the laver of Baptism and the grace of the HOLY GHOST, from the defilement of earth, loosing from them those shoes of dead hides that she may do so. So Moses put off his shoes at the burning bush, and Holy Scripture nowhere tells that he resumed them; so, in all the elaborate vesture of the High Priest, there is no mention of shoes; so too, the Apostles were directed to provide no shoes for their journey. And that because there is neither dust nor mire on the Way to our Country, paved as it is with portions of the Rock, according to that saying, "He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet upon the Rock, and ordered my goings." And again, the words are taken of that voluntary poverty in spirit and body, when the Bride is eager to strip herself of everything which may entangle her in her race and delay her approach to the goal where the Bridegroom awaits her with the first of His beatitudes. For they who imitate by voluntary poverty His suffering life are intrusted with the special privilege of judicial power, as saith the LORD to them who had forsaken all, "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And that because in being conformed and united to Him Who is Truth and Righteousness, there is nothing left in their judgment to swerve from justice, and thus they are fitted for the office. The Targum, taking the words *I have put off my coat* as spoken by the congregation of Israel, doubtful how to repent and clothe itself again with the garment of obedience to God's Law, ascribes the second clause to GOD Himself,

Col. iii. 9.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Gen. iii. 21.

S. Mat. x.
10.S. Mark ii.
21.

Tres Patr.

Ps. xl. 2.

Hen. Harph.

S. Mat. xix.
28.

Targum.

- Hon. Aug. there is much force in that suggestion of Honorius, that He gives this grace by showing His hand, that is, the finished work of His own obedience,—how finished, the scar in its wounded palm may tell—that she may be roused to like zeal for accomplishing the work assigned her. He stretches His hand through the hole in yet another way when He makes His Bride pass through trouble and persecution. If she will not open to Him when He knocks, He will punish her by means of suffering, calling her back to Himself by famine, and pestilence, and war, letting her feel, but not see, His corrective hand. Philo would have us remember how He drew the doubting and incredulous to Himself through the hole, when He spoke to Thomas, “Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing.”

And my bowels were moved for Him. Here they all substantially agree that the mingled awe and delight of the Bride’s heart are described; awe at His presence, because of her own unworthiness and sense of recent failure, and delight, because where His right hand is, there pleasures must be. And accordingly the holy Abbat of Deutz recounts a vision granted to a nameless person, supposed to have been himself, telling us: “The Beloved appeared plainly in a vision of the night, and wondrously put His hand, as through a hole, into the man’s breast, and laid hold of his heart within, and held it for some time, pressing it gently, and that heart rejoiced with gladness unspeakable, leaping and bounding within the clasp of that Hand.” Lastly, the passage is explained of the rejoicing of the hallowed womb of the Virgin Mother when He, the Right Hand of God, came to her at the Annunciation in secret and mysterious wise, finding her all pure, free from every garment of sin, resolute in her spotless maidenhood, with no speck of the earth on which she dwelt defiling her feet.

Rupert.

Cantacuzene.
Dion. Carth.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

We open to the Beloved not merely when we receive Him coming, but when we preach Him to others, and

cause them, who had formerly barred their breast with sin, now converted by our preaching, to open the door of their heart to CHRIST. And it is well said in the first place *I rose up*, and afterwards *to open to my Beloved*. For he who wishes to open the hearts of others to CHRIST by preaching, must first rise up, that is, be alert in zeal for good works, and fulfil in deed what he preaches, lest perchance when he has preached to others, he himself should "be a castaway." Wherefore also Luke saith of the LORD, "All that JESUS began both to do and to teach." He mentions *do* first, and then *teach*. And *I rose up* to a more toilsome and holy task, that by many a labour, and by mortification of the flesh, I might *open* a wider door of meditation, and so take in the Bridegroom Whom I could not receive before. *I rose up* to strive after Divine contemplation, roused by the touch of His hand, that I might be ready for the full bestowal of celestial grace. For if His touch moved me, what will His embrace be? if a drop from His hand had such effect, what will be the overflowing of His bounty? if His whisper was sweet, what will be His open speech? So then, the Bride rises up to open to her Beloved when, having obtained some grace, she is the more fired to win it again, to love more fervently, and to devote herself more earnestly to the care and the salvation of her neighbours. For even ere she had opened to her Beloved, she is more eager for Him, and for toiling in works of charity. She trains herself then in the love of God, or in contemplation; she labours in works of mercy for the profit of her neighbours according as their need requires and the occasion demands. She prays for some, she comforts others, she gives wholesome counsel to some more, and she prepares herself to undertake the task of ruling or of preaching, if the occasion demand it, when she is thus visited with grace, and endeavours to answer the call of that grace, and to conform herself to it. It is no labour to open the door for CHRIST, when once the Bride is erect and ready, but it may be toilsome enough to rise and make the needful preparation, shaking off slumber, and removing any obstacles that lie between her and the door.

Cassiodor.

1 Cor. ix. 27.

Acts i. 1.

Tres Patr.

Thom. Verc.

Ric. Vict.

Cocceius.

And my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. This is the order of the sentence, according to

the Masoretic pointing, the Syriac, Arabic, and LXX. The Vulgate, on the other hand, stops at the second *myrrh*, and begins a new sentence, *I opened the bolt of the door for my Beloved*. The first question they ask is, Whence came this myrrh? And various answers are suggested. Some urge that the Bride had anointed herself for the reception of her Bridegroom, to which it is very reasonably objected that she makes no mention of this herself, and that it is inconsistent to suppose her to have so prepared, and then refuse to open the door. Others suppose that she may have carried with her to the door a box of unguent ready to anoint the dank tresses of the Bridegroom, and broken it in her haste, so as to spill the contents. Thirdly, and best, the myrrh comes from the Bridegroom, and is the trace of His recent presence and of His touch when He put in His hand through the hole, and tried the lock. And so Lucretius may tell us :

Guider-
racius.
Nannius.
Corn. à Lap.

Delrio.
Lud. Legion.

Lucret. iv.
1173.

At lacrymans exclusus amator limina sæpe
Floribus et sertis operit, postesque superbos
Unguit amaracino.

The tearful lover, shut without, oft clothes
With blooms and wreaths the threshold, and anoints
The stately jambs with marjoram.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Ambros.
Luc. Abb.

They agree in taking myrrh to be, as usual in Scripture, the type of repentance and voluntary mortification, though supposing it to flow spontaneously from the Bride herself, as a result of that sudden yearning produced in her by the apparition of the Bridegroom's hand. But it is better, on all accounts, to take this motion of grace as proximately derived from Himself, and that, by recalling His Passion. Moreover, it accords exactly with His own words a little before, "I have gathered My myrrh," and He now gives her of that which He has so collected. Observe next that not only the *hands* of the Bride, but her separate *fingers* are said to drop with myrrh. That is, the effect produced upon her was not merely general, but particular. Each virtue of her soul was separately affected, each detail of her conversation, and not merely the general scope of her life, was influenced. For as several fingers exist separately in one hand, so in one holy life or conversation divers virtues are independently discerned. For liberality is one kind of virtue,

Ricard. Vict.
Theodoret.
S. Greg. M.

frugality another. Humility is one task, frank rebuke another. We practise one when we speak for our neighbour's advantage; another, when we keep silence for our own edification. And the fingers are said to be full of the choicest (Vulg. *probatissima*) myrrh, because it is essential in all our actions that mortification of fleshliness hold a place. The myrrh is rightly called choicest, when in the case of every prompting of the Enemy, carnal pleasure is kept from admission. When this is so, all the hardness of the soul is melted, and an ingress is provided that the Bridegroom may enter the heart. The myrrh is twofold, an ordinary kind, and *sweet-smelling*, or rather, with the margin of A. V. *passing*, that is *fluid* myrrh (LXX. *πληρη*) dropping naturally from the tree, and not forced out by incision or other artificial means. And this denotes the progress of the soul in grace. The first and inferior myrrh, is that penitence which comes from fear of punishment, or after actual chastisement at God's hand. The second, and more acceptable, is the overflowing of a softened heart, melted by the love of God, and streaming forth its tears naturally and easily under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. And observe too that it is the hands and fingers of the Bride, not her mouth, which is said to drop myrrh, teaching us thereby that an austere and self-denying life, carried out in all details of action, is more important than eloquent preaching on the part of those who are engaged in the conversion of sinners. The myrrh drops upon the handles of the lock. That is, the repentance of the Bride is first directed to the particular act, habit, or temper of mind which is the barrier, the besetting sin which keeps the Bridegroom out. And the myrrh, falling on the stiff or rusted bolt, makes it easy to draw it back, showing that amendment of life and the reception of divine grace must be preceded by contrition. A further sense is well put by Cocceius: "The lock, whereby our heart is opened to CHRIST, or by which CHRIST is shut up within the heart, is faith. Its bolt is withdrawn when our heart is expanded, so that CHRIST can always come to us, with all His retinue, and in every array. The bolt of this lock is shot by fulness and pleasure. And it is very properly shot against other desires, but not against the kingdom of CHRIST, to prevent it from flowing into us wholly. The fulness which shuts out everything save CHRIST,

Guilielmus.

Tres Patr.

Cocceius.

is from the HOLY GHOST, but that which checks any desire for Him is of the flesh. Besides, the Bride hints that she found the myrrh on the lock, that is, the effectual working of the HOLY GHOST when she desired to open her heart. And if we desire to press the parable further, she finds this fragrant ointment on her hands and fingers, that is in her toil and action, which she has begun in the fear of God."

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

- Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.
- S. Ans. Laud.
- Ric. Vict.
- Parez.
- Gillebert.
Serm. 44.
- 1 Kings vi.
31.
- The Latin Fathers, reading in the first clause of this verse (as noted above) *I opened the bolt of the door for my Beloved*, discuss here the nature of this bar or bolt. And first, they take it to denote worldly pleasure, which shuts GOD out of the heart. S. Anselm of Laon, looking at the verse as descriptive of the Church's missionary work, takes it to be ignorance and blindness, which preachers remove when they proclaim the Gospel to their hearers. And Richard of S. Victor aptly points out that a lock is but small, though it keep a great door fast, and its bolt is but a small part even of it, whence he draws the conclusion that in the spiritual life it is small negligences and defects which are the surest barriers between the soul and grace, so that it is needful to amend and withdraw them before the Beloved can enter in to the soul. And Parez, according to his wont, treating the Canticles as the history of the Church under both the Old and New Covenants, remarks that after the Bridegroom's Incarnation, the Bride withdrew the bolt of ceremonial usages, and threw open those doors of the Law which hid the sanctuary of CHRIST from sight, and barred the access of the Gentiles. *I opened.* Fitly do anointed hands open the door for CHRIST, Who takes His title from anointing. It may be that He cannot enter save through an anointed door. Wherefore in the Temple there were little doors (Vulg. *ostiola*) made of olive-tree, through which was the entrance into the Holy of holies. For this is the kind of tree which yields the anointing fluid. They are called little doors, and

the olive-wood entrance is narrow, but thou canst glide in easily in the fatness of grace, where the understanding is subtilized, and the mystery secret. Ingress will not be toilsome, if thou wilt but use the oil of devotion and charity as a door. And it seems to me that a suitable testimony is produced as to the temple. 'For the Temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' ^{1 Cor. iii. 17.} Have therefore in thy temple doors through which the High Priest alone may enter the inmost chamber of thine heart. Shut the door, draw the bolt, save when thy Beloved knocks, desiring to enter. If there be no door, there will be free entrance for every passer-by. If the door be shut, but not secured with a bolt, it will readily yield, and give way to pressure, having no surer fastening. Have both, the door of watchfulness, and the bar of firmness. Keep a watchful lookout, resist firmly. Let not forgetfulness and ignorance creep in, let not wickedness break in. And if thou wantest a more precise definition, let anxious forethought be the door, and prayer its bolt. Fastened with such a bar, thy door will yield to no hostile push. 'He hath made fast,' saith the Psalmist, 'the bars of thy gates.' ^{Ps. cxlvii. 13.} In the bars and gates dost not thou think that thou hearest of the *door* and *bolt*? Both are needful, but only against the enemy. When thou hearest the voice and knock of the Beloved, when thou feelest the light touch of His hand through the hole, draw back the bolt, open the door, let every barrier give way; if it may be, pull down the whole mid-wall, that thy Beloved may pour Himself freely upon thee. Let thy carefulness against the snares of evil spirits be turned into security, and at the presence of the Bridegroom change caution in keeping off the foe into plenteousness of enjoying the Beloved. He knew that he had opened the door, who said, 'O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready.' ^{Ps. cviii. 1.} But how is it that JESUS needs a door, Who saith in the Gospel, 'I am the door?' ^{S. John x. 9.} It is a strange thing. He is the Door, and yet He knocks at the door. He, by Whom 'if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture,' Himself desires to enter. There is a great diversity of doors. There is the door of natural religion, the door of Church Sacraments, the door of experimental grace. In that first door of natural religion, wisdom becomes known to us by reasoning on it as it operates in the works of creation,

and we gain access to a certain measure of truth, we gather some knowledge of the Deity, but not of the personal character of GOD. At this door there is no distinction of persons, no bestowal of grace. And therefore no one ought to be a very frequent or eager knocker at this door. By the second, through which we are initiated into the Sacraments of salvation, we enter into the unity of the Church, the Communion of Saints. At the second door, men are in such wise within as to be in fact without, until they come to the third; which we explain to be familiar access, by the emotions of love, to a certain abundant fruition and contemplation of the Beloved. This secret and innermost door is not open to all, but yields entrance to the Bride alone. It makes but little difference whether thou enter in to Him, or He to thee, save that thou seemest as the entering one when thou art as it were the first to come, and to petition Him; and He comes first to thee when He anticipates thee, knocks at thine affections, glides in unexpectedly, and raises thee looking for no such thing, with His touch of undefiled sweetness."

But my Beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone. And very often, when we are anxious to handle spiritual things, the more acutely we essay them, the more the heart's edge is beaten back and blunted, whence Solomon observes: "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me." For the more one lifts up his heart by purification of the flesh to divine contemplation, the more unattainable does he find that which he seeks to be. The Bridegroom withdraws and goes away from His Spouse, not removing to a distance, but merely turning aside. For He is at her right hand, that she may not be removed from her good beginning, but He does not show her His face. "He is nigh unto all them that call upon Him faithfully." She desires to look on Him, and to talk with Him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend. But He hides His face, while abiding with her, and in her, though she perceives not His presence. And in this wise, though He hath truly taken up His lodging with her, He withdraws from her, and goes away, lest she become uplifted, and ascribe the fulfilment of her wishes to her own merit. Even when she has shown herself more worthy of receiving Him, He does not give Himself to her as she desires, but withdraws from her, to keep her in humility, to whet her desire more sharply,

Cassiodor.

Eccles. vii.
23.

Ricard. Vict.

Ps. cxlv. 18.

to gratify it more fully. How brief too were the LORD's appearances after His Resurrection, how sudden, how soon cut short! Scarcely was He recognized by a few of His disciples, when He vanished. Some He does not suffer to touch Him. He glides in amongst others through closed doors, needing no opening of the valves. When we think that we hold Him, He robs us, as it were, of His dear presence, coming secretly and going secretly. For the joy of contemplation is but an instant. It swiftly departs, and utterly surpasses all the power of human understanding, and where it goes, we cannot, in this flesh, follow it with equal step. Yes, adds a devout commentator, so that there is silence for but half an hour in the heaven of the pious heart. He withdrew Himself also, when He departed out of the world to His FATHER, though He hath not abandoned His Spouse, nor left her children orphans, but comes again and again in Sacraments and inspiration to visit and console her. And whereas the Vulgate instead of *gone* reads *passed through (transierat)*, they dwell on the special meaning of the Latin word as conveying fresh lessons. "He passed through me, through all my powers, through myself. For the WORD OF GOD is a sword, JESUS is a sword of fire, passing without delay or difficulty, through the soul, which melts at His passage, and cannot bar His way." And so, as another and earlier writer reminds us, He was Himself that sword which pierced the heart of His own dear Mother, that the secrets of many hearts should be revealed. Whence, as they explain her rising up to denote the alacrity of her service, and the droppings of myrrh in her case to be her incorruption, humility and self-denial, so they take the withdrawal of the bolt to be her breaking her wonted silence that she might preach her Son; though Honorius will have it that the bolt denotes sin, and that we are hereby taught that she opposed no obstacle of the kind to the Most Holy when He would enter in.

My soul failed when He spake. The Vulgate reads, *My soul melted*, while the LXX., closer to the original, has, *My soul went forth*. That is, remarks S. Ambrose, it followed the WORD OF GOD, and went forth from the body, lifting itself out of its tabernacle, and makes, as the same Saint observes in another place, a good exit, when, coming to Him, it

Gillebert.

Hugo Card.

Philo Carp.

Gillebert.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.
Id. de Isaac,
cap. 6.Guilielmus.
Rupert.

Honorius.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 6.
Id. de
Virgin. 3.

Cassiod.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Ps. cxxi. 8.

S. Greg. M.
Mor. iv. 30.

Dan. viii. 27.

Philo Carp.

Wisd. ix. 15.

Bern.
Cluniac.
Rhythmus.

passes from sin to holiness, and, despising earthly things, melts with the love of heaven. Whatever is hard and frozen in the heart softens and melts under the fire of GOD'S love, and pours out in a stream of penitence and longing. The Beloved passed by, but He did not therefore abandon the soul, but rather drew her to Himself, and that by His word. O happy going forth! "The LORD preserve thy going out and thy coming in." The going out is from that wherein we are now placed; the coming in is to those good things which are above us. She goes forth to the WORD, because the Bridegroom saith, "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out," so as never to cease going in and out, but ever go in to greater things, and go out from lesser ones. And taking the reading of the A. V., *My soul failed*, let us hear a Western Doctor: "Did she not feel herself exhausted in her strength who said, *My soul melted*, because when the mind, in its strongest condition, is touched with the inspiration of secret speech, it melts with the very desire in which it is swallowed up, whence it finds itself utterly wearied out, because it sees the height to which it would fain ascend beyond its strength. Hence the Prophet, when he tells how he saw the vision of God, adds, 'I fainted, and was sick certain days.'" And Philo, uniting all the ideas together, notes, The Bride declares that she went forth and fainted at the speech of the Bridegroom, because she cannot, while still prisoned in the body, long endure the power of JESUS CHRIST'S love, Who pours Himself into the longing soul by the HOLY GHOST, "For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things," and the soul fired with divine love is often caught up in contemplation to those eternal joys, but cannot abide there long, because laden with the burden of the flesh, but falls back after going forth, drowned in tears, and yet in gladness. And so the Cluniac:

Jerusalem the only,
That look'st from heaven below,
In thee is all my glory,
In me is all my woe.
And though my body may not,
My spirit seeks thee fain,
Till flesh and earth return me
To earth and flesh again.

Wherefore it fitly follows: *I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.* For although the soul have passed out of her own nature, so as not to be hindered by anything in her consciousness, yet she still seeks, still calls, and finds not. How could she find that which nothing that is known can show us? She sought Him by reasonings and meditations, but He is beyond them all, evading the grasp of the mind. She called, that is, she devised countless phrases to denote His goodness unspeakable, it surpassed them all. So David, after he had said, "Thou, O LORD GOD, art full of compassion and mercy, longsuffering, plenteous in goodness and truth, my strength, the horn of my salvation," and so forth, at length confesses that he is at a loss for words, and marvelling cries out, "How excellent is Thy Name!" But why is it that GOD seeks when He is not sought, that He comes when He is not called, and that when He is sought He withdraws, and flees when He is called? If He does not love, why does He come? and if He does love, why does He flee? He does love, and therefore He comes; but He does not love here, and therefore He flees. What do I mean by saying that He does not love here? I mean in this world, in this land, in this country, in this exile. But He calls us to His own Land, for such love as His befits not a land like ours, and the pleasantness of His Country is a bulwark to our love. A happy love seeks a pleasant spot, and therefore He praises His Land to us, saying, "The flowers appear on the earth, the vines with the tender grape give a good smell, the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," that we may desire such a region, long for such a country, and follow Him. There He loves us; there He desires to enjoy our love; there He asks for our embrace; there He no longer flees from them who follow Him, but awaits them as they come.

But the words are also spoken in terrible warning to the Church or soul which neglects to hear and obey the call of the LORD, so that He, the Eternal Wisdom, cries in the streets, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will mock at your calamity. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but

S. Greg.
Nyss.Ps. lxxxvi.
15;
xviii. 1.

Ps. viii. 1.

Hugo Vict.
de Arcâ
Moral, iv. 4.

Cant. ii. 12.

Luc. Abb.

Prov. i. 24,
28.

they shall not find Me." And what He spake thus aforetime in prophecy, He said again to the Jews who rejected Him. "Ye shall seek Me, and not find Me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come." Again and again has it been true in Christian history, in that slackness of zeal which preceded the outbreak of Arianism, which left the East a prey to Mohammed, which caused the great schism of Europe three centuries ago. Again and again is it true of souls which God has invited, and which, turning away to their farm or their merchandise, or their domestic pleasures, are finally excluded from the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And one commentator points his note with the homely old saw :

He who will not when he may,
When he will, he shall have nay.

Luc. Abb. For even that will is imperfect, because the careless soul cannot say with David, even when it does call for the passing Bridegroom, "I call with my whole heart," since if it did, He could not choose but answer.

Ps. cxix. 145.

7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

Theodoret. Whence we may learn to what mischief sloth gives birth, and what toil comes of indolence. For whereas the Bride excuses herself, and is not willing to open at once to the Bridegroom, she is forced a little later not merely to go as far as the door, but even to traverse the city, and to go about the streets, and to fall in with the watchmen, by whom she is wounded, and even so scarcely finds her desired Spouse. But if she had obeyed at once, she would have escaped all this trouble. The meaning of the verse differs according to the interpretation given to the word *city*, whether it be Babylon or Sion, the world or the Church. The Targum, explaining these watchmen to be the Chaldean besiegers of Jerusalem who took it in the reign of Zedekiah, so far blends the two ideas as to take the city in a good, and the watchmen in a bad sense. But the Christian expositors keep the ideas distinct. Thus, Theodoret will have it that the watchmen of the city

Targum.

Theodoret.

are the magistrates, rulers, and tyrants of the Pagan Roman Empire, who persecuted the Church, and stripped the Martyrs of that outer veil of flesh which covered their souls, and that in the streets, because of the bold and public preaching whereby the early missionaries of the Faith exposed themselves to peril. Or, as S. Justus comments, the veil denotes all the external helps of religion, taken away, when the priests were imprisoned, the altars levelled, and the Scriptures burnt. Another, taking the *city* in a yet wider sense, as the whole world, explains the watchmen to be the evil spirits, who prowl about the earth, seeking whom they may devour, wound, and strip of their faith, smiting them with words of false doctrine, and tearing from their souls its baptismal purity. Whence S. Jerome draws the practical lesson that it is wise for Christian virgins to remain sheltered in their home, of domestic or Religious life, and not to go forth even to search for CHRIST. Could he have looked down the ages at the history of that Common Life whose infancy he aided in fostering, he would have seen the world and the cloister engaged in perpetual strife. Again and again would he have observed the spirit of laxity and secularity, fostered by evil rulers within the Church, untrustworthy watchmen of her walls, forcing its way into Houses of the strictest rule, stripping them of the true religious character, and needing the strenuous efforts of reformers such as S. Coletta, S. Teresa, and Angelique Arnauld, to restore it as before. Or he would have seen the civil power in one country after another, laying unhallowed hands on the patrimony of the poor, and driving Religious forth, bare of everything save their faith, from the cloister into the streets and highways. And a yet more literal fulfilment of the type would have presented itself in the many glorious martyrdoms which the convent yielded in its passive resistance to the sword of unbelief, as in those English nuns who disfigured their faces with terrible scars a thousand years ago during the invasion of Inguar and Hubba, that they might not be a prey to the evil passions of the heathen, who then massacred them in rage and disappointment; or in their French sisters nine centuries later, who went to the scaffold singing the *Te Deum*, continuing it with undiminished numbers as each consecrated head fell, until the Abbess died last, with the closing words of the

S. Just. Org.

Luc. Abb.

S. Hieron.
Ep. 22,
ad Eustoch.
Ep. 7, ad
Lactan.

Titelman.

Gloria in excelsis on her lips. In the other interpretation there is a diversity, according as the Angels or the great earthly Saints and teachers are regarded as the watchmen of the city. S. Gregory Nyssen and S. Ambrose are in agreement in taking the verse to denote the share of the Guardian Angels in the conversion and salvation of the soul entrusted to their care. They smite her with the sword of the Word of God, and with tribulations, after she has come out of the dwelling of her old conversation, and wound her with increased love for divine things, and taking from her the veil, (be it a token of widowhood or a type of bodily thoughts and habits obscuring the free vision of the mind, or else an emblem of mere human reason, impeding faith,) that her beauty may be more perfectly discerned, and that she may see more clearly the mysteries they present to her view.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 6,
de Virg. iii.

Tres Patr.

Psellus.

Henry
Vaughan,
*Cock-
crowing.*

Only this veil which Thou hast broke,
And must be broken yet in me,
This veil, I say, is all the cloak
And cloud which shadows me from Thee.
This veil Thy full-eyed love denies,
And only gleams and fractions spies.

O take it off! make no delay;
But brush me with Thy light, that I
May shine unto a perfect day,
And warm me at Thy glorious eye!
O take it off! or till it flee,
Though with no lily, stay with me!

S. Gregory Nyssen draws a further corollary from the verse, that it betokens progress in grace. The Bride had laid aside her tunic or *coat*, she had no thought of removing her veil also, but the Angels take even this from her, because the soul, as it advances, divests itself by degrees of all that checks its speed in the race of salvation. A more widely accepted interpretation, however, is that which sees here the task of the preachers of the Gospel in the conversion of sinners. And first, the Apostles and Evangelists found the Jewish Church seeking vainly for CHRIST, *smote* their hearers with powerful words, and *wounded* them, so that they were "pricked and cut to the heart," and took away from them that veil of the ceremonial law which lay upon their hearts and hid the light of God's countenance from them. Of which veil the Apostle

Acts ii. 37;
vii. 54.

Parez.

writes, saying, "Not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in CHRIST. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the LORD, the veil shall be taken away."¹

2 Cor. iii. 13.

Next, applying the words to the individual soul, they tell us that the Church's watchmen, those watchmen set upon the walls of Jerusalem, be they Apostles, Martyrs, Prelates, or preachers, are said to find her, because they seek her out for instruction, they smite and wound her with the arrows of divine love, with their counsels of mortification, with their injunctions to repentance, with their wholesome discipline, and take from her the veil of ignorance and blindness, by teaching her how she may abandon her evil habits, and serve GOD truly. Their sword, wherewith they inflict the wound, is the Word of GOD, and her veil of earthly thoughts and affections is taken from her for her own good, as Joseph left his mantle behind when he fled away from sin, and Elijah cast his to earth when he ascended in the chariot of fire. It is not singular, therefore, that some should here see an exact type of the Sacrament of Penance. The watchmen of the city, who know that they must needs give account for the souls therein, find one such soul wan-

Philo Carp.

Cassiod.
Beda.

Gillebert.

¹ The force of this argument of the Apostle is somewhat obscured to English readers, by an error of the A. V. in Exodus xxxiv. 33, which reads, "And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face." This, taken in conjunction with verse 35, is commonly understood to mean that the veil was intended to prevent the Israelites from being dazzled with the radiance. The LXX. and Vulgate, more correctly, have "When he had done speaking," &c. That is, the light was gradually fading from his face after he left GOD's presence, and the veil

was merely intended to hide that fact from the people. On returning to GOD's presence, he withdrew the veil, that his face might again be illuminated. Hence S. Paul's reasoning is, that the outer ceremonial Law, as practised by the Jews in his day, only served to conceal from the people the loss of true spiritual enlightenment on the part of the priests, and to prevent the rays of GOD's grace from shining on them; so that the abolition of that Law was now a necessary preliminary to any true knowledge of divine things.

dering in error and darkness. They smite with the warnings and threats of God's Word, they wound, by enjoining sharp, but needful penances, they take away the veil, when they urge the sinner to full confession of hidden guilt; and when, by wise ghostly counsel, they show the true deformity of sin to a conscience which had lost the power of seeing it as it is. Thus Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, the worthy successor of his kinsman, S. Charles, when urging his clergy in Milan to careful discharge of the duties of the Confessional, told them of a noble and wealthy lady, living in sin, who made a merely formal confession, and was met by the priest with a stern injunction to abandon her evil habits, and all occasions which might lead to their repetition, before daring to approach the altar. She, who had been accustomed to a laxer discipline, angrily exclaimed: "Sir, if you had been wise enough to do as I asked you, there is not a stone of yon church I would not have covered with gold and silver." To which he replied, in the words of the Prince of the Apostles, "Miserable sinner, 'thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.'" Happy, exclaims the great Cardinal, happy is the church or convent which has such a faithful pastor as this was, not afraid to strike where a blow was needed. And that too remembering the saying of the Wise Man, "If thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." And we may learn from another place the deadly peril of those priests who, from sloth or unbelief, are slack to use the Power of the Keys for penitents who seek them. "And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him."

Van Neercassel, *Amor Penitentis*, 2, xix., 1.

De Ponte. Prov. xxiii. 13.

1 Kings xx. 35-37.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,

if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.

Here we have set before us the Communion of Saints in the bond of intercessory prayer: Great is the confidence, observes Philo, of the Bride, be she Church or faithful soul, in the purity of her life and works, when she is bold to declare to her Spouse CHRIST JESUS, by the hand of her chaste and holy daughters, as herself their honoured mother, how she glows with love of Him. For she calls upon the Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs (to whom their mother the Church ceases not to commend herself) that as they were, next after CHRIST, the authors of her faith and salvation, she may have them also as her defenders, continual guardians, and perfectors of her hope with the same Heavenly Spouse, beside Whom those happy spirits now stand in bliss as watchmen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and intercede for the Bride militant here, still veiled in mortal flesh, but eagerly longing to reach her divine Bridegroom. And therefore burning with love and devotion, she does not merely ask the Apostles and her other most faithful patrons for their prayers on her behalf with GOD, but binds them, as it were, with an oath. So too an old English poet takes the passage :

Ye holy virgins, that so oft surround

The City's sapphire walls ; whose snowy feet

Measure the pearly paths of sacred ground,

And trace the New Jerusalem's jasper street ;

Ah ! you whose care-forsaken hearts are crowned

With your best wishes ; that enjoy the sweet

Of all your hopes ; if e'er you chance to spy

My absent Love, O tell them that I lie,

Deep wounded with the flames that furnaced from His eye.

I charge you, virgins, as you hope to hear

The heavenly music of your Lover's voice ;

I charge you, by the solemn faith you bear

To plighted vows, and to that loyal choice

Of your affections, or if aught more dear

You hold, by Hymen, by your marriage joys ;

I charge you, tell Him that a flaming dart

Shot from His eye, hath pierced my bleeding heart,

And I am sick of love, and languish in my smart.

Francis
Quarles,
Emblems,
v. 1.

And the Bride is fitly said to be *sick of love*, when smitten and wounded with the sword of the Spirit, she Beda.

- strips off the veil of fleshly desire, because, in proportion as the holy soul grows strong in GOD, so she becomes feeble and weak in worldly affection. Nor is it any marvel if the perfect soul be called sick to worldly things, seeing that the Apostle does not hesitate to call those dead who have fully abandoned the world, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD," and of himself he says, "The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." The *daughters of Jerusalem* are the citizens of the heavenly country, who are partly in their pilgrimage on earth, and partly now reigning in heaven. But here, when saying, *If ye find my Beloved*, she seems rather to address that part which is still on earth, and has not yet attained to the full vision of the LORD, but which nevertheless often finds Him, when receiving Him in the heart by love. And we make this adjuration whenever we reveal our thoughts to GOD'S Saints, either by asking their prayers on our behalf, or by disclosing to them our hidden longings after divine grace. And it is the usual order of devout persons, advancing in holiness, first to seek GOD themselves, and to busy themselves in purging their heart, and then to consult skilful advisers as to their condition and their hidden dangers, to ask the prayers and seek the intimacy of the godly. Note too, the brevity of her message. She does not say, "Tell Him to come to me, to visit me, to heal me." She knows all that may be safely left to Him, to His wisdom and love. She asks only that He may know that she is sick. So too His Mother, when at Cana, said to Him, "They have no wine," but did not say, Work a miracle for them. So Martha and Mary, when weeping for their dead brother, said to their Master, "LORD, come and see;" they did not say, Raise up Lazarus. And yet He answered in each case the unspoken prayer. *Tell Him*, then, *that I am sick of love*. My love is not sick, but I, who love, am sick. Where love is strong, there sickness is strong too, if the loved one be absent. What is this sickness, but a yearning for the absent Beloved, slaying the lover? Tell Him, then, that I am sick with love, through my great longing to see His face, now that He is gone from me, that I am weary of life, and scarcely endure the lingering of my exile here. Some take the words as specially applying to the Blessed Virgin's yearning for the presence of her
- Cassiodor.
- Col. iii. 3.
- Gal. vi. 14.
- S. Greg. M.
- Ric. Vict.
- Hugo Card.
- S. John ii. 3;
xi. 34.
- Gillebert.
Serm. 46.
- Rupert.

Divine Son after His Ascension into Heaven, and that not as implying that He needed to be told of her love, but that she might ease her longing by giving expression to it. In us, alas, there are many other sicknesses,—the sickness of fear, of weariness, of sorrow, because of past sins, possible relapses, and the toil of pilgrimage. Speak the word only, O LORD, and we shall be healed of these disorders. But whereas such ailments as these are told to the physician, that He may heal them, that of love is told to the Beloved, not that He may remove, but that He may renew and increase it, for though it is begotten by His absence, yet it is made far stronger by His presence, which is the one thing for which the fainting Bride yearns and strives, the one thing she cherishes in her bosom, the one thing she fears to lose, saying as she does to Him, “My soul hath longed for Thy salvation.”

Philipp.
Harveng.
Cantacuzene.
Dion. Carth.

Gillebert.

S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.
xi. 1.

9 What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

This question is asked whenever any believer converses with a believing brother, and they mutually suggest words of heavenly desires, to increase their affection for things above. Tell me, who now long and desire to arrive at the vision of my Creator, *what is thy Beloved*, that is, how CHRIST ought to be loved. Long since I have begun to fear Him, but now that love is casting out fear, I wish to hear words whereby I may be kindled to His love. Thou, who art even now seeking Him in love and art sick with that love, tell me, *what is thy Beloved*. They who take the daughters of Jerusalem to be the Saints, glorified or militant, see in this address of theirs to the Bride, only their desire to increase her love for the absent Bridegroom by giving her an opportunity of dwelling on all His graces. But they who, with Theodoret, suppose that the weaker and yet untried believers in the Faith are meant, hold that the question is asked in real desire to be instructed, to be told, when so many false Christs are to be found, what are the marks whereby the true one may be known, lest if they know Him not here, He may refuse to know them in the Day of

Cassiodor.

Beda.

Corn. & Lap.

Ainsworth.
Cocceius.

Philo Carp.

Nic. Argent. Judgment. And if the words be ascribed to the Angels, they ask the Bride to tell them how much she has been able to learn of her Spouse, so as to love Him so tenderly, seeing that even they, who behold Him face to face, cannot fathom the depths of His glory, nor know Him as He is. Further; as they do not know Him at all by sympathy, but only by love and worship, since He is not of their nature, they are eager to learn from her who suffers with and for Him somewhat of that mystery of sorrow which is one of those "things which the Angels desire to look into."

1 S. Pet. i.
12.

The literal Hebrew of the first clause is, *What is thy Beloved before a beloved?* and the LXX. and Vulgate, endeavouring to keep as closely as may be to this, read, *thy Beloved from a beloved.* And the commentators dwell much and variously on this repetition. It denotes, says the Scholastic Doctor, the twofold nature of CHRIST, beloved in His Manhood, and beloved in His Godhead too. It means, remark several others, His eternal generation from His FATHER, in that He is GOD of GOD, Light of Light, Very GOD of Very GOD, and he who loveth the SON loveth the FATHER also, even as he who seeth the SON seeth the FATHER also. They ask her this question because she is the *fairest among women*, and they gather that the chosen Bridegroom of one so lovely must be Himself a marvel to look upon. That is, it is only by superior holiness of life and conversation that the Church, thereby rising above all schools of philosophy and all sects of heresy, can so attract seekers after GOD as to make them inquire from her, rather than from any other, where and how to find Him. And that precisely because she is *fairest* only because of her nearness to Him, whereby His beauty is reflected in her face. They ask her, therefore, By what signs shall we know Him in contemplation, lest, taking falsehood for truth, we should instead of Him, receive that one who pretends to be light, when he is darkness itself? How, too, is He to be known in action, lest we should take evil for good here also, carried away by excitement in well-meant zeal, and deceived by the prospering of our plans? All this we ask of thee, because, having adjoined us, thou hast kindled in us the fire of love towards Him, and forced us to seek until we find Him.

S. Ans. Laud.
Philo Carp.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

Ricard. Vict.

Cocceius.

Tres Patr.

10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

“A strange mingling of colours,”—these are the last words of teaching spoken by Gilbert of Hoyland ere he died—“which are found blended in one by divine operation only in the Person of the LORD JESUS, not so as to be themselves one, but to be together in one. O gracious and lovely Bridegroom, in Whom shines divine, and blushes human generation! For He is the brightness of eternal light, and He, though not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, yet was sprung from His Mother’s blood, and there is in Him nought of that ruddiness whereof Isaiah saith: ‘Though your sins are red like crimson, yet shall they be as wool.’ The whiteness of wool and the redness of crimson agree not together, nor can unite. But there is another redness which is found together with whiteness in the raiment of JESUS. ‘Wherefore,’ asks Isaiah, ‘art Thou red in Thine apparel?’ The apparel of the LORD JESUS, naturally white by reason of His Virgin birth, shining with purity and the innocence of holiness, is yet more beautiful with the ruddy hue of His voluntary Passion, whereby He glows in the affections of His faithful. What is that redness which lacks not the power of whitening? ‘They have washed their robes,’ saith He, ‘and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.’ This ruddiness found the whiteness already in my JESUS; it creates it in us, and does not find it. This ruddiness, laid upon the tint of our blood-stained nativity and personal sin, turns its redness into whiteness, purifying our hearts by faith. For we are justified by faith in the Blood of JESUS. Happy for thee is the ruddy glow of His out-poured Blood, if it kindle in thy mind a longing for a change. Happy is its glory for thee, if the mighty love of GOD shines for thee in the Blood shed for thy sake. For JESUS so loved His Bride as to wash her in His own Blood. Love is like flame, and this makes the LORD JESUS ruddy to me. In Him truth is white to me and love is red. *My Beloved is white and ruddy.* Why should He not be white? For GOD is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Why should He not be ruddy? For GOD is a fire, and He hath come to send fire upon the earth. If He bestow on thee the light of under-

Gillebert.
Serm. 48.

Tres Patr.
Cassiodor.
Beda.

S. John i.
13.

Isa. i. 18.

Isa. lxxiii. 2.

Rev. vii. 14.

standing, He is white to thee, but unless He kindle thy soul with love, thou dost not feel Him to be ruddy. He is both in Himself, but He is not so unto thee, unless thou feelest the working of both within thee. If thou be His Bride, strive after this blending of the twin colours; ask it of thy Bridegroom, that thou too mayest be white and ruddy, that is, sincere and fervent. For as He hath the power of calming, so also hath He that of kindling, and whoso draweth nigh unto Him, draweth nigh to the fire." So too, He gave us a type of this His twofold character, when He suffered Himself to be arrayed by Herod in a white robe, and by Pilate in a purple one. So, in His Passion itself, both blood and water issued together from His side. So, again, He showed Himself to the beloved Disciple, clothed in the sweeping alb of His everlasting Priesthood, and also in the "vesture dipped in blood," which pertains to His victorious royalty. And He was white not only in His Nativity, but also in His Resurrection, when He was indeed *the chiefest among ten thousand*, as the First-born from the dead. And note, further, how our Beloved keeps this twofold nature of His, Godhead and Manhood, Virginity and Passion, purity and love, light and fervour, before our eyes in that most dear pledge wherein He gives Himself to us under the Sacramental veils, white in the form of hallowed Bread, ruddy in the chalice of mystic wine. And so runs an old Eucharistic hymn:

Ave CHRISTI corpus verum,
Ave dulce rubens merum,
Caro cibus, sanguis potus,
Et ubique CHRISTUS totus.

Hic est Sponsus candidatus,
Dilectus et rubricatus,
Custus ortus hunc albavit,
Sanguis fluens rubricavit.

Hail, O Flesh of CHRIST divine,
Hail, O sweet and ruddy wine,
Blood the cup, and Flesh the meat,
And in each is CHRIST complete.

This is He, the Bridegroom, dight
In His vesture red and white:
White, for Him a Virgin bore,
Red, for He His Blood did pour.

Hugo Card.
S. Luke
xxiii. 11.
Psellus.

Rev. i. 13.

Rev. xix. 13.

S. Hieron.
in Esa. lxiii.

S. Hieron.
Epit. Paulæ.

White and ruddy is He too, because He gives the prizes of peace as well as those of war to the con-

querors. White in His love and gentleness to Saints and penitents, ruddy in His terrible anger against the ungodly and reprobate. White and ruddy is He Who is girt round with the roses of Sharon and the lilies of the valleys, the choirs of Virgins and of Martyrs, Himself the Virgin of Virgins and Martyr of Martyrs in their midst.

Dion. Carth.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 28, in
Cant.

O, what are these roses bright,
That in Thy garland blow?
These roses red as blood,
These roses white as snow?

Dora
Greenwell.
*Carmina
Crucis.*

These blood-red roses grew
On a field with battle dyed;
These snow-white roses strew
A path that is not wide;
None seek that path but they who seek
Him Who was crucified!

And note this, further, that He only is perfect and unchangeable in His whiteness and ruddiness. Others have been white and ruddy too, whether local Churches, Religious Orders, or individual souls, but they have failed in the grace of perseverance, and have lost their beauty through sin. And accordingly it is written by the Prophet, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow; they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered, it is become like a stick." Thus the only white in which we can trust is the fine linen of His righteousness, the only redness which will abide in our cheeks is that which He bestows from His own Blood. And observe herein, that a further mystery lies hid under the word *ruddy*, which is אָדָם, *adam*, denoting the same thing as *Adam*, so that He Who is the Brightness of the FATHER'S glory, Whose countenance is as the sun shineth in his strength, is also the Second Adam, the Man from heaven, Who hath come to repair the loss we sustained by the fall of the first Adam. And, therefore, too, because He hid that shining of His celestial garments, "exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them," under those robes which tell of the conflict and suffering of our human nature, the Prophet asks in wonder, "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments?" For Edom,

Gillebert.
Serm. 47.

Lam. iv. 7.

Ricard. Vict.

Cocceius.

Heb. i. 3.
Rev. i. 16.S. Mark ix.
3.

Isa. lxxiii. 1.

which is *red*, denotes also that first-born Who lost His birth-right, and became an exile from His home, that His younger brother might have the inheritance.

The chiefest among ten thousand. The LXX. and Vulgate, differing slightly in phrase, but not in meaning, from this version, read severally *elect from ten thousands*, and *elect from thousands*. There is but little diversity in the expositions, as they all dwell on CHRIST being the Only-begotten SON of the FATHER, the only Virgin-born Son of a mother, as alone without sin, as the single High Priest of GOD, and as the One SAVIOUR of mankind, fairer than the children of men, and excelling those thousand thousands who minister unto Him, and the ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before Him. Philo gives two mystical reasons for the number ten thousand; one, that He Who is perfection (denoted by a thousand,) came after the ten precepts of the Law, or that He came into the world, after passing over the nine choirs of the Angelic hierarchy, from the womb of the Virgin, as a bridegroom from his chamber. The margin of the A. V., translating "standard-bearer," is hardly accurate, for

S. Just. Org.
Ric. Vict.

Dan. vii. 10.

Philo Carp.

Gesenius.
Weissbach.

Isa. xi. 10.

S. John xii.
32.

though the word דָּגוּל, *dagul*, here used, is connected with דָּגוּל, *degel*, a standard, yet it is a passive participle, and means not standard-bearer, but *lifted up like a standard*, and therefore conspicuous. It is a prophecy of Him concerning whom Isaiah foretold, "In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek;" because, as He Himself hath said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven.

1 Cor. xi. 3.
Philo Carp.
Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.

Luc. Abb.

"The Head of CHRIST is GOD." So speaks the Apostle, and the Fathers agree, for the most part, in explaining this clause of the verse, dwelling on the purity and costliness of gold, the king of metals, as a faint type of the pre-eminence of the LORD Almighty. And the Godhead of the Eternal WORD is also the Head of the Man CHRIST JESUS, in Whom shone the brightness of Deity. GOD alone, says a Western divine, is to be loved above all things of which we can

think, with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the strength, even as the head is more cared for than the other members; and as gold is known to be loved by covetous princes, who fear not to die for its sake. And the thinner the sheets are into which gold is drawn out, the more it shines and increases in ductility. Just so, the more searchingly we endeavour to investigate the majesty of divine power, so much the more boundlessly does the ocean spread. And as the substance of gold, by reason of its softness, is ductile in any direction that you draw it; so the unchanging goodness of God's majesty, however mocked by the ungodly, is never broken. S. Gregory Nyssen, however, refers the verse to CHRIST'S Humanity alone, in that He is Head of the Church; golden indeed, as sinless, and because in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Whereon another observes, "His head is as *paz*, that is, pure gold, for this gold is the form of the Saints, who shine as lights in the head of the body, and are gold tried in fire by God, because He, having tested them by suffering when melted in the furnace of this world, found them, as it is written, worthy of Him, and stamped upon them the sacred impress of His image, printing the word of His truth on their hearts and lips, and making them His moneyers, that they might stamp, according to His pattern, sterling coins for the LORD, and having defaced the image of Cæsar in us, should mint the living medal of the everlasting King, that we, inscribed with the spirit of redemption, with necks freed from the yoke, and with foreheads guarded by the superscription of salvation, might sing 'The light of Thy countenance is signed upon us.' Let us strive, then, with all our might so to prepare ourselves, that we may attain to be the locks and gold of our Divine Head, which, by God's grace, CHRIST is to us."

S. Greg.
Nyss.

S. Paulin.
Ep. iv. ad
Severum.

Ps. iv. 7,
Vulg.

The Hebrew term here for *fine gold* is כֶּתֶם זָהָב *ketthem paz*, and the existing copies of the LXX. read, by a curious error, *gold of Cephaz*, χρυσιον κίφαζ.¹ It would be unnecessary to refer to the erroneous reading, were it not that it has led to a singular interpretation, that of Philo, who, taking the *head* of CHRIST'S mystical Body, the Church, to be the most eminent Saints, supposes this text to denote S. Peter, as Prince of the

Philo Carp.

¹ The text Theodoret and the Three Fathers used, had δφάρζ.

Apostles, and eminent in wisdom; a view which had not long to wait for refutation, as it called up S. Jerome in defence of the truer interpretation, which sees here CHRIST, and Him only. The contemplative writers see in the golden head an emblem of the inexhaustible treasures of divine illumination, vouchsafed to the Saints who strive after perfect knowledge of GOD; and therefore, too, some take it of that unsearchable wisdom of CHRIST, whereof He saith in the Proverbs, "My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold;" while a further explanation is that the faith, and still better, the love of the Church, as her principal grace, is symbolically this head, as being that which is most like her true Head and Spouse.

His locks are bushy. Rather, as in margin, *curling*. The older versions translate, *like palm-buds*,¹ which cluster like a bunch of grapes. This has been accepted as the true rendering by Rosenmüller, De Wette, and Gesenius; and the former aptly cites an ancient Arab love-song in illustration. "The tresses which adorn her back are black, like a coal, thick, twining like the clusters of the palm." Hitzig and Weissbach, however, demur, and translate, with no practical difference of result, *grape-clusters*, and like *hills upon hills*. These locks, as before, are taken to denote the Saints who are nearest to the Head, such as the Angels, Apostles, Martyrs, and others eminent in holiness. S. Gregory Nyssen, who however prefers to translate *like pines*, takes the simile to denote the stately height attained by the Apostles, and the manner in which they increase the Bridegroom's beauty when they are moved, like foliage or tresses, by the wind of the HOLY SPIRIT. S. Ambrose, taking the same meaning, draws from it the further simile that the Saints are like the pine-built ships of Tarshish, floating over the waves of the world, and providing a sure life-boat (*tutum remigium salutis*) for all mankind. And another Saint works out the idea more fully still, commenting thus: "The Saints are like flowering palms, and branching cedars, and

¹ *ἑλάται, ἐλάτα palmarum.* The Greek word is more commonly used of the *pine*, and thence is sometimes taken to denote an oar, or even a ship, made of that tree. The root is *ἐλαίνα*, used in the case of

the tree in the sense of "shooting upwards," and in that of the buds of "pushing forth" out of the sheath. All these ideas will be found dwelt on by the earlier commentators cited in the text.

they are also like pines, black and good, because they are conspicuous on the heights of their merits in the Church, the mount of God, like pines upon the mountains, and as those trees are suited for ship-building, so too these princes of the people, cut down from the Mount of the Law, as from Lebanon, framed the Ark or ship of the LORD,—that is, the Church, intended to sail over this world's floods,—from the Gentiles, hewn with the Word of God, and taught therein, closely knit together in the framework of charity by the bond of faith, to plough their way in safety over the billows of this world." The *elata* of palm-trees are, notes Cassiodorus, their longer and more prominent branches, sometimes of a golden hue, curling, always tending upwards, and never losing their verdure. And some allege that the words mean an aromatic pine, used for making unguents, but not the great tree employed as timber for ships and houses. To these *elata*, then, the locks of the Bridegroom are compared, because the company of the faithful rejoice in their evergreen faith, are lifted up to a longing for eternal things, and taste the sweetness of heavenly bliss. The palm, observes another, is rough near the ground, and confined within a very narrow bark, but above it is beautiful and spreading to the sight, and abundant in fruit. So the members of CHRIST in lower things fare hardly, and suffer tribulation, whilst above they are fair and fruitful in the eyes of GOD; for they purify themselves through bodily hardships, and shoot upwards into beauty of soul and spiritual loftiness, and attain, by the grace of GOD, to that victory whereof the palm is an emblem. The close bark below denotes the many troubles whereby they are straitened here, the green and spreading foliage above the abundant reward which awaits them on high. Again, they take these locks of the Bridegroom to be the Divine graces and attributes wherewith He is adorned, and as it were, clothed; or else as the lofty truths contained in Holy Scripture.

And black as a raven. The literal sense here is to denote the youthful vigour and prime of the Bridegroom, Who is untouched by age or weakness, and thus has no sprinkling of white hairs upon His head. The mystical interpretations are various. Taking the locks, as before, to denote the Saints, they are called *black*, say many of the Fathers, to denote their hu-

Cassiodor.

Ricard. Vict.

Theodoret.
Cassiodor.
Tres Patr.
Thom. Verc.
Rupert.

Delrio.

Cassiodor.
Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.

mility. The blackness of good men, remarks one of themselves, is that they count themselves to be sinners, and carry in their faces that shame for their sins, for they choose contempt, they cheerfully endure to be despised, they desire menial tasks, and poor apparel, knowing that in their lowliness lies hid the precious treasure of CHRIST. Or, as another puts it, the very Angels and Saints are black and sinful in comparison with the golden glory of the Head whence they depend. And, confining the reference to the Person of CHRIST Himself, we are struck at once with the contrast between this verse and that of the Apocalypse, where we read, "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," even as Daniel beheld six centuries before. And they explain it very well, saying that the vision in Patmos describes Him in the pure holiness of His virgin life, whereas He was black in His Passion, when His flesh was scorched with the fire of pain and suffering in the furnace of the Cross, so that there was no form or comeliness left in Him. And, finally, if we see here either the Divine attributes or the mysteries of Holy Scripture implied, they are called black, because hidden from us in impenetrable darkness, according to that saying of the Psalmist, "He made darkness His secret place, His pavilion round about Him with dark waters, and thick clouds to cover Him."

12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

His eyes under the Old Testament were the Prophets, or Seers. His eyes now are the Prelates and Doctors of His Church, ἐπίσκοποι, or Overseers. Or, as another will have it, the contemplative Saints who are ever looking to GOD. They are compared to *doves* because of the graces of innocence and simplicity which should characterize them, and they abide *by the rivers of waters*, both as having been cleansed in the laver of Baptism, and as dwelling close to those streams of Holy Scripture whence they ever drink, and mirrored in which they can see themselves and any hawk or other enemy which approaches them. They are *washed with milk*, because, as one Saint observes, the LORD baptizes in milk, that is, in sincerity. And they

Nic. Argent.

Rev. i. 14.

Dan. vii. 9.

Hugo Card.

Isa. liii. 2.

Tres Patr.
Rupert.
Thom. Verc.
Cantacuzene.

Ps. xviii. 11.

S. Greg.

Nyss.

Psellus.

Ric. Vict.

Cassiod.

S. Ambros.

in Ps. cxix.

16.

are truly baptized in milk who believe without guile and maintain a pure faith and put on unspotted grace, so that the Bride ascends in white robes to CHRIST. S. Gregory Nyssen dwells on the plural form, *rivers of waters*, and sees in them the divers virtues of holiness, whereby the contrary vices of the soul must be washed away. Again, as the Saints are like doves' eyes by reason of the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT, so the words may be taken of CHRIST alone, as possessed of all His gifts in their fulness, as it is written: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of GOD sent forth into all the earth." These gifts and graces are fitly said to dwell by the rivers of waters, because the HOLY GHOST delights in pure and sincere hearts. And they are *washed with milk*, because those heavenly graces are not kept for the strong and vigorous alone, but are freely given to the Church's little ones, as milk to babes. The literal reference is to the clear white of the eye-ball, which contrasts with, and sets off, the more beautiful and coloured pupil, whence we gather that the passive graces of purity and innocence are insufficient of themselves for the perfection of the holy soul, but are meant as the frame in which the active powers of saintliness must be set. And in that they are said to dwell by *rivers*, not by lakes or ponds, we are led back in thought to the Source, hidden and exhaustless, whence these waters ever flow, not stagnant, nor collected by the work of any human skill. Again, following the clue given by the Chaldee paraphrast, who sees here the unceasing watch of GOD's providence over Jerusalem, we too may see here the perfection of CHRIST's wisdom, human and Divine. For in it are the eyes of Godhead, according as it is written, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous," and in another place, "The eyes of the LORD are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men, and considering the most secret parts." These eyes are the understanding and wisdom of GOD, or the glance of His loving-kindness, and they may be compared to doves' eyes, because of their perfect singleness and purity, most alien from all evil. And also the inner eyes of CHRIST's Humanity were the reason and understanding, wisdom and knowledge poured into

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Philo Carp.

Rev. v. 6.

Cassiod.

Gene-
brardus.

Beda.

Targum.

Dion. Carth.

Ps. xxxiv.
15.Ecclus.
xxiii. 19.

Him, shining with dovelike simplicity and full of all sincerity, testified by the clear, pure, and candid aspect of His bodily eyes also.

And fitly set. Literally, *resting in fulness.* The metaphor is taken from a gem skilfully set in the bezel of a ring, so as to be exactly centred, and to shine most brilliantly. Hence the mystical meaning is that the Saints are fixed in the golden circle of God's law and discipline, so as not to vary to the right hand or the left, and thereby they attain greater beauty and value, just as clear and limpid eyes, which are free from all distortion, are the chief beauty of a lovely face, while any irregularity in them is the greatest of deformities. But the Vulgate reading, amplified from the LXX., is *dwelling by the fullest of streams.* Theodoret will have it that the words denote the manner in which CHRIST is, as it were, always waiting anxiously by the waters of Baptism to receive fresh souls into His Church, and that these waters are called *fullest*, to warn us that the bare external rite with no inward correlation of will, cannot satisfy Him, as was shown in the case of Simon Magus, who came to that Sacrament unrepentant and unconverted. Others take these fullest streams to be the Holy Scriptures, abundantly supplying the spiritual thirst of the soul, and overflowing with heavenly mysteries. Here it is, then, observes a Saint, that we must sit, and not by the waters of Babylon, where our eyes will be dim with weeping, rather than washed in that milk which, as it reflects no image nor shadow, denotes the perfect truth which suggests no deceitful phantasm to the eyes of the soul. Or again, Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and it is on this fulness of love in the multitudes of the Church, who are the waters in that channel, that the Holy Dove vouchsafes to rest. And yet once more, as CHRIST is He in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, so it was upon Him that the mystic Dove hovered at the streams of Jordan, upon Him Who is the perennial River of the mercy of GOD. And so the Prophet foretold, "The SPIRIT of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

The LXX., Vulgate, and modern critics all vary in the interpretation of the earlier part of this verse so widely, that it is necessary to give their several versions before proceeding to comment on them. In the first place, the LXX. has *His cheeks are as vials of spice giving out unguents*. That is, observes Theodoret, the doctrine of CHRIST supplies the preachers of His Word with all the arguments and counsels which they need for making that salve which they prepare for the benefit of wounded and sin-sick hearts. Philo, differing a little in the version he follows, (reading, as he does, the text of Symmachus, which is *πρωιαί, beds*,) takes nearly the same view, that Holy Writ is the store-house of those wholesome medicines which drive away all spiritual diseases; herein agreeing substantially with the Targum, which explains the cheeks as the two tables of the Law. The Vulgate reads *His cheeks are like beds of spices planted by the ointment-makers*. And these cheeks some will have to be the Martyrs, because as the ruddiness of the cheeks is an especial beauty of the face, so the blood of the Martyrs, shed for CHRIST, is a glory to His Name. They are *planted by the ointment-makers*, in that the earlier Martyrs were cheered on to their conflict by the counsels of holy preachers, and the later ones by the examples of their predecessors, brought before them by preachers too. And they are *beds of spices* because the sweet and restorative fragrance of their lives and deaths perfumes the garden of GOD. Again, some will have it that not the Martyrs but the Doctors and teachers of the Church are intended, as the cheeks clothe the jaws which prepare food for the stomach; and these are *beds*, carefully tilled ground, bringing forth the *spices* of prayer and good works, *planted by* those skilled ointment-makers, the Apostles and Prophets of GOD. Or, if you will, you may take these spice-beds to be individual Churches, rich in Saints and in good works, planted by the missionary zeal of the Apostles and their successors. And, turning to a different class of exposition, several Fathers take the cheeks of the Bridegroom to be the outward bearing and demeanour of the LORD JESUS, according as He showed Himself gentle, stern, or sad. One will have it that the union of the Two Natures in One Person, bringing GOD and man together, is here intended. Wherefore, he says, these cheeks are compared to

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.

Targum.

S. Greg. M.
Ric. Vict.S. Greg.
Nyss.
Psellus.

S. Ans. Laud.

S. Just. Org.

Cassiod.
Beda.
Rupert.Philipp.
Harveng.

beds, that is, to little gardens, whence aromatic herbs and spices are produced, cultivated with benevolent skill by those ointment-makers who are learned and busied in the art of medicine for healing the sick. For after GOD had borne with the world for thousands of years as it was perishing in sin, and no man nor Angel was strong enough to drive sin out, at length the Ointment-Makers chose out in wisdom certain beds, whence they gathered aromatic medicines and healing spices. For they joined together the Divine and human natures, to which, in mysterious counsel, they added a certain joint power of cure; and on them, united in One Person, as cheeks are joined in one face, they concentrated spices, and restored the fainting world with the blessing of health. Nor were these Ointment-Makers other than the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. The view of modern critics is to be found in their explanation of the literal Hebrew of that clause where the A. V. reads, *as sweet flowers*. The margin, more exactly, is *towers of perfumes*. And this is explained as most probably meaning pyramidal or conical flower-beds in a garden, so planted as to present to the eye a rising and unbroken mound of sweet flowering shrubs. The metaphor seems to denote the growth of beard upon the cheeks of the Bridegroom, and therefore, as they tell us, the Saints who draw all their life and being from Him are here designated, towering upward in their aim at heavenly things, and planted so closely together in unity of spirit and doctrine, as to leave no void space where weeds may spring.

His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

The lips of the wise, who toil in the Law, says the Chaldee paraphrast, flow with decision on all points, and the words of their mouth are like choice myrrh.

And this is very nearly the sense given by most Christian expositors, taking the verse, as they do, to denote the preachers of CHRIST'S Gospel, pure in life, fragrant in doctrine, and proclaiming first of all the LORD'S death, then the passions of His Martyrs, and finally the duty of mortification, patience in suffering, and readiness to endure death for the LORD'S sake. Or, with a more restricted application, it may be taken of those Confessors who exercise the power of the keys in binding and loosing, righteously binding the impenitent by condemnation, loosing righteously the

Rosen-
müller.
De Wette.
Weissbach.

Cocceius.

Targum.

S. Ambros.
S. Greg. M.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Just. Org.

Luc. Abb.

penitent from the bond of condemnation by reconciling them to God. To the wise they are *lilies* in fragrance, bringing them gladness and healing, to the foolish they have the bitter savour of *myrrh*; but even these, when healed, themselves praise the remedy which has brought them cure of present suffering, and protection from future corruption. Theodoret, looking to the Master, and not to His servants, says that His lips may well be compared to lilies, because the Divine sayings have their own glorious beauty, though devoid of human ornament. For as the LORD Himself teaches, the lilies toil not, neither do they spin, yet the Heavenly FATHER clothes them. Since then the Divine sayings are destitute of all human wisdom, and have only their own Divine beauty, it is well said *His lips are like lilies dropping full myrrh*, for they teach mortification in this present life. For such as these is that teaching of the LORD: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." And again: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." Therefore His lips drop full myrrh. And others, also explaining the words of CHRIST's sayings, tell us that the comparison to lilies denotes His promise of eternal brightness, and His counsels of purity and cleanness, both typified by the white flower. There are not wanting some who remind us that we are not to understand here the white lily or narcissus, but the purple one, as better figuring the rudeness of the lips; but there is one most true sense in which we may prefer to keep the snowy flower in our minds, thinking of Him in His dying hour, when with pale and bloodless lips He dropped that sweet-smelling myrrh of the Seven Words, which has since healed many and many a sorely-wounded heart, for, as our own poet says:

The nails and bleeding brows,
The pale and dying lips, are the portion of the Spouse.

Keble, *Lyra Innocent.*

14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

Theodoret.

S. Luke xiv.
26.

S. Mat. xix.
21.

Ghislerius.

Tauler,
De Passione.

Here again in the first clause the ancient translations are utterly at variance with the A. V. The LXX. and Vulgate read in the first clause, *His hands are cylindrical* (*τοπειρατα, tornatiles*, literally, *turned in a lathe golden, full of Tharsis* (LXX.) or *of jacinths*, (Symmachus and Vulgate.) And modern critics are divided, some accepting the interpretation of the A. V. and then explaining with Cocceius that the hand, when curved to grasp anything, resembles a ring; and others preferring the Vulgate reading, on the ground that the specific word כַּף *caph*, always employed in Hebrew for the closed or hollowed hand, is not that found in the text here. They differ, too, as to the phrase, *set with the beryl*; agreeing that the word does not imply that the stone is set in the gold, but that the gold is fixed in the stone. And they give two equally ingenious explanations,—one that the finger-nails, in which the hand terminates, are the beryl, chrysolite, topaz, jacinth, or Tarshish stone, (so variously is the gem described) referred to,—compare the Greek name for one well-known jewel, *onyx*, “a nail,”—the other argued with much ingenuity by Weissbach, that the hand itself is intended, being the costly socket in which those slender golden pillars, the fingers, are firmly rooted, illustrating the argument with a reference to the rich tessellated pavement in which stood the pillars for the hangings in the palace of Ahasuerus. The hands, then, of CHRIST’s mystical Body are the stewards and dispensers of His grace, *golden*, even as their Head is of gold, *turned in a lathe*, because rid of everything external and superfluous, *full of Tharsis-stone*, because the outer crust of sin which hid the jewel has been cut away by the lapidary’s skill, and thus only the clear radiance remains. The hands of the Beloved, says the Prior of S. Victor, are the works of the godly, which are *turned*, because they are regular and perfect. For as turners’ work is regularly and smoothly circular, and admits of no interruption or inequality, so the godly do nothing blameworthy, nor aught whereby their neighbour may be offended or weakened. The energy of the godly is therefore regular and polished, because they seek only heavenly things, swerving neither to right nor left, but keeping to the King’s highway. Wherefore it is said that they are *golden* because they shine with divine wisdom, and are not

Rosen-
müller.
De Wette.
Cocceius.

Hitzig.

Weissbach.

Esth. i. 6.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

Ric. Vict.

darkened by sin or ignorance. And these works shine before men unto the glory of their FATHER Which is in heaven, unclouded with sins or lack of judgment, and are all performed for GOD's sake and with a single mind. Therefore it is added that they are *full of jacinths*, because they are done from pure hope and longing for heavenly things, for the jacinth is a stone of the colour of the sky, with a greenish shade in it. Again, the hands of the Beloved, when referred to the Person of CHRIST Himself, denote His works and miracles, *turned*, because of the ease and rapidity of His operation, *golden*, by reason of the manifestation of Divine power, *full of jacinths*, because arousing men to hope of heavenly things. They were turned, too, because of their completeness and perfection. And His bodily hands were turned in yet another sense, when fastened on that cruel lathe of the Cross, there to be fashioned for us into an instrument of salvation; *full of jacinths*, truly, when gemmed with the ruddy drops of His most Precious Blood. Others are found to take the word *tornatiles* in an active sense, and to explain it as the *hands of a turner*. And then the whole clause is taken of the creative power of GOD, shaping all things, as a turner does, with no pattern before Him, but only by force of will and steadiness of hand. And as a cup or a sphere is potentially hidden within the block out of which it is to be turned, so all things, say they, pre-existed in the mind of GOD, and they had no independent being or place till He, so to speak, put them outside Himself, removing from them all that was not of their essence. And it is added that these hands are *golden*, because "GOD saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

Cassiodor.

Theodoret.

Cassiodor.

Philo Carp.

Beda.

Nic. Argent.

Gen. i. 31.

Passing now to the A. V. reading, it remains to be seen what its mystical import is. And first, it is to be noted that the verse in no case can imply that the hands of the Bridegroom are adorned with rings, but that they themselves are in some way like rings, possibly, as suggested above, when curved, and with henna-dyed nails for jewels. The ring, under the Law, as containing the signet, is the token of authority, and is so given by Pharaoh to Joseph, and by Ahasuerus to Haman. Under the Gospel the ring is the symbol of marriage. Thus the Bride sees in CHRIST at once her King and her Bridegroom. Here on earth

Gen. xli. 42.
Esth. iii. 10.

and under the Old Covenant, when the fear of Him is the beginning of her wisdom, He is *Baali*, "My Lord," to her. Under the Law of Grace in our Country, when perfect love hath cast out fear, He will be called by her, *Ishi*, "My Husband." Into His hands she commends herself, by those hands she confesses that she is made and fashioned, for the operations of those hands she rejoices in giving praise. If those hands seem to press hardly on her at times, she recognises that it is only that the imprint of the Everlasting Name may be set upon her forehead, and when they support her in time of weariness and sorrow, she feels in them the loving clasp of her Bridegroom. They are *set with the beryl*. And it is enough to say briefly that in the great vagueness of all translators in explaining the Hebrew names of precious stones, no trust can usually be given to their versions. But as to this stone, the *tarshish*, first in the fourth row of the High Priest's breastplate, it is now for the most part agreed that the Oriental topaz, the stone called by the ancients *chrysolite*,¹ the seventh foundation of the Heavenly City, is intended. And on this let us hear the mystic comment of Marbod of Rennes :

Hos. ii. 16.

Ps. xxxi. 6 ;
cxix. 73 ;
xcii. 4.Exod. xxviii.
20.The Hymn,
*Cives cæ-
lestis patriæ.*

The golden-coloured chrysolite
Flashes forth sparkles in the night :
Its mystic hues the life reflect
Of men with perfect wisdom decked,
Who shine in this dark world like gold,
Through that blest SPIRIT sevenfold.

Ayguan.

Or, as the great Carmelite writer on the Psalms alleges, "The chrysolite shines as gold in the day ; as fire in the night. By the *day*, the good ; by the *gold*, their crown, are represented ; by the *night*, the wicked ; and by the *fire*, their punishment." Hence the stone typifies their final separation, and thus the seventh article of the Creed, "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." And thus the jewels which adorn the hands of the King and Bridegroom are His Wisdom and Justice. Here too may fitly be cited a vision, which helps to explain the meaning of the ring : "And she saw the most Blessed Virgin standing at her right hand, giving her a golden ring, which she at once offered to the LORD, and the LORD,

S. Mechthil-
dis Revelat.
iii. 1.

¹ By a curious interchange, | lite, the stone anciently known
modern lapidaries call chryso- | as topaz.

graciously accepting it, placed it on His finger. Then, pondering within herself, she said, O if it might but be that He would give me His ring in token of betrothal! And it seemed to her that it would be enough if the LORD would vouchsafe to send her a pain in the ring-finger, that she might bear it all the days of her life in memory that she was betrothed to CHRIST. To whom the LORD: I give thee a ring, gemmed with seven stones, which thou canst recall in the seven joints of thy finger. In the first joint, thou mayest remember that divine love, which bowing Me down from the FATHER'S bosom, made Me serve in many toils for thirty-three years, seeking thee. And when the marriage-time drew nigh, I was sold, by the love in My own heart, to obtain the price of the bridal-feast, and I gave Myself for Bread, and Flesh, and Chalice. And at that feast I was harp too, and organ, by the sweet words of My mouth. In the second joint, remember how I in My beauty led forth the bridal throng to the martial dance after that banquet, and thrice leaping, I fell thrice to the ground, and shed forth drops of bloody sweat. And I clothed My fellow-soldiers in the dance with triple robes, when I granted them remission of sins, sanctification of their souls, and My own divine glory. Thirdly, recollect the love of My humility for the Bride's kiss, when the traitor drew near and kissed Me; in which kiss My Heart felt such love, that had his soul repented, I should have taken him, by that kiss, into the person of the Bride. In the fourth, recall what were the marriage-songs My ears heard from the Bride's love, when I stood before the Judge and so many false testimonies were adduced. In the fifth, remember how beautifully I clothed Myself for love of thee, when I so often changed My vesture, white, red, purple, and wore a garland of roses, to wit, the crown of thorns. In the sixth, be mindful how I embraced thee when I was bound to the pillar, and there took on Myself for thee all the darts of thine enemies. In the seventh, be mindful how I entered the bridal chamber of the Cross. And then I stretched out My hands by those hard nails for thy sweet embraces, singing in that chamber of love seven songs of marvellous sweetness. And then I opened My Heart that thou mightest enter in, when dying on the Cross, I slept the sleep of love with thee."

His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

Here it is necessary to premise that the word עֶשֶׂת *esheth*, translated *bright* in the A. V., is passed over by the Vulgate, is explained by *box* or a *tablet* (πυξίλον) in the LXX., and is held by modern critics to mean a *work of art*. There is this further difference, that the Vulgate agrees with the A. V. in taking the sapphires as set in the ivory, while the LXX. reverses this notion, reading an *ivory box* (or *tablet*) on a *sapphire stone*. Theodoret, taking πυξίλον to be a box or vessel, comments thus: The depth of His mysteries, and the storehouse of His knowledge, where are hid all the treasures of His wisdom, are an *ivory box* to those who are worthy of His revelation. They are naturally incomprehensible, and therefore they are said to be upon a *sapphire stone*, which signifies the hidden depth of divine things. Philo explains the belly of the Bridegroom to be the Law, wherein the oracles, prophecies, and types of CHRIST were inclosed, as in a box, like the records of princes. This box was ivory on sapphire, because as ivory is opaque and of trifling cost compared with the transparent and precious sapphire, dyed with the hue of heaven, so the Old Covenant is altogether inferior to the Gospel of CHRIST, just as a picture or a flower ranks below a fruit or a living creature. Or, as the same Father adds, we may understand here the choir of the Saints, pure and shining, like an ivory box, having no spot or defilement. In this spiritual box lie the documents of wisdom and the title-deeds which will confer no earthly possession, but a heavenly kingdom. And this rests upon a sapphire stone, which may be referred to the Communion of the Saints, their love, and their glory. Taking πυξίλον to be a *tablet* for writing, the Three Fathers beautifully interpret it of the Book of Nature, the visible creation, firm and lovely, and written by the hand of GOD, resting on that which is yet firmer and lovelier, His unseen Almightyness and heavenly wisdom, figured by the sapphire stone. And S. Gregory Nyssen takes the tablet to be any pure human heart on which GOD writes "not with ink, but with the SPIRIT of the living GOD; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." It is white with holiness, it rests on sapphire, because its whole longing is bent on heavenly things. Turning to the Latin Fathers, we read first

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.

Tres Patr.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

2 Cor. iii. 3.

"In the members of the human body nothing is weaker or more delicate than the belly, and therefore the frailty of CHRIST's assumed Humanity is thereby denoted. It was *ivory*, because it had no spot or corruption, for 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.' It was *studded with sapphires*, because of the heavenly graces and powers with which CHRIST's Manhood was endowed, since the sapphire, having the colour of a clear sky, signifies GOD's Majesty, as it is written, 'And they saw the GOD of Israel, and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.'" Another, applying the words to CHRIST's mystical Body, says that the belly denotes those who bring forth spiritual children in faith; nay, that the ivory belly itself may not unfitly denote the baptismal font, as the pure white ivory is taken from a dead animal, for the Apostle saith, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST were baptized into His death? Wherefore we are buried with Him in baptism unto death, that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by the glory of the FATHER, even so we also should walk in newness of life." And this font is *studded with sapphires* because of the great Saints, glorious in their confession, who have issued from it. A third takes it of the contemplative Saints, not actively busy in external work, like hands and feet, nor yet employed, like the lips, in preaching the Word, but silently receiving into themselves the food of the HOLY GHOST, and adorned with tokens of true holiness, and thereby profiting the whole body to which they belong. There is yet another sense, applying the words to the human Person of CHRIST. His Body, in its perfect purity and beauty, is ivory, the stripes and weals inflicted on Him in His Passion, studded it with sapphires. Even yet the mysteries of the sapphire are not exhausted. It, like the beryl, gleamed on Aaron's breastplate; it is the promised foundation of the afflicted Church; it is the second jewel in the base of the New Jerusalem.

Cassiodor.

1 S. Pet. ii.
22.Exod. xxiv.
10.

S. Just. Org.

Rom. vi. 3.

Luc. Abb.
Thom.
Vercell.

Cocceius.

Exod. xxviii.
18.
Isa. liv. 11.
Rev. xxi. 19.

The azure light of Sapphire stone
 Resembles that celestial Throne:
 A symbol of each simple heart
 That grasps in hope the better part:
 Whose life each holy deed combines,
 And in the light of virtue shines.

Marbod.
 The Hymn,
*Cives ca-
 lestis patria.*

And therefore the blue of sky and sea, typifying the height and depth, and length and breadth of the wisdom and love of God, was reproduced mystically in the Temple of old, and in the robes of Aaron, along with the purple of CHRIST's royalty and the scarlet of His Blood, while the sacred ephod was all of blue. Therefore too, the children of Israel were enjoined to put a "ribband of blue" upon the fringe that bordered their garments, to remind them of God's commandments; and it was this blue ribbon which formed the hem of that white robe of CHRIST, whose touch healed the woman with an issue of blood.

15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

By reason of the title "pillars" given to SS. Peter, James and John, by their colleague S. Paul, several of the Fathers take the legs here to mean the Apostles in general. They are *marble*, because of their firmness and solidity, especially S. Peter, whose own name denotes a rock; they are set on *golden sockets*, because they rest on the base of which is written, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST." And the Apostles are in a sense the legs of CHRIST, not merely because they bore at first the whole weight of His mystical Body the Church, but because CHRIST Himself passed in and on them into the whole world to proclaim the Faith to the Gentiles, when He commanded them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The words are applied to other Saints also, besides those chief and earliest ones. All the righteous who support others by their charity, and prop them with the consolations of Scripture, are such, as the Apostle writes: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." And the bases on which such Saints rest may well be Holy Writ, for it follows soon after, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." Or, the examples of the great Saints of old are the bases which support later ones, as it is written, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets."

Exod. xxv.
4; xxvi. 1;
xxviii. 5;
xxviii. 31.

Numb.
xv. 38.

S. Mat. ix.
20.

S. Epiphan.
S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Ambros.

Psellus.

1 Cor. iii. 11.

Philo Carp.

S. Mark xvi.
15.

S. Just. Org.

Rom. xv. 1.

Rom. xv. 4.

S. Ans. Laud.

Eph. ii. 20.

Again, applying the words to CHRIST Himself, they give divers explanations. One is that the two precepts of love to GOD and love to our neighbour, firm as marble in their claim on our faith, and based on the golden foundations of GOD's truth and love, are, as it were, the legs wherewith CHRIST enters the building of the faithful soul. Or you may take the Bridegroom's legs to be the journeyings of the SAVIOUR, undertaken for our salvation: His coming down from heaven to become Man, His descent into the grave, His Resurrection and Ascension. They are *marble*, for all the ways of the LORD are straight and strong. Of His strength the Psalmist saith, "He rejoiceth as a giant to run His course, His going forth is from the uttermost part of the heaven." Of His straightness elsewhere, "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth." These legs are *set upon sockets of gold*, because all things which were to be done by CHRIST or in CHRIST, were foreordained and appointed before the foundation of the world. Wherefore the Prophet exclaims, "O LORD, Thou art my GOD; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." And that we might be assured in type how unchangeable these counsels for our salvation are, the LORD did not suffer His legs to be broken upon the Cross, as were those of the malefactors; just as He signified the unity of His Church in preserving the seamless robe from being rent. But if you will have it, that only two journeyings can be signified by the two legs, you may take them to be the first and the second Advent; the first for redemption, the second for judgment and salvation.

His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. Lebanon, towering and white, is taken as the type of Him Who was fairer and purer than the children of men, and of Whom that first King of Israel was a mystical type, of whom it is written: "There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." Theodoret, translating Lebanon by "incense," bids us see in it the Divinity which we worship, and in the *cedars*, the Man Who is incorrupt. And a Western writer, accepting the same idea of incense, explains it that CHRIST is so entitled, as at once Priest and Victim in the One Great Sacri-

S. Greg.
Nyss.

Tres Patr.

Cassiodor.

Ps. xix. 5.

Ps. xxv. 19.

Isa. xxv. 1.

Beda.

Hugo Card.

1 Sam. ix. 2.

Theodoret.

Luc. Abb.

- Philo Carp. fice. Others, dwelling on the version "whiteness," see
 S. Greg. M. Him who washes away the sins of His people, making
 them white as snow. And the Virgins of the Church
 Ricard. Vict. are said to be the countenance of CHRIST, white as Le-
 banon, for because of the chaste purity of their life,
 and because they are free from stain of pollution, they
 Rupert. are nearest to the spotless Lamb. Rupert reminds us,
 very aptly, that the great stones whereof the Temple
 was built were hewn on the slopes of Lebanon, and
 that as that Temple, to which CHRIST compares Him-
 self, was the head, and glory, and Holy of holies of the
 earthly Jerusalem, so is CHRIST the Head, and glory,
 and Holy of holies in the heavenly Jerusalem, and
 every stone in that building made without hands is a
 Saint of GOD, part of Lebanon itself, as a member of
 Beda. the Body of CHRIST. *Excellent as the cedars.* Where
 note, that the same Beloved is compared to Lebanon,
 which produces mighty trees, and to the cedar which
 amongst others, Lebanon produces, because He, one
 and the same, brings forth and carries the trees, and is
 Himself brought forth and carried amongst the trees
 by Himself. For our LORD JESUS CHRIST, while bring-
 ing forth to life and nourishing by His Divine grace
 all His elect from the beginning till the end of the
 world, bears Himself also amongst men, in willing to
 be made Man, and filled that Man with the grace of
 His own SPIRIT, albeit far more than all others. The
 LORD then is *excellent as the cedars*, because He tran-
 scends in His sole and singular dignity all the trees of
 that wood of the Holy Church wherein He was born.
His countenance is as Lebanon, which produces the
 cedar also amongst its other noble trees, because, when
 He willed to become Man, He created Himself as the
 Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, just as a painter
 might depict himself with fitting colours, in the midst
 Rupert. of a group. He was *elect*, or *excellent as the cedars*,
 because He bore a likeness to all those great Patri-
 archs, His forefathers, and united in Himself every
 virtue and grace which they separately possessed.
 S. Ambros. And as the cedar seems to tower up to the sky, while
 de Virgin. its roots go deep and firmly into the earth, so the
 3. Divinity of CHRIST reaches to the Heaven of heavens
 where He dwells, and yet His Incarnation binds Him
 closely to the children of men.

16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is al-

together lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

By the *mouth* of CHRIST they understand, as by His lips, the preachers of His Word, and in especial the first of them, the Baptist Forerunner. Or, applied to Himself, it will denote His own words. For what, asks Theodoret, can be sweeter than the sayings of GOD? Wherefore holy David saith, "O how sweet are Thy words unto my throat: yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth;" and again, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Therefore, also, the officers of the chief priests, who were sent to the LORD, fascinated and attracted by longing for the sweetness of His words, said, "Never man spake like this Man." And, seeing that the whole New Testament is His utterance, we may well understand it by the mouth (or *throat*, as LXX. and Vulgate read) of the Bridegroom, especially by reason of the sweetness of reading and meditating on its heavenly sayings. And S. Anselm of Laon reminds us that as it is not the outer letter, but the inner spirit, which is profitable, so the hidden speaking of CHRIST to the heart is the sweetest of all, by reason of the loving-kindness which is His utterance. And whereas the margin of the A. V. reads *palate*, so there are not wanting those who tell us that here is meant the internal savour of CHRIST and His spiritual consolation, which are so sweet to those who taste them. The more this sweetness is preserved, the more it is longed for. It hath hunger, not satiety, in this life: it hath refreshment, not fulness. It is so sweet as to be ever desired; it is so vast, as never to be fully comprehended. The Bride calls the throat *most sweet*, and we are not told *how* sweet, nor yet what it is like. Some comparison is given us in all the other cases, as that the head is fine gold; the locks like palm-buds; the eyes like doves' eyes by the waters; the cheeks beds of spices; the lips lilies; the hands cylindrical, golden, full of jacinths; the belly, ivory studded with sapphires; the legs pillars of marble with golden sockets. But the Bride calls the throat only *most sweet*, and gives no simile, that thereby you may ponder how unspeakable and priceless is that divine inner sweetness, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

S. Greg.
Nyss.
S. Just. Org.
Psellus.

Theodoret.

Ps. cxix.

103.

Ps. xix. 10.

S. John vii.
46.

Tres Patr.
Philo Carp.

S. Ans. Laud.
Beda

Ricard. Vict.

Rupert.

1 Cor. ii. 9.

Plato.
Phædrus,
64.

neither hath entered into the heart of man, but which God hath prepared for them that love Him. *Yea, He is altogether lovely.* Or, as all the ancient versions read, *desirable*.¹ And a heathen philosopher will tell us how desirable, in those marvellous words whereby he forecasts the Beatific Vision as shadowed in trance and communion, and the attractive power of the Incarnation: "We cannot, in mere similitudes here, behold the glory of Righteousness and temperance, and those other things that are precious to our souls; nay, scarce even a very few, reaching with their imperfect organs to the images thereof, beheld what kind of things it is which is pictured. But it was then permitted to gaze on resplendent beauty, when, together with the choir of the blest, we attained, with God, to the blissful vision and contemplation; and others too beheld, and were initiated into that mystery which may well be called the happiest of all; which we celebrated, purely, and free from all the passions which abode in us in the later time.² And so initiated, and admitted as beholders, we, pure and spotless, and freed from the body which we bear about with us like a shell, beheld those perfect, simple, unwavering, and blissful visions in light unsullied. And all this is a delight to memory, wherefore has it now been spoken of at length, through longing for it once more. And that beauty, as we have said, shone forth, coming with them,³ and we, reaching this point, perceived its clearest shining by the clearest of our senses. For sight is the most acute of our bodily senses, and yet wisdom cannot be seen by it, for wisdom would excite the most eager love, if any like image of it could appear, and show itself to sight." So when the Eternal Wisdom, the Beauty uncreated, did show Himself to men, He inspired such passionate yearning in them that they could not but rise up, leave all, and follow Him, to poverty, exile, shame, and death. *Altogether lovely*, because He is lovely as God, and lovely as Man also. He is lovely in Himself, and lovely in His Saints. Lovely was the

Cassiodor.
Ric. Vict.

¹ The Syriac included; with singular poverty, however, it applies the epithet to the raiment of the Bridegroom, not to Himself.

² It is not a forced interpretation, using the passage as is done here, to interpret this latter time of the Fall, suc-

ceeding that earlier time of man's innocence.

³ So it is recorded of more than one Saint, that the face, after returning from Communion at the Altar, seemed to shine with supernatural light and beauty.

vision of His Humanity upon earth, but lovelier by far will be His glorified Humanity in heaven ; lovely is that Countenance which the whole company of the heavenly citizens desires, most lovely of all the contemplation of His Godhead, to which all that can be desired may not be compared. He is *altogether lovely*, because the mystery of His Humanity kindles such universal longing in the souls of His elect, that not merely the glory of His Resurrection calls them forth, but even the ignominy of His Passion invites them to imitate His example. Altogether lovely, because the more He is possessed, the more He is longed for ; we desire to behold Him, and when we behold Him, we desire Him more ardently than before.

S. Pet. Dam.
Opus. 1. 4.

Rupert.

O JESU, King of wondrous might,
O Victor, glorious from the fight,
Sweetness that may not be expressed,
And altogether loveliest !

S. Bernard.
Rhythm.
Jubil.

This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. He is *my Beloved*, because I cling to Him by faith and love ; He is *my Friend*, because He vouchsafed to redeem me from the bond of sin, to make me His friend, and the sharer of His secrets, and the more each one loves Him, the more worthy does he become of His friendship. And observe that He is called *Beloved* first, and then *Friend*, "because He first loved us," and was united to us by that love even before He came upon earth to speak unto us face to face, as a Man speaketh unto His friend.

Cassiodor.

1 S. John iv.
19.
Exod. xxxiii.
11.

One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend,
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end ;
They who once His kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.

John
Newton.

CHAPTER VI.

1 Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women ? whither is thy beloved turned aside ? that we may seek him with thee.

- Tres Patr. The Three Fathers, assuming that the speakers here are the Angels, represent the words as an attempt on their part to penetrate the mystery of the Incarnation, because they did not fully comprehend it until the Ascension, as appears from their question when bid to lift up their gates: "Who is the King of Glory?"
- Psellus.
- Ps. xxiv. 8. But the more general view is, that we have the weaker and less-instructed believers, the *Ecclesia discens*, asking to be taught by the wiser and more perfect, the *Ecclesia docens*, the history, as well as the beauties of the Bridegroom, the place where He may be found, as well as the marks whereby He may be known. Tell us, then, they say, how it is that thou seekest Him as absent, Whom thou preachest as everywhere present? If He be present, how may He be seen; and if He be absent, how can He be found? And one answer to this part of their inquiry is, that GOD never leaves those whom He has once taken to Himself, that He may go elsewhere to win others, but that the power of the Divine presence is in such wise ubiquitous that it goes, as it were, or turns aside, to attach others to itself, yet so as to keep that grace which has begun in those whom it had already gathered, just as the putting the Spirit on the seventy elders of Israel, took nothing from the grace given to Moses, or as a candle may light many other candles, with no diminution of its flame. They dwell, too, on the double phrase, *gone*, and *turned aside*; the one word denoting a distant journey, the other a mere withdrawal to some place close at hand, as, for instance, passing out of the sun into the shade. CHRIST is *gone* bodily into heaven by His Ascension; He has *turned aside* spiritually from the Synagogue into the Church. He is *gone*, too, when He altogether refuses to comply with any prayer; He is but *turned aside*, when He delays a little when sought, that He may excite more eager longing in the soul which seeks Him. And the verse may be explained also of days of grievous scandals, coldness, and laxity in the Church, times like those of Arian supremacy, or of Mohammedan conquest, or that dark and sorrowful century of which the historian exclaims that the LORD appeared to be sleeping in the barque of Peter. Then men anxiously inquire where may be found the marks of true piety, where are the Confessors of CHRIST'S Name. And once, the answer would have been that He was in the deserts of the
- Cassiodor.
- Honorius.
- Beda.
- Numb. xi. 25.
- Honorius.
- Hugo Card.
- Cassiodor.
- Card. Baroni-
nius.
- Corn. & Lap.

Thebaid, with Paul, and Antony, and Pachomius; at another time that He had passed from the Arian East to His faithful in Gaul, where Hilary and Martin upheld the standard of the Consubstantial; and even in the tenth century itself, great Houses like Cluny, reforming Saints like Dunstan, and missionary triumphs in Norway, Bohemia, Russia, and Pomerania, testified to the presence of CHRIST in the outskirts of His Church, when those who looked for Him in the midst could nowhere see Him. Again; the verse has been explained of all those mysterious journeyings of the LORD, of His passage from heaven to the womb of the Virgin, of His dealings in Hades between His Passion and Resurrection, of the intervals between those sudden and intermittent visits granted to the Apostles during the Great Forty Days, intervals of which Holy Scripture tells us nothing. And, lastly, the question is asked by every devout seeker after CHRIST, that he may know who those true Saints are in whose hearts He rests, that imitating their example, he too may find Him. This seeking must be twofold, in action and in contemplation, in faith also and prayer, and the finding is in holiness of life. Wherefore is added, *That we may seek Him with thee*, because they who seek for CHRIST outside the Church, and without her aid, are scarcely likely to find Him. And remember, after all, what one of those who first sought Him vainly outside the Church, and at last found Him, as few have found so truly and closely, within it, has said, "Let us seek Him while He is yet to be found; let us seek Him even when we have found Him. He is hidden that He may be sought when not yet found, and that He may still be sought when He has been found He is incomprehensible."

Card. Hall-
grin.Cassiodor.
S. Ans. Laud.S. Greg.
Nyss.
Honorius.

Cassiodor.

S. August.
in S. Joann.

2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

The Chaldee paraphrase explains this verse in a very remarkable manner of the Captivity: "The Ruler of the world willingly received their prayer, and descended into Babylon, to the council of the wise men, and gave His people rest, and led them out of their captivity by the hand of Cyrus, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Zorobabel son of Salathiel, and the elders

Targum.

of the Jews. And they built the House of the Sanctuary, and set priests over the oblations, and Levites over the guardianship of the Word of holiness. And He sent fire from heaven, and willingly received their oblation and the incense of spices, and as a man reareth up his son in pleasant things, so tenderly did He nourish them; and as a man gathereth roses out of the valleys, so did He assemble them together out of Babylon."

- Ghislerius. And, not dissimilarly, the Fathers take it of the special aid which CHRIST gives His Church in time of need, going down into it, that it may go up unto Him. And though this time of need may be variously understood, yet there can be little doubt that S. Gregory Nyssen is right in understanding it first and chiefly of the first Advent of CHRIST in the flesh, when the whole creation was groaning and travailing in pain, and looking for the promised Deliverer. He went *down*, for the sake of that man who going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among thieves; *down* from His unspeakable majesty to our lowly nature. He came into His *garden*, as the True Gardener and Husbandman, to plant it anew; for we men, as saith the Apostle, "are GOD's husbandry." Seeing then that it was He Who tilled in Paradise at the beginning of the world the garden of human nature which the Heavenly FATHER planted, and that the wild boar and singular beast preyed on that garden, to wit, ourselves, and rooted up the field of GOD, He came down to deck that garden once more by planting virtues there, and by sending through it, by the channels of His Word, the pure and holy fount of doctrine, to cherish the plants. He comes not merely to the garden generally, but in especial to the *beds of spices*, in that He seeks in preference those souls where there is no mere desert, barren of virtues, but where the spices and odours of holiness abound. It is said, too, that He comes into His *garden*, which is one, to feed in the *gardens*, which are many; and that because the Church Universal, which is His garden, contains within it many local and particular Churches, and each such Church many devout souls which He delights to visit; and to *gather lilies*, that is, to take away for Himself out of this world those holy souls which by maturity in sanctification have attained to perfect whiteness, that He may cause them to rejoice evermore with Him in eternal blessedness. And that He might do all this, He went down into
- S. Greg. Nyss. Hom. 15.
- S. Luke x. 30.
- 1 Cor. iii. 9.
- Ps. lxxx. 13.
- Theodoret. Philo Carp.
- Cassiod.

that garden where they laid Him in Joseph's new tomb, and there too, by appearing to Mary Magdalen, He consecrated the first-fruits of the Church. He went also into that other garden of His when He descended into hell, to those *beds of spices*, the holy Fathers and Patriarchs who awaited His coming, to Abel and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Job, David and other great Saints before and under the Law. He entered Paradise also in triumph after He had pierced down to hell. And GOD Himself is our witness to this fact, in that He mercifully replied to the thief upon the Cross, who devoutly commended himself to Him; "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise;" that is, thou shalt see and behold My Divine glory, Myself, and My garden of delights (for such is the meaning of Paradise,) and there thou shalt feed and rejoice for ever, where no weariness or satiety can come. Hence it is, pursues the Bishop of Carpasia, that in the fragrant gardens of human souls, glowing throughout the world with Christian faith and charity, GOD Himself *feeds*; and thence He gathers, to deck His bridal chamber, the white and perfumed garlands of His *lilies*, the Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs and all Saints. Had He not first gone down into His garden to overcome the sharpness of death, never could He have delighted Himself with His holy feeding in the gardens, that is, in the many Churches of the faithful throughout the world. And when He was gone and turned aside from the unbelieving Jews, to whom it was necessary that the Word of GOD should first be spoken, He turned to the Gentiles, because those to whom He came judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life. And thus He went down into His garden to the beds of spices. For out of the Gentile nations, and out of the fanes and temples, He made for Himself beds of spices and a fruitful garden, casting out thence the filthiness of idolatry, that He might feed in those gardens and gather thence lilies, Virgins and Martyrs, Confessors and Doctors, and just persons, both men and women; and be fed there with the food of worship, of sacrifice, oblations, and prayer. And He is said to have *gone down* from the Jewish people to the Gentiles, as from the more worthy, which worshipped GOD, to the less worthy, which worshipped idols. He came, in His Incarnation, into His garden the Church, but He came first to the choicest spot of all that garden,

S. John xix. 41.

Philo Carp.

S. Luke xxiii. 43.

Acts xiii. 46.

Parez.

the bed where the most fragrant spices grew, to the spotless Maiden at Nazareth, where He might gather the white lilies of purity and holiness as nowhere else. And there is another garden besides those of the Church and the soul, where He comes to meet His Bride, which is the reading of Holy Scripture, whence He gathers for her lilies, violets, roses, and divers spices, to fill the beds of believing souls, and to pluck thence abundantly lilies of the LORD.

S. Hieron.
Com. in
Zachar.

Dora Green-
well, *Car-
mina Crucis.*

“O what are these lilies tipped
With fire, that sword-like gleam?
O what are these lilies dipped
As in the pale moon-beam,
That quiver with unsteadfast light,
And shine as through a dream?”

“These fiery spirits passed
From earth through sword and flame;
These quiet souls at last
Through patience overcame;
These shine like stars on high, and these
Have left no trace nor name;
I bind them in one wreath, because
Their triumph was the same.”

3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

After her fall, and her repentance, the Bride, returning to her first love, is enabled once more to speak of Him as in the days of her earliest fervour. Her LORD called upon her by the memory of that happy time, saying, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the LORD, and the first-fruits of His increase.” And as it was in the trials and sufferings of the wilderness that she first learnt to know Him, so it is by trials and suffering that He purifies her, and brings her to Him again; as it is written in another place: “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.” Thus, as S. Gregory Nyssen teaches, she has become so like her Beloved by conforming herself absolutely to His will,

Cocceius.

Jer. ii. 2.

Hos. ii. 14.

S. Greg.
Nyssen.

that all who behold her feel as the spectators of a skilfully painted portrait, or as those who look on an image reflected in a mirror, that they see not a mere representation, but the very original itself. Nay, the Bride herself, irradiated with the light of God's glory, wherein she beholds shadowed His wondrous attributes of beauty, goodness, wisdom, and love, is tranced at the sight, and so absorbed in Him that she has no heed for aught else, and neither sees nor hears anything which pertains to earth. *I for my Beloved*, she says, prepare the food He loves. *My Beloved for me* will provide the grace of perfection, the reward of eternal life. *I for My beloved* prepare a mansion in myself. *My Beloved is mine* because He dwells in me, and makes me dwell in Him, as He says Himself in the Gospel, "Ye in Me, and I in you."

S. Thomas
Aquinas.
Sec. Secund.
Q. 175, art. 2.

Cassiodor.

Honorius.

S. John xiv.
20.

Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death can bow
My least desires unto the least remove;
He's firmly mine by oath; I His by vow;
He's mine by faith, and I am His by love;
He's mine by water; I am His by wine;
Thus I my best Beloved's am, thus He is mine.

Francis
Quarles.
Emblems,
v. 3.

He is my Altar, I His holy place;
I am His guest, and He my living Food;
I His by penitence; He mine by grace;
I His by purchase; He is mine by Blood;
He's my supporting elm; and I His vine;
Thus I my best Beloved's am, thus He is mine.

He gives me wealth, I give Him all my vows;
I give Him songs; He gives me length of days;
With wreaths of grace He crowns my conquering brows;
And I His temples with a wreath of praise;
Which He accepts; an everlasting sign
That I my best Beloved's am, that He is mine.

And observe the change in the order of the words from that earlier passage where the same Divine truth was enunciated. Before, it was said, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," "because He first loved us." Now, she has learned to love Him, not as perfectly as He deserves, nor as He loves her, but yet in such wise that she can feel that she is not merely taken possession of by Him, but that she willingly and joyfully gives herself up to Him for ever. This, then, is the full promise of the marriage bond. The Bridegroom has made His vows, and plighted His troth to her already, and now she is asked to plight hers in turn, that as He promises to

if. 16.

1 S. John iv.
19.

Delrio.

Henr.
Harpius.

love her, comfort her, honour her, keep her in sickness and in health, and endow her with all His goods, so she in her turn promises loving obedience and steadfast faith to Him. This is the fulfilment of that which He spake unto her by the Prophet, "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD." And as the essence of marriage consists in mutual consent, CHRIST the Bridegroom asks for the heart of His Bride, saying, "Give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways." For there is none other to whom she may so profitably, happily, and honourably give it, since it is well to bestow the heart on such a Bridegroom as can alone be sufficient for the heart, as the Bride herself saith with the Psalmist, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Only the love of God, then, which is the union of a fitting Bridegroom with a suitable Bride, makes spiritual marriage. For charity, which, according to the Apostle, "is the bond of perfectness," makes us agree perfectly with God, and therefore establishes perfect marriage between God and the soul, binding God to the heart and the heart to God by a spousal bond, and knitting it so closely to Him, that whoso thus clings to God is made one spirit with Him. Consider then, O soul, if thy love is yet to give, where thou canst better fix it than on Him Who is fairer than the children of men, in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid. If thy love is for sale, does not He buy it at the great price of His own Blood, lovingly forestalling thee, and faithfully ransoming thee? Moreover, this Bridegroom is a Virgin, and the Child of a Virgin, Who desires to have a virgin Bride. And according to the Law, it is ruled that the High Priest "shall take a wife in her virginity;" wherefore the Apostle saith, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to CHRIST." Yet fear not, O soul, for so often as thou art cleansed by grace, thou art counted as a virgin; art freed from the corruption of sin, pure through love, asking, seeking, and desiring one thing, and that the one thing needful. And this is the great difference between earthly and spiritual marriage, that in the former a virgin ceases to be such, but in the

Hos. ii. 19.

Prov. xxiii.
26.

Ps. lxxiii. 25.

Col. iii. 14.

Lev. xxi. 13.

2 Cor. xi. 2.

latter a soul which has been stained is made a virgin; whence blessed Agnes saith, "Whom when I love, I am pure, when I touch; I am undefiled, when I receive, I am a virgin." The beginning of this bridal is by faith in Baptism, it is confirmed by progress in holiness, it is consummated in glory, when the soul is inseparably joined to CHRIST. And there are three blessings attached to this spiritual marriage, as to all true and loving marriages of earth, mutual faith, offspring, and indissoluble union. The spiritual offspring of the soul and GOD, of Divine grace and free-will, is threefold, active pursuit of good, passive avoidance of evil, patient endurance of suffering; the inseparable bond which shall unite them in glory is also a triple cord, conformity in holiness, identity of will, perfectness of inward love. And as fire melts two masses of metal into one, so the fervour of this love melts the soul, and causes it to flow into GOD, and thus be united with Him, thenceforward to be parted from Him nevermore. Further, as all marriage is sealed with a solemn pledge, so it is in the vows of the Religious Life that this bridal of the soul and GOD is most frequently seen. Not but that countless great Saints in other vocations have been firmly knit to Him, but that nevertheless the saying of the Apostle holds, and must always hold good in the main, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the LORD, how he may please the LORD; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the LORD, that she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, that she may please her husband." And as in the discharge of our obligations there is more acceptability in giving that which we are not bound to pay, but which we do pay for love's sake, therefore it is that such especial honour is yielded to the Religious Life. Wherefore a great Saint speaks thus of the Brides of CHRIST, those *lilies* among which the Beloved feeds: "'With joy and gladness shall they be brought, and enter into the King's palace.'" Not they who have submitted to virginity by compulsion, not they who have adopted a celibate life from sorrow or necessity, but they who with joy and gladness delight in this good thing, these shall be brought unto the

S. Thomas
Aquinas.

1 Cor. vii.
32.

S. Hieron.
ad Pollent.

S. Basil. M.
in Ps. xlv.

King, and be brought into no common places, but into the King's temple. (LXX.) For the sacred vessels, which no human use has defiled, may be carried into the Holy of holies, and are permitted entrance into that shrine where no profane feet may tread."

J. M. Neale,
The Hymn,
Christ's own
Martyrs.

CHRIST'S dear Virgins, glorious lilies,
Tell us how ye kept unstained
Snowiest petals through the tempest,
Till eternal spring ye gained :
Snowiest still, albeit with crimson
Some more precious leaves were stained ?

"In the place where He was buried
There was found a garden nigh ;
In that garden us He planted,
Teaching us with Him to die,
Till to Paradise He moved us,
There to bloom eternally."

4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with
banners.

The word *Tirzah*,¹ implying "pleasantness," has not been translated as a proper name by the LXX. and Vulgate, which severally read *εὐδοκία* and *suavis*. But taking it first as we have it here in the A. V., the mystical import is that the life of the Bride, even as militant in this world, (of which the northern kingdom, with its capital Tirzah, is a type) has a beauty and attractiveness which rivals all earthly bliss, besides that yet greater loveliness which belongs to her in her triumph when she has reached her Country, and attained to the Vision of Peace. And that, because she has now been conformed to her Bridegroom, the Eternal Wisdom, of Whom Solomon elsewhere saith, "Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom . . . her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Prov. iii. 13,
17.

¹ The juxtaposition of these two names supplies an item of internal evidence as to the date of the Song of songs. Tirzah became the first capital of the northern kingdom, after the revolution of the ten tribes under Jeroboam I., (1 Kings xiv. 17.) The wars, jealousies, and religious differences which

thenceforward divided Israel and Judah, make it all but certain that no southern poet would have praised Tirzah, and no northern one Jerusalem, at least so as to couple them. Thus the actual reign of Solomon is the most probable era of the composition.

Accordingly, the LORD Himself tells His Apostles :
 " Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold more in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." Those Fathers, however, who explain the verse of the Church, do not contrast here the Militant and Triumphant divisions of it, but the Gentile and Jewish. The WORD, remarks S. Athanasius, beholding and approving the faith of the Gentiles, saith, *Thou art beautiful, My love, as approval, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as forces in array.* For they who are come from the Gentiles ought not to be unlike Jerusalem, that there may be but one people, for this is so when we honour the Law and believe in CHRIST. For the GOD of the Law and of the Gospels is One, and whoso is not made like to Jerusalem, does not become the Bridegroom's friend. So too S. Gregory the Great : "The Synagogue is called *beautiful, and love, sweet, and comely as Jerusalem*, because when converted, she will follow the four Holy Gospels as does the Church. Hence she derives beauty of conduct, so as to please, she gathers training in holy action, that she may abide in love; she learns the sweetness of meekness, that she may persevere; she exhibits the comeliness of fair conversation, that she may attract by her example." This Church of the LORD is *terrible* to heretics, unbelievers, and evil spirits, by reason of the number and valour of her warriors, their long training in arms, their loyalty, zeal, and unanimity in battle; because of the alliance of the Angels; and yet more, in that she is aided by the presence of the mightiest of Kings, ready to protect His subjects. And so it is written : "The shout of a king is among them," and as Captain of the LORD's host is He come. *As an army in array*, for in the foremost line is the King Himself with His generals the Apostles; in the second, the army of Martyrs; in the third, the company of the Confessors.

S. Mark x.
29.S. Athan.
Synopsis.

S. Greg. M.

Hugo Card.

Numb. xxiii.
21.

Josh. v. 14.

Let angelic armies
 Guard us on each side,
 But Thyself as Leader
 First in battle ride;

Thou Whose Name is Faithful,
 Thou Whose vesture glows
 White with perfect pureness,
 Red with blood of foes.

Again, the Church is *beautiful* in the devout lives of her Saints; she is the Bridegroom's *love* in those to whom by holy love His secrets are disclosed; *sweet* in those who are busied in works of mercy; *comely* in her contemplative and hermit Saints; *terrible as an army in array*, by reason of her Religious Orders, militant under rule, and each company under its own chief, or spiritual Superior. And following that other version, *as an army with banners*, we are reminded by the Targum of the twelvefold array of the children of Israel in their march through the wilderness, every man pitching "by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." In the vanguard is the victorious standard of the King Himself:

Targum.

Numb. ii. 2.

S. Ven. Fort.
 The Hymn,
Vexilla Re-
gis.

The Royal Banners forward go,
 The Cross shines forth in mystic glow;

Numb. ii. 3.

Corn. à Lap.

even as it is written, "On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies," but behind it clusters many a banner and pennon of the inferior chieftains of the host. There is the ruddy Rose of the Martyrs, the candent Lily of the Virgins, the golden Chain of the Doctors, the starry Crown of the Confessors. There too—as in ancient Rome, where every especial type of military valour had its own appropriate crown, one like the beaks of ships for a naval victory, one like the battlements of a city for him who first scaled the enemy's wall, one like the palisades of a camp for the leader in storming the intrenchments—gleam the ensigns which tell of the armorial bearings won by each champion in his hardest fight. There is the lion which sent Ignatius to his reward; there are the anchor of Clement, the grating of Laurence, the fiery chair of Blandina, the arrowy sheaf of Edmund the King, and countless other tokens of victory in many a well-fought field, once tossed to and fro by the stormy breezes of earth, now hung up for ever in the peaceful calm of heaven, yet not so high but that we may see them still. And all this is true in its degree of every holy soul which makes one in the ranks of that great army, *beautiful*, because of

Luc. Abb.

her gentle ways ; *sweet*, in pureness of heart ; *comely as Jerusalem*, from its love of peace ; *terrible*, with the arms of truth and purity. Comely as *Jerusalem*, also because imitating here the life of the Angels, pondering on earth the thoughts of heaven, following after the prize of her high calling, seeking the things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of God. And not only comely, but *terrible* to beholders, because of her set *array*, having nothing irregular, uncertain, confused, but all things in due order and judgment. For, as Philo and S. Gregory aptly say, it is well known to the experienced that soldiers, when advancing in array against the enemy, if they march in close order and keep step together, are feared by the foes that come against them, because they see no gap in the ranks whereby they may pierce them. So too, in our war against evil spirits, the unity of faith, the cheerfulness of hope, the bond of charity, are what make us terrible, since, if there be discord and schism in the body, it is no hard task for the enemy to rout it. *In array*, not only because of the orderly regulation of all the faculties, powers, and habits of each soul within itself, but by reason of each soldier in the great army of God having his own appointed place in its ranks, according to his order and calling, and thus by faith and obedience being *sweet* to man, *comely* to the Angels, *terrible* to evil spirits. And finally, they apply the verse fitly to S. Mary, *beautiful* in her holiness, *sweet* in gentle meekness ; *comely as Jerusalem*, because in her peace was made between God and man, when she became the abode of the Prince of peace, and palace of the King ; *terrible as an army in array*, because compassed by the ranks of the Angels.

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

Hugo Card.

Cassiod.

Hugo Vict.

Erud. Theol.

ii. 1.

Rupert.

Alanus.

Guilielmus

Parvus.

5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me : thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Overcome me. The LXX. and Vulgate, with little difference, *have given me wings, or made me fly away.* The beauty of thine eyes, the contemplation of thy vision, and the clearness of thy mental sight have drawn Me to thy love, but gaze not steadfastly on Me beyond measure, lest thou shouldst suffer some harm thence. For I am past searching out, and incompre-

Theodoret.

- hensible, not only by men, but by angels; and if thou shouldst pass the bounds, and vainly occupy thyself with matters above thy powers, not only wilt thou fail in thy search, but thou wilt make thine eye dimmer and feebler. For such is the nature of light that just as it illuminates the eye, so it punishes with hurt its insatiability. Therefore *turn away thine eyes from Me*; search not out things that are too hard, seek not that which is too mighty for thee, but ponder evermore upon that which is enjoined thee. I have given thee doves' eyes, wherewith thou mayest behold Me, and penetrate most keenly the hidden things of Scripture, but beware lest thou shouldst direct them to look on Me now, for whilst thou art in this present life, thou canst not, "for there shall no man see Me, and live." But, when freed from the fetters of the body, thou shalt attain to Me, then thou shalt behold Me in open vision, and that shall be fulfilled which is promised in the Gospel, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My FATHER, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." In that it is said, *for they have made Me fly away*, it is not to be supposed that GOD deserts those who seek Him and departs from them, seeing that He Himself commands, "Seek and ye shall find;" but it is rather to be understood that the more any one aims at searching out GOD's divine majesty, the more clearly he understands how unsearchable and incomprehensible it is. Again, they take the words as denoting fervent love, and not any warning. *Turn away thine eyes* of prayer and meditation from Me for a little, since they have forced Me to so much, have made Me *fly away* from My throne in heaven to the manger on earth, have made Me fly away from the unbelieving Jewish people to the faithful Gentile Church. *Turn away thine eyes* from My bodily presence, not always desiring to see Me in the flesh, Whom thou mayest see better in the Spirit by faith. For therefore I ascended into heaven, that I, Who fill all things with My divine presence, might not always seem to thee tied to place, Who am everywhere, Who contain all things, and am uncontained in any place. *Turn away* not merely *thy* fleshly eyes from Me, but eyes clouded with sin, since they make Me fly away, but look on Me with the eyes of holy contemplation, and I will draw near. The marginal reading of A. V., *they have puffed Me up*, is nearly that
- Cassiod.
- Exod. xxxiii.
20.
- S. John xiv.
21.
- S. Luke xi.
9.
- Dion. Carth.
Parez.
- S. Just. Org.
- Luc. Abb.

adopted and commented on by S. Ambrose, as though CHRIST were saying to the soul, If thou be perfect, yet there are other souls remaining for Me to redeem and prop up, wherefore *turn away thine eyes from Me, for they lift Me up*, but I came down to lift all up. And he explains this somewhat obscure comment more clearly by adding that a teacher who wishes to lecture on a difficult subject to an audience, however learned and eloquent he may be, yet lowers himself to the standard of those who are uninstructed, and uses simple language, that he may be understood. Hence the words are an injunction to preachers and Christian Saints in general to withdraw at times from contemplation and from discussing the darker mysteries of the Faith, that they may teach the babes in CHRIST, and appeal to them with the simplest language of the Gospel and the plainest object-lessons of good works.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac. 8.

There is yet another rendering, found both in some ancient writers and in modern critics. *Turn thine eyes towards Me, for they encourage Me*. And then it may be explained of the devotion of those few faithful ones who clung ever to their LORD, even at the Cross itself, as being the one and only help His human nature had in bearing up against all the sorrows of His life and Passion. And especially when His dear Mother stood by His Cross, gazing on Him with sorrowful eyes, the thought that He was dying for her salvation braced Him to endure unto the end. There are not wanting those who, following this version, put the words into the mouth of the Bride, and make her ask that those blessed eyes may look on her, to strengthen her for the battle; or, following in part the other rendering, to give her wings that she may flee away from the world, may direct her flight into the hole of the rock, and there, in the wounded Side, be in safety and at rest.

Targum.
Psellus.
Weissbach.

Ainsworth.

Psellus.

I heard the voice of JESUS say,
"I am this dark world's Light,
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to JESUS, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun,
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.

Bonar.

Thy hair is as a flock of goats. Here begins a repetition of some of the words of praise with which the

Cassiodor.
Beda.

fourth chapter opens, on which S. Beda, expanding Cassiodorus, observes, "These verses, as well as the succeeding ones, have occurred before, and have been fully explained so far as we had understanding to do it. But we ought not to be weary of repeating in exposition what the author of the sacred poem was not weary of repeating in composition; either that we may recall to mind what has been said before, or, by the help of divine grace, may produce something fresh and profitable. For when these, and countless other passages in Scripture, already uttered, are repeated, it is a token of firmness, that it is indeed the Word of GOD, and will truly be fulfilled, as the Patriarch Joseph testifies when explaining the dream of the king."

Gen. xli. 32.

S. Greg.
Nyss.

We are told, then, of additional reasons for comparing the Saints to goats. The goat was constantly offered in sacrifice, and the devout offer, by penitence for their

Rom. xli. 1.

sins, of which the goat is also a type, their "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD." Goats, preferring steep and rocky places, up which they bound with swift but silent footfall, are types of those who deliberately choose a hard and austere life, and pass their time chiefly in silent ascent of the steep Way of perfection. And in that it is said a *flock* of goats, we are taught the need of union in the Church and in Religious Orders, for as there is no beauty in the hair if it consist of but a few scanty threads, neither is there beauty in that Church or community which is rent asunder by schisms and disputes. And R. Ishaki

Hugo Card.

goes at length into the various sacred uses to which both sheep and goats were put, to enforce the lesson that every act and faculty of a devout soul can be pressed into the service of GOD. The fleece and hairs were woven into curtains for the sanctuary, the flesh was offered in sacrifice, the horns were made into trumpets, the leg-bones were used for flutes, the entrails for stringing harps, the skin for covering drums; whereas no part of the dog could be applied to any holy purpose, just as the entire life of a sinner is displeasing to the LORD.

Delrio.

6 Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

These *teeth*, says Cassiodorus, are the words of the Church, pure and clean, firm and strong; *twins* in uttering the twofold law of love to GOD and to our neighbour. They are the Saints purified by regeneration, which bear *twins*, observes S. Epiphanius, because each soul goes down alone into the font of Baptism, and comes back joined by the HOLY GHOST, so that they two go over on dry ground. They are twins, in the double guard over soul and body, in the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, in the promises of GOD for this life and for that which is to come. Cocceius, agreeing with some others in taking these verses to refer to a later period of the Church's history than the earlier panegyric does, bids us observe the absence of the epithet *even* or *shorn*, which occurs in the parallel passage in the fourth chapter, and thence argues that some inferiority of the Church of the latter days to that of the primitive age is implied, chiefly in the more relaxed discipline, which permits irregularities and errors which would have been sternly repressed in the era of martyrdom.

Cassiodor.

S. Epiphanius.

2 Kings ii. 8.
Beda.

Cocceius.

7 As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Here too they have little to add. Aponius takes the cheeks here to be those who have fallen into post-baptismal sin, and who, washed anew with tears of repentance, beautify the face of the Church with the ruddy blush of shame. And they are compared to the *rind of the pomegranates* (Vulg.) itself not ruddy, which encloses the bright colour, because their example restrains others from falling into like sin, albeit those others know nothing of the roughness and hardness of penance. Philo of Carpasia sees the mingled glow of faith and hope in every holy soul that serves the LORD, *besides that which lies hid within* (LXX.) the numerous seeds of good works and devout thoughts, hidden within the rough rind of the fruit, but one day to be disclosed by the Bridegroom Who alone knows them now. Cardinal Hugo, explaining the words of the preachers of the Church, likened to pomegranates because of the firm rind and the many seeds, calls their purity and fervour the red and white which vie in the cheeks, and that *without the hidden things* (Vulg.) meaning either that even their outer life is holy, with-

Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.

Hugo Card.

out taking into account the more precious inner devotion, or else that their venial sins of ignorance are not enough to mar their spiritual beauty. And these verses are repeated, observes S. Justus of Urgel, because GOD is foretelling, with the fruit of His twofold love, the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles, and describing the glory and merits of the Martyrs in these two portions of His Church.

8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

That these several titles denote three classes of believing souls is the view of most commentators, although there is some diversity in their explanation. The *queens*, according to Origen, are the perfect souls; the *concubines*, wives of the same royal husband, but of inferior rank, and without right of succession to the throne for their children, are those which are progressing, and the *virgins* those only beginning the way of holiness, and still outside the King's palace, though within the royal city. S. Gregory Nyssen and others, not very dissimilarly, take the *queens* to be those who serve GOD for love; the *concubines*, those who do so through fear; the *virgins*, imperfect believers, looking nevertheless for salvation. And S. Justus of Urgel, accepting this view, explains the application of the titles, saying that the first are called *queens*, because they are not the servants of sin, for "where the Spirit of the LORD is, there is liberty;" the *concubines* are those who receive the seed of the Word of GOD, but bring forth carnal, not spiritual fruit; and the *virgins without number* are that great multitude which is always willing enough to listen to good and holy things, but is by no means equally ready to carry what it hears into action, and so has no spiritual offspring as yet. Philo gives a different interpretation, seeing in the *queens* those who led righteous lives before the Law and under it; in the *concubines*, those Gentiles who lived only by the law of nature, and fell into grievous sin of idolatry, but were at last united to CHRIST by conversion; and in the *virgins*, the general mass of Christian believers, not distinguished by any remarkable graces. And S. Epiphanius, agreeing that the *queens* denote the Patriarchs from whom CHRIST

S. Just. Org.

Origen.
Hom. 2.

S. Greg.
Nyss.
Theodoret.
Tres Patr.
Rupert.

S. Just. Org.

2 Cor. iii. 17.

Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.

Cont. Hær.
lib. iii.

descended, takes the *concubines* to be the heretical sects of Christendom, and the *virgins* to be the countless schools of heathen philosophy. Others will have it that the *queens* are the Doctors of the Church (with which agrees the curious comment of S. Epiphanius in his gloss on the Canticles, that the *threescore* queens are the souls of the *threescore* valiant men who guard Solomon's bed,) admitted to the bed of CHRIST by faith and knowledge, and bringing forth spiritual children for Him; while the *concubines* are those who preach CHRIST indeed, but not of sincerity, and only for temporal gain or popular applause. These too bring forth spiritual children, but are themselves alien from the crown of the everlasting kingdom. And the *virgins* are those souls regenerate in CHRIST, which have laid aside the old man and are renewed, but are not as yet fitted for the nuptials of the King, nor able to preach CHRIST at all. And now, before coming to the mystical explanation of the numbers, the remark of S. Augustine may be referred to, that the discrepancy between this passage and that wherein it is written that Solomon "had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines," gives evidence that the Song of songs dates at an early period of his reign, before the sins of his old age.

The queens are *threescore*, say they, for these reasons, because they fulfil the ten moral precepts of the Law in the six days of mortal work, or because they govern their five senses by the teaching of the twelve Apostles. Another, and still quainter exposition, is that of Aponius, who sees here the union of the Churches of the Old and New Covenant, the Saints of each being *thirty*, because the number *ten*, denoting fulfilment of God's commandments, was multiplied thrice before the coming of CHRIST, by the law of nature, the ordinance of circumcision given to Abraham, and the Law of Moses; while after the preaching of the Gospel this same number ten is found repeated in the baptized, the penitent, and the Martyrs. The concubines are *fourscore*, says Theodoret, because they differ from the queens in their motive for serving God. For whereas the queens fulfil God's commandments during the six working days, looking to the seventh, which is rest, the concubines think of the eighth day, that awful Day of Judgment, the first of the new creation, and are

Cassiod.
Beda.
S. Ans. Laud.

S. August.
Cont. Faust.
Manichæum.

1 Kings xi.
3.

Cassiod.
Theodoret.

Luc. Abb.

Theodoret.

obedient, only because they fear condemnation.¹ Much less happy than this, because abandoning the recognised mystical meaning of the number eight—the new birth of creation, one more than the seven days of the week, whence the octagonal form of mediæval fonts—is the interpretation which sees here worldly compliance with God's Law, eight being supposed to designate the world, ruled by four seasons in its four quarters. Better than this, though not working clearly out, is that other suggestion that here are intended souls striving by obedience to obtain even the smallest blessing of some one of those eight beatitudes which are all granted to the perfect. The virgins are *without number*, because they have not yet been entered on the roll of the elect. For if they were so entered, their number would be known, as the Apostle saith, "The LORD knoweth them that are His;" and as the LORD Himself saith, "I know whom I have chosen." But if they were on the other muster-roll, that of Babylon, their number would be known too, and therefore their lot is not yet fixed, till they hear that saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," and elect between the LORD and Baal.

Cassiod.

Hugo Card.

Luc. Abb.
S. Greg. M.

2 Tim. ii. 19.

S. John xiii.
18.
Guilielmus.Josh. xxiv.
15; 1 Kings
xviii. 21.

9 My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

Cassiod.

Eph. iv. 5.

That is, notes Cassiodorus, there is but one Catholic Church diffused throughout the world, which, though consisting of queens and virgins, has also concubines in it, that is, such as are Christians or teachers in name only. The Church is *one*, because she does not admit of rending and schism, but as there is "One God, one faith, one baptism," so there is one Church Universal, which is also rightly called a *dove*, because she is betrothed and hallowed to CHRIST by the dowry of the HOLY SPIRIT, Who appeared in the form of a dove.

¹ This is a very forcible way of putting that view which was universally held by theologians till the lax days of the sixteenth century, that mere servile dread of hell is no true motive to holiness, and is of the nature of sin.

The Church is *one* before the Law, under the Law, and under grace. *One*, because created for the "one thing needful," that one thing which she hath desired of the LORD; *one*, because the Bride of one Husband. *The only one of her mother.* That is, as some have it, the sole representative on earth of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Mother of us all; or, as others say, the one true lineal successor of that primitive Apostolic Church from which all local Churches spring. Or, again, they take it of the Synagogue, which has never had any other spiritual offspring than Christianity. A yet deeper view than any of these interprets the *mother* to be divine grace, which bore the Church in the font of regeneration, through the means of Incarnate Wisdom. One Latin Father will have it that the pure and spotless Humanity of CHRIST is here intended, the only offspring of His Virgin Mother, the choice, elect One of His mother the Synagogue, elect as the One Sacrifice, the One Mediator between GOD and man. Spoken of the holy soul, the verse tells of her perfect and steadfast union with GOD, her advance in sanctification of the Spirit, her election from amongst the daughters, hirelings, and servants, to a share, through grace, in the throne of Godhead itself. And she is *one*, because endowed with the spirit of peace and unity, single in heart, and not made up of warring and dissonant elements, but simple, harmonious, and at rest. It is true of Our Lady, notes Psellus, purer than cherubim and seraphim, the only one of earthly Saints who is the true likeness of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the one elect daughter of her mother the ancient Church, of Patriarchs, Kings, and Prophets, the *only one*, for neither before nor since was there, nor can there be any such; His *dove*, because full of grace; *elect*, because not merely saved, but the bringer-forth of salvation.

The daughters saw her and blessed her. In this collocation we have at once the fulfilment of her own prophecy, "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." But applying the words to the Church, Philo says very well: By *the daughters of Sion* (LXX.) those holy men of old, the souls of the Patriarchs and all the Prophets, are intended who beheld afar off this Bride as yet to come in the Bridegroom Who was to be born, and the Apostles by their preaching united her to the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Hugo Card.
S. Luke x.
42.
Ps. xxvii. 4.
Philo Carp.

Cassiod.

S. Ans. Laud.
Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.

Luc. Abb.

Tres Patr.

S. Ambros.

Psellus.

Rupert.

S. Luke i.
48.

Philo Carp.

And this He Himself plainly declares, when He teaches that they were mindful and thankful for so great a blessing, saying, "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." And the words may also be applied to Churches and any faithful souls, which look with longing at that Church as they see her triumphing in this mortal life, and are thereby lifted up daily more and more from this militant and pilgrim state unto life everlasting. *And blessed her.* The Vulgate reads, *called her most blessed.*

S. Mat. xiii. 17. Blessed in her spiritual wealth, more blessed in her numerous children, *most blessed* in the bridal and embraces of the Bridegroom. And note that it is said that the daughters *saw* her and blessed her, whereas it is said of the queens and concubines that they *praised* her, without adding that they saw her. It is because

Hugo Card. "the King's daughter is all glorious within," and only those holy souls which are truly GOD's children can see that inner beauty, since they look for the Kingdom of GOD, while "the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth." The queens and concubines, types now of the outer world, do not *bless* the Church, for they have no desire for her prosperity, but they are compelled, in their own despite, to *praise* her, to extol the valour of her Martyrs and the purity of her Virgins.

Ps. xlv. 14. Aponius, taking the words of CHRIST'S Humanity, explains that the heavenly host, citizens of Jerusalem on high, when they saw that holy Body, united to the FATHER'S love, born upon earth, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and yet resplendent with glorious majesty, called Him most blessed, bursting out with their song, "Glory to GOD in the highest." Most blessed, truly, for only in that One Person did all the Beatitudes meet, one of which alone is enough to make others blessed in their degree.

Prov. xvii. 24. S. Just. Org. Luc. Abb.

10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

Here is set forth for us the gradual progress of the Church or of the holy soul, as it goes on in holiness, advancing to the perfect day. Honorius of Autun, recognizing the identity of the Church of GOD through

Honorius.

all the phases of its existence, tells us that the *morning* signifies the Patriarchal dispensation; the *moon* the Mosaic Law, drawing its light from the unseen sun, and gradually crescent to the full, while the *sun* denotes the full light of the Gospel revelation. Or, if the words be limited to the Christian Church, they may be taken of its small beginnings in Judea, when it was hidden from the world at large, and then was fair as the moon, indeed, but pale with the light of suffering, terror, and martyrdom during the Ten Persecutions, till under Constantine it became like the sun, visible in faith and glory through the world, and *terrible as an army*, because then began its active career against heresy and Paganism, which it had combated before only with the passive weapons of endurance. Another view, but partially different from this one, is accepted by several Fathers, who put these words into the mouth of the repentant Synagogue at the end of the world, or else into that of the Angels who attend the Bridegroom. The Church *looketh forth as the morning*, in passing from the clouds of darkness, and beginning to shine with the light of truth; she is *fair as the moon* in this life, borrowing all her brightness from the Sun of Righteousness, and crescent or waning according as she is in prosperity or adversity; *clear as the sun*, in the world to come, when radiant with the open vision of her Creator. And the words may be taken not only of the Church Universal at three epochs of her existence, but of the three classes of beginners, who are leaving their sins behind and making their first steps towards light; of progressing Christians, setting a good example to sinners, like the *moon* shining in the night; and of Saints, who serve as patterns even for the good, and are therefore like the *sun*, shining in broad day. And S. Bernard, limiting the reference further to the Religious Life, sees here the three principal virtues which befit a community; humility, which is the *dawn* or *morning*, driving away the darkness and heralding the light, because it is the line of distinction between the righteous and the sinner; chastity, denoted by the *moon*, and charity, which resembles the *sun*, and makes the Common Life the terror of evil spirits.

Corn. & Lap.

Cassiodor.
Theodoret.S. Ambros.
Hexaëm.
iv. 8.

Philo Carp.

S. Greg. M.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 60,
ex parvis.

Spoken of the faithful soul during the progress of her sanctification, Philo notes that she is fitly compared to the dawn, because as the dawn brings a slight

Philo Carp.

chill with it, and the arising of the light of heaven, so too every faithful soul and spouse that turns to righteousness from an evil life, begins to contemplate the first rays of the light of Salvation, and to feel the restful lowering of the heat of sin by that cold which checks it. And there are some, moreover, who when carefully pondering what punishments and grievous torments are prepared for the ungodly, and those everlasting, begin to examine their lives and habits strictly, and so minutely to review themselves, and all their words and deeds, as to cast away at once the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, making themselves radiant with acts of righteousness and holiness, and thus are said to arise as the dawn from the darkness. Not as He arises, Who is the Day-spring from on high, for of Him it is written, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds." She has to make her way slowly and painfully through the mists of error and clouds of temptation, and her first turning to GOD will appear sombre and chill enough, for it has been usually true of GOD's greatest Saints that a time of struggle and comparative darkness preceded their fuller knowledge of Him, that—

2 Sam. xxlii.
4.Milton,
Par. Reg.
iv. 426.

morning fair,
Comes forth with pilgrim steps in amice grey.

Neale.

But, as the advancing sun turns the black clouds into purple, and the white into gold, so the very trials and difficulties of the soul become, through GOD's grace, new beauties, royal apparel for her, His Bride.

Philo Carp.

Fair as the moon is she too, because whatever divine light she possesses she receives from the Sun of Righteousness, steadfast and divine, what time she places herself meekly before Him; and, like the moon, she now seems to decrease and wane through temptation and sufferings, and again to become new and crescent when her cruel enemies have been routed. Or else because she will one day fail altogether in bodily death, and at the last arise again with all the righteous to everlasting glory, never more to pass through phases of change, but to abide immortal and most blessed. Thus the second comparison exhibits progress, but two things are yet lacking, the steadfastness which knows no change, the light which is not merely clear, but warm and quickening. Faith has broken through the

clouds of night; Hope, even in the night of this world, yields a calm radiance, telling of something more glorious and genial, teaching the world what must be that splendour of which she is but the faint shadow: Dion. Carth.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth.

Addison,
The Hymn,
*The spacious
firmament.*

And S. Gregory dilates on this theme as follows: The moon, as she illuminates the earth, shows to clouded eyes the path by which man should go. So the soul which parts the clouds, and puts itself forth to holy activity, sheds light on darkened eyes while setting its neighbours an example of good work. For while sinners see any good thing done and set themselves to do the same, they are like wanderers in the night returning to the road by the light of the moon. There is another cause of likeness too, for if the moon suffer aught to come between her and the sun, she is straightway eclipsed and darkened. Last comes that perfect likeness to CHRIST Himself, attained by conformity to His Passion and His will, and perfect trust looking to Him alone, which make the soul, now flooded with divine light, and glowing with the fervour of the SPIRIT, *clear as the sun*. Then, too, as it is written of the wild beasts, "The lions roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from GOD: the sun ariseth, and they get them away together, and lay them down in their dens;" so when the glory of holiness is visible in any Christian soul, and it arises to resist the devil, he must needs flee, for then she is *terrible as an army with banners*, and that because she comes not to the battle alone, but with the examples and miracles of the Saints, and the alliance of the Angels, on her side, so that she may say with the Prophet to all timid waverers: "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Rupert explains the verse of the Mother of God, saying, "When thou wast born, O Blessed Virgin, then the true Dawn arose on us, the Dawn which heralds the eternal Day; for as each day's dawn is the end of the past night and the beginning of the following day, so thy nativity, of the seed of Abraham, from the illustrious race of David, to whom GOD made with an oath the promise of blessing, was the end of sorrows, and the beginning of consola- S. Greg. M.

Dion. Carth.

Philo Carp.

Ps. civ. 21.

2 Kings vi.
16.
Rupert.

tion, the end of sadness and the beginning of our joy. Then we pass from dawn to morn. For when the HOLY GHOST came upon thee, and thou, a Virgin, didst conceive a Son, and bring Him forth in Virgin-birth, then, and thenceforward thou wast fair with divine fairness; *fair*, I say, not in any wise, but *as the moon*; for as the moon shines and illuminates with light which is not her own, but derived from the sun, so thou, O most blessed one, hast not of thyself, that thou art so bright, but of grace divine, that thou art full of grace. Lastly, we pass from the moon to the sun. For when thou wast taken up out of this world, and translated to the heavenly hall, then, and thenceforward thou wast *elect as the sun*, elect, I say, for us, for as we adore and worship the SON of GOD, sprung from thee, the True Sun, the eternal Sun, as VERY GOD; so we honour and venerate thee, as the Mother of VERY GOD, knowing that all honour paid to the Mother, doubtless redounds to the honour of the Son."

Keble.

What glory thou above hast won,
By special grace of thy dear Son,
We see not yet, nor dare espy
Thy crownèd form with open eye:
Rather beside the manger meek,
Thee bending with veiled brow we seek,
Or where the Angel in the thrice great Name
Hailed thee, and JESUS to thy bosom came.

Henceforth, Whom thousand worlds adore,
He calls thee Mother evermore;
Angel nor Saint His face may see
Apart from what He took of thee;
How may we choose but name thy name,
Echoing below their high acclaim,
In holy creeds? since earthly song and prayer
Must keep faint time to the dread anthem there.

And she is *terrible as an army with banners*. How an *army*, one of the sweetest of English poets tells us in his quaint anagram of the name *Mary*,

George
Herbert.

How well her name an *army* doth present,
In whom the LORD of Hosts did pitch His tent!

With banners; since where the King's pavilion is, there will be the royal standard. And accordingly S. Ambrose says:

The LORD a Maiden's womb doth fill,
 But keeps her stainless Maiden still,
 The banners there of virtue shine,
 Where GOD is present in His shrine.

S. Ambros.
 The Hymn,
*Veni, Redemptor
 Gentium.*

Aponius, continuing his reference to CHRIST'S Humanity, says that JESUS came as the *dawning* after the darkness of ignorance to His Baptism in Jordan, that He advanced as the *moon* by His miraculous works, and shone as the *Sun* after His Resurrection. And He will appear on the Judgment Day to the righteous with the calm beauty of the moon, to the Angels in the fuller glory of Divine majesty, whilst to sinners, doomed to eternal fires, He will be *terrible as an army with banners*.

Luc. Abb.

11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

There is some variance here as to the speaker. The Targum, followed by the great majority of the Fathers, ascribes the words to the Bridegroom; while a small minority, agreeing with some later critics, puts them into the mouth of the Bride. Taking the former view, and interpreting, as several have done, the *garden of nuts* to be the Synagogue, Philo says, Behold, the Heavenly Bridegroom first *went down* into the Synagogue of the Jews, to the priests and Scribes, by the Manhood which He took on Him of their seed, according to the oath and promise which He had sworn to Abraham and David. By the *garden of nuts* Jerusalem and the priesthood are rightly signified. For the rod of Aaron held the dignity of royal priesthood. And the nut is an apt symbol of the Mosaic Law, for as the nut-tree has bitter and trifoliated leaves, and produces its fruit covered with an exceedingly bitter rind called the hull, and a yet harder dry shell, within which is contained a pleasant kernel divided fourwise by a wooden cartilage, or a thin membrane while it is green; so that Law, written by the finger of God, seemed to consist of those carnal sacrifices and ceremonies, as the nut-tree with its bitter leaves, though mystically signifying the Triune God. And the Law was covered over with a meaning hard to be understood, and mys-

Philo Carp.

S. Epiphanius.

Philo Carp.

tical, like a harsh rind, and yet held veiled within it that sweetest and most wholesome fruit CHRIST JESUS Himself, Who should come down from heaven, to be made openly known through the four quarters of the globe by the fourfold sense of the Gospel, and yet only for those who could take Him fitly and reverently out of that shell, and eat Him in the holiest manner. Down to this garden came the Bridegroom *to look into the plants of the torrent* (LXX.)¹ that is, at the time appointed for His death (of which I hold that David was thinking when he said, "He shall drink of the torrent in the way;" and again, "Our soul had passed through the torrent," that is, had endured most cruel scourges, painful tortures, and death,) *to see if the nut itself and the vine flourished.* O wondrous mercy of GOD! O unspeakable goodness! It was not enough for Thee to have given the Law, to have sent so many eminent Prophets and Kings, famous in learning and holiness, but Thou wouldest come Thyself to see and act for Thy garden of nuts and Thy vineyard, and that in the *plants of the torrent*, that is, in the mortality and death of our flesh which Thou didst take, that Thou mightest gather some fruit thence. But, alas, an ungrateful and wretched Hebrew people, after slaying the servants and messengers of the LORD'S vineyard, dared to cast the heir, His Only SON, shamefully out of the vineyard (that is, Jerusalem and the Synagogue,) and to slay Him most cruelly. So when He came first to the garden of nuts He gathered no fruit there, but only thorns; wherefore He passed to the Gentiles, for whom He made ready faithful Churches for Himself, and let out His vineyard to them, having ruined and destroyed those former vinedressers whom He had graciously floured out of Egypt. He found that the *vine* did not flourish with them, for He Himself saith, "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Nor had the *pomegranates budded*, but now they blossom in the Christian Church, where the

Ps. cx. 7.

Ps. cxxiv.
3, LXX.

Isa. v. 2.

¹ So too the Arabic version. The meaning is the same as the A.V., because commonly in the Semitic languages, and notably in Arabic, the same word stands for "valley" and "river," or rather "water-course," a deep cleft in the

hills, dry in summer, and a rapid stream in winter. The second of these meanings has left its mark in Spanish, where the Arabic *wady* enters into the names of several rivers, as Guadiana, Guadalquivir, Guadalavir.

multitudes of the people of GOD lie enclosed as pure white seeds in the mystical body, washed and ruddy with the BLOOD of JESUS CHRIST, and full of the goodness of divine grace and the juice given by the heavenly SPIRIT; and with these fruits the Spouse gives holy gladness daily to the Bridegroom. Aponius varies somewhat from the latter portion of this exposition of Philo, taking the valley to be this world, the *fruits* of the valley to be the tears of the righteous, shed because of their exile and prison, and for the sins of men, and the visit as intended to see whether in Israel the *vine* of devout thought, leading to repentance, *flourished*, whether the *pomegranates*, the mystical teaching of the Prophets, *budded*, in producing other Saints besides that one Baptist Forerunner.

Luc. Abb.

They also explain the *garden of nuts* to be that garden inclosed of which we have already heard, the hallowed womb of the Virgin Mother, into which the LORD went down, she who kept her sweet purity sheltered in firm resolve, where the Bridegroom found *fruits of the valley* in her lovely humility, and saw that vine which bore Him, the True Vine, flourishing in beauty, as it conceived Him, and the pomegranates of her charity to all men, as they were budding forth.

Honorius.
Alanus.
Hugo Card.

A further sense for the *pomegranates* is suggested by the fact that this fruit was embroidered on the hem of the High Priest's robe, thus typifying the inferior priests or Levites, who derived their office from him. And therefore the words will here denote the visitation of the Christian Church, to see whether the prelates and clergy, vicars of the One High Priest, are fulfilling their duties, and bringing forth fruits to GOD.

Lyranus.
Exod. xxviii.
33.

And, applying the words to CHRIST's visitation of souls, S. Gregory tells us that the *garden of nuts* signifies the hearts of the Saints, who retain divine wisdom in their bodies, like a kernel in a fruit-shell, for there are many in the Church, constantly busied in the study of Holy Writ, tasting how sweet the LORD is, desiring to taste Him more, chewing the cud of sacred joy in their heart, and thereby growing ever stronger; and yet to those without, who know them not, they seem valueless, because that sweet food which they bear within them is unknown. But why is He said to come to the garden of nuts, not to see *nuts* but *apples*? (*poma*, Vulg.) Because He comes first to His perfect Saints, that He may visit the weaker

S. Greg. M.

ones through their ministry, and so be manifested to them.

The *vines flourish* when children are brought up in the Church in faith, and are trained to a holy life as to firmness of fruit. The *pomegranates bud* when the perfect edify their neighbours by their example, and invite them to new and holy conversation by preaching and the exhibition of good works. Or, as another takes it, the *vines flourish* when local Churches and congregations are healthy and abundant in holy meditations and prayers, the *pomegranates bud* when prelates and contemplative Religious, who should be ruddiest with charity and zeal, give forth beauty and fragrance to adorn the Church. Cassiodorus and Beda, albeit ascribing the verse to the Bride, vary little from the interpretation of S. Gregory, representing her as watching the progress of the various classes of Saints in this life. Happier than this is the explanation of S. Athanasius, followed by S. Justus of Urgel, that the garden of nuts is Holy Scripture, which exhibits one thing in the outer letter or rind, and another in the inner spirit or kernel; though the latter agrees with the authors already cited in seeing lowly Saints figured in the *fruits of the valley*, and Martyrs in the pruned vines and ruddy pomegranates. What the especial nut is which the Bride seeks there S. Augustine will tell us: The nut has three substances united in itself, the hull, the shell, and the kernel. In the hull the flesh, in the shell the bones, in the kernel the inner soul, have their types. The hull of the nut denotes the flesh of the SAVIOUR, which had in itself the harshness and roughness of the Passion. The kernel denotes the inner sweetness of His Godhead, which made the covenant with us, and gives us the help of light.¹ The shell signifies the transverse wood of the Cross, which did not separate that which was within from that without, but by the interposition of its mediating wood allied earthly things and heavenly, as the blessed Apostle saith, "Having made peace by the Blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Similarly, with his wonderful knowledge of Scripture and of theology, sings Adam:

¹ The Saint is referring to the nut-oil, anciently used for lamps.

Dion. Carth.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

S. Athan.

S. August.
Serm. de
Temp. Dom.
IV. Adv.

Col. i. 20.

Nux est CHRISTUS, cortex nucis
 Circa carnem pœna crucis,
 Testa corpus osseum,
 Carne tecta Deitas
 Et CHRISTI suavitas
 Signatur per nucleum.

Adam. Vict.
 The Se-
 quence,
Splendor
Patris et
figura.

CHRIST the nut, the hull His Passion
 Closing round His human fashion,
 And His bones and frame the shell:
 Hid in flesh, Divine completeness
 And CHRIST JESUS' perfect sweetness,
 In the kernel mark ye well.

Seeking Him, then, in the time of His utter humiliation, when He was in truth the *fruit of the valley*, she desires to know if that True *Vine* can possibly be *flourishing* after the beast of the field and the wild boar have done their worst upon it, if the ruddy *pomegranate* of the Passion shows any promise of succeeding produce. So too, each soul has to go down into the garden of its own heart, where the LORD is hidden in the shell of reticent affection, to see if the vine-branch He has planted be thriving, if the graces which spring from His Passion are showing signs of spiritual fruit to come. And she need be at no loss what to do with these fruits and flowers when she finds them. She will say, as once said a faithful Bride of CHRIST, "And now, O only Beloved of my soul, I offer Thee my heart, as a blooming rose, whose beauty may daily attract Thine eyes, and its fragrance delight Thy Heart. And I also offer Thee my heart, that Thou mayest use it as a cup, to drink Thine own sweetness with all Thou hast done to-day for me. Further, I offer Thee my heart, as a pomegranate of choice flavour, fit for Thy royal banquet, that eating it, Thou mayest so take it unto Thyself, that it may rejoice in feeling itself thenceforth within Thee."

S. Mechthil-
 dis Revel.
 iii. 6.

12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me [*like*] the chariots of Ammi-nadib.¹

The LXX. and Vulgate, in the first clause, read correctly, with the margin of A. V., *I knew not*. The

¹ The italic *like*, unnecessarily inserted after "me" in the A. V., is superfluous and

misleading, and is therefore bracketed.

ancient versions, for the most part, oscillate in the second clause between the rendering of the A. V., as given above, and its marginal reading: *My soul set me on the chariots of my willing [or princely] people.* Symmachus and the Vulgate, however, read *My soul troubled me, [or, was perplexed] because of the chariots, &c.* This most difficult verse has given rise to a great variety of interpretations, and there is no more agreement as to the speaker, whether it be Solomon, the Bride, or one of the queens and concubines acting as mouthpiece to the rest. The latest view of modern critics is that the words are an exclamation of wonder at the dazzling beauty of the Bride. She had been compared, a little before, to an *army with banners*, and now the speaker declares that she is stately and ornate as the war-chariot of the king, so that to be near her is like being set upon it. And it is easy to see the mystical force of such an interpretation, if we put the speech into the mouth of the Gentile world, noting the progress of the Church. It had already recognized her beauty, as Solomon's *litter* (iii. 9, 10,) in her peaceful holiness and passive endurance of suffering, saying, "See how these Christians love one another." Now it was to see her as the *war-chariot* of the Great King, to confess the resistless might of her conquering advance, and to exclaim, in the words of Elisha, echoed later by Joash, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." And this comes very near to the explanation of several Fathers, who ascribe the verse to the Synagogue. Thus Cassiodorus comments: *I knew not, O Bride of CHRIST, that such grace and such gifts of spiritual power had been given thee by thy Bridegroom, and I am troubled with great anxiety of soul because of this sudden preaching of the Gospel. For I knew that the Law and the Prophets were divinely given, and therefore when all of a sudden I saw the Gospel preached, I was troubled because of the chariots of Amminadab.* Amminadab was great grandson of Judah, through whom CHRIST's genealogy is derived. And the name is interpreted "The willing one of my people," and consequently denotes CHRIST, Who was the willing One of His people, because, being GOD, He voluntarily was made Man, and being Creator and Maker of the world, of His loving-kindness alone He was made a part of His people. And

Weissbach.

2 Kings ii.
12; xiii. 14.

Cassiodor.

Beda.

S. Greg. M.

Rupert.

the sense is this: I am troubled because of the sudden preaching of the Gospel, which has suddenly sped through the whole world like a very swift chariot. Rupert dwells on the phrase, *My soul troubled me*, as meaning something different from *I was troubled*, and explains it that the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, who were the *soul* of the Jewish people, guiding them in their religious and social matters, did nothing but perplex and trouble them, instead of giving them wise counsel, when the preaching of the Gospel began. The Latin Fathers also lay stress on the Vulgate word here used for chariots, *quadrigas*, or four-horse cars, and interpret it for the most part as mystically referring to the Four Gospels; though Rupert gives the further explanation that the four principal mysteries of the Gospel itself, the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, are indicated. Of this chariot CHRIST Himself is the Charioteer, and He is most fitly designated, as the Abbat of Deutz continues, by the name of Amminadab, because it was from that descendant of Judah that the royal and priestly lines were both derived, inasmuch as his daughter Élisheba was wife of Aaron, and mother of Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, from whom all the High Priests were sprung, while Amminadab himself was ancestor in the direct line of David, and thereby of Him Who is King of Israel and a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. There is also an ancient Jewish tradition that when the Israelites reached the Red Sea, all the tribes hung back, till Amminadab, prince of the house of Judah, seizing his standard, advanced boldly between the walls of water, and won thereby the immediate honour of leading the vanguard of the march, and the later one of the kingdom for his posterity. It is needless to dwell on the type this yields of CHRIST as the Leader and Standard-bearer of His people in their pilgrimage and warfare.

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.

Rupert.

Dion. Carth.

Lyranus.

De Lyrâ, also ascribing the verse to the Synagogue, explains it very differently. He interprets Amminadab to mean *My ruling people*, and thus paraphrases: *I knew not GOD'S Law*, but was ignorant and as a beast before Him. My own self-will led me into the sin of idolatry, and thereupon I was punished by the Captivity, which made me like the mere chariot of the conquering Assyrians and Babylonians, who became my ruling people, with power to drive me whither-

- Philo Carp. soever they pleased. Applied to the devout soul, the earliest interpretation we meet is closely akin to one already given; saying that every faithful soul is borne by the four steeds of the Four Gospels, swift and strong, throughout the world, as they are driven by the HOLY SPIRIT. And this in order that the Bride may be happily borne in this chariot of fire, which she has ascended in faith, to heaven itself. It is to be carefully noted, too, that the Bride and faithful souls are not merely said to be set on the chariots, but that the Church herself is *made* these chariots, that she may understand herself to be the holy car whereby multitudes are to be borne to their country. For as they who are conveyed in chariots, cars, and carts are lifted up above the inconveniences of the road, such as mire, ruts, stones, and the like, and are often quite free from them, so Christians, borne in the heavenly chariot of faith, and cherished in the holy bosom of their loving mother the Church, are preserved safely for the kingdom of heaven. And thus she is made the chariot of the Prince of the people, that she may bear Him, by means of her preachers, into the hearts of men. He so deals with her when she has gone down from the heights of mystic contemplation into the garden of active work, to see if she could find Him in the lives and hearts of His people, but failing to see Him there, she says, *I knew not*, and her zeal at once hurries her into missionary toils. If the soul be His chariot, comments S. Ambrose, beware lest the flesh be the horse, but let vigour of mind be the driver, to guide and check the flesh and its passions, like steeds, with the reins of wisdom. But, as he says more forcibly in another place, CHRIST, the true Amminadab, drives the soul of the righteous like a chariot, and guides it from His seat with the reins of the Word, lest it should be hurried down the steep by the violence of untamed steeds. For its four passions are its horses, anger, desire, pleasure, and fear, and when these run away, the soul, as she begins to be hurried along, does not know herself. There is another interpretation, akin to that of De Lyrâ, explaining Amminadab as the prince of this world, oppressing the Church and enslaving her, returning evil for good, and interfering with the freedom of her operations. Or again, the soul says, *I knew not*, I was ignorant and blind, and so I became the mere chariot of my own unrestrained
- Theodoret.
- Tres Patr.
- S. Ambros. de Naboth. 15.
- Id. de Virgin.
- Theodoret.
- Henr. Harphius.

will, which hurried me away at its pleasure, until God called me to return.

The view which takes the Bridegroom as the speaker has the authority of the Chaldee paraphrase on its side, which interprets the verse of God promising to change His dealings with His people, now repentant, and instead of chastening them further, to set them as on the chariot of a king. Very few Christian expositors have followed in this track, and the only noteworthy comment is far-fetched and strained. The evil spirits, says Aponius, as created by God to test the endurance of the Saints, are, in a sense, His people. They are His *free-willing* people, because they have refused His service, and have chosen to follow their own wicked devices. These spirits sit like drivers on the necks of sinners, forcing them to accomplish crimes. And they made Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, and their companions, *chariots* on which CHRIST was carried to His death with shouts of "Crucify Him, crucify Him," wherefore He was *troubled*, as He Himself has said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And He begins the sentence by protesting His innocence, saying, *I knew not*, for in truth He knew no sin.

Targum.

Luc. Abb.

S. Mat. xxvi.
38.

S. Just. Org.

13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

The first question to be settled here is the meaning of the name *Shulamite*. One literalist view is that it is a local appellation from a supposed place *Shulem*, formed by the same analogy as Shunammite from Shunem. And in fact the LXX. does read *Sunamitis*, and the Vulgate did read it, so that a reference to Abishag has been seen here by some ancient writers, and Abishag herself by some modern ones. Another opinion is that the name is strictly a proper one, the personal name of the Bride, akin, perhaps, to *Shelomith*, the feminine form of the name Solomon. And this brings us closer to the mystical view, which takes the word as an adjective, and explains it variously as "belonging to Solomon," or "daughter of Salem," or "perfect;" or again, most satisfactorily, as "Peaceful," which last is supported by the authority of Aquila, who

S. Just. Org.

Rupert.

Dion. Carth.

Smith's Dict.

Rosen-
müller.

translates it *ειρηνεύουσα*. One other suggested meaning is that of Symmachus, who, deriving the epithet from שָׁלַל , *shalal*, *spoliavit*, views it as equivalent to "plundered," or "captive," *έσκυλευμένη*. Either of these last-given meanings will suit the Synagogue, to which the Targum applies the verse, paraphrasing thus: "*Return to Me, O congregation of Israel, return to Jerusalem, return to the House of My Law, return to receive prophecy from the Prophets who prophesy in the Name of the Word of the LORD. Israel heard and obeyed the call, notes De Lyrâ, and returned at four several times after the Captivity; first, under Zorobabel and Ezra, in the reign of Cyrus; secondly, in the next migration headed by Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes; thirdly, under Nehemiah; and, fourthly, when Judas Maccabeus cleansed and restored the profaned sanctuary. The We, then, Who desire to look upon the Shulamite, and therefore call her back, may best be taken, as many of the Fathers do take it, of the Most HOLY TRINITY, calling the wandering Church, Jewish or Christian, or the soul which has gone astray, back to its true home, to the presence of the Divine Countenance. It is, notes Rupert, the Voice of Amminadab Himself as He sits upon His chariot, saying, Thou, O Shulamite, that is, captive or depised, thou, O faith, O dignity of the true Priesthood (wellnigh given up to oblivion through carnal ceremonies, so that the Synagogue knows not, and thinks not that her father Abraham was justified by thee, and not by the Law, as it is written, "Abraham believed GOD, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,") return, and again I say, return, and a third time I say, return, and a fourth time I say, return, one call for each horse of My chariot. For I was born and I suffered to this end, that thou mightest return, and rise again, and ascend into heaven to Me, and therefore till thou dost return I cease not My calling upon thee.*

Targum.

Lyranus.

Ezra ii. 1.

vii. 7.

Nehem. ii.

11.

1 Macc. iv.

36.

Rupert.

Rom. iv. 3.

Luc. Abb.

Hugo Card.

Aponius, closely agreeing with this view, adds that our merciful LORD calls the Synagogue daily to repentance by the four voices of the four Gospels, and that, in order that *We may look on thee*, that the Image of GOD may be reflected in thee, as in a mirror, when thou art cleansed by penitence and Baptism, and confessest the Trinity. *Return to the true faith, return*

to brotherly peace, *return* to acknowledgment of thy Redeemer, *return* to perfection in good works. *Return*, too, from the four quarters of the world, whither thou hast been scattered, for thy sins, among the Gentiles. And the call will continue till that happier cry is raised,

S. Greg. M.
Dion. Carth.

Rise, Sion, rise, and looking forth,
Behold thy children round thee,
From east and west, and south and north,
Thy scattered sons have found thee!
And in thy bosom CHRIST adore,
For ever and for evermore!

S. John Dam.
*Golden
Canon, Ode
viii.*

There is less beauty and force in the common interpretation, which ascribes the words to the Christian Church, typified by the daughters of Jerusalem, and makes her, not God, address the Synagogue. *That we may look on thee*, standing to do penance for thy sins, and acknowledging thy crime in slaying and crucifying thy King, as one will have it; that we may see thy beauty and purity, as others, more gently, interpret. Spoken of the soul, the words may be variously taken. If addressed to a perfect one, then it may be the voice of God calling the preacher back from peaceful contemplation to the harder task of converting sinners, promising His aid in all time of weakness, but not the less summoning him to descend from the Mount of Transfiguration to the plain of the demoniac, or it may be a cry for help from weaker Christians, asking to be taught how to bridle the four passions of their souls, for which reason they call four times. *Return*, that we may be cleansed with thy purity, *return*, that we may be kindled with thy fire, *return*, that we may be illuminated with thy light, *return*, that we may be perfumed with thy fragrance.

Cassiodor.
Beda.
S. Greg. M.
S. Ans. Laud.

S. Greg. M.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

Theodoret.

Tres Patr.

Thom. Verc.

If, on the other hand, it be an erring soul which God is recalling to the right way; then, as S. Ambrose teaches, He saith well, as a driver to his chariot, *Return, O Shulamite*, that is, Peaceful, for the soul which is peaceful turns herself quickly, and corrects herself, even though she sinned before, and CHRIST all the more readily ascends, and vouchsafes to guide her, as is said to Him, "Ride upon Thine horses, and Thy chariots were salvation." And His reason for four times calling back the soul on which He looks, is perhaps that it may not abide in the habit of sin, nor in consciousness of offences, nor yet in the lukewarmness and sloth of ingratitude, nor in

S. Ambros.
de Isaac. 8.

Hab. iii. 8.

S. Bernard.
Serm. 3,
super
Missus.

Idem.
Serm. 58,
de parvis.

Hugo Vict.
Miscell. ii.
2, 24.

Henr.
Harphius.

De Obit.
Valent.

Tres Patr.

Theodoret.

the blindness of conceit. *Return*, He says, first from vain joy; secondly, from useless sorrow; thirdly, from empty glory; fourthly, from hidden pride. The LORD, says one of the profoundest of mystical writers, four times calls her to return, as though He would say, Return from what is Mine, because it is wonderful; return from thine own, for it is evil; return from thyself, because all flesh is grass; return to Me, for I am the Supreme Good. Thou canst not see Me unless We first look upon thee. Thou hast some spot upon thy face, thou art foul, and bearest another image than Mine, cleanse it, therefore, *that We may look on thee*. Return, as a handmaid to her master, as an erring daughter to her father, as a patient to her physician, as a sinful wife to her husband. Return through infusion of divine grace, through direction of thy free-will to faith and love for GOD, of that same free-will to hatred of sin, and through the expulsion and remission of sin itself. Return too, by the four stages of true repentance, knowledge of sin, sorrow for it, confession, and satisfaction. Or, as S. Ambrose once explains it of the holy soul departing out of the world, return from the exile of earth to thy home in heaven. *What will ye see in the Shulamite?* Who asks the question, and of whom? They reply, for the most part, that the Bridegroom addresses the daughters of Jerusalem, and tells them of the aspect which the Synagogue will present when it has returned to the faith. The Three Fathers alone suppose that the Shulamite herself both puts the question and answers it. *As it were the company of two armies*. The ancient versions and the English one have each lost something in translating this verse. The latter, by rendering מְחֹלָת *mecholath*, merely *company*, has missed the true force of the word, which is *dancing company*, preserved in the χοροί of the LXX. and the *choros* of the Vulgate. On the other hand, these versions have omitted to take notice of the dual form *Mahanaim*, found here as in Gen. xxxii. 2, and have turned it merely as *camps*, with no mark of number. There appears at first sight, says Theodoret, an inconsistency between the words *choirs* and *camps*, for the one has to do with feasting, and the other with war. But as the Bride is made up of many Saints, she is like to camps because of her valiant soul and warlike

panoply, and she is at the same time the choir which has in its mouth the praises of GOD. And after showing how David tells us of the Church's song and S. Paul of her weapons and conflict, the good Bishop continues: That the Saints are not merely like camps, but like choirs also, let us hear the LORD telling: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went out to meet the Bridegroom." He says well, then, *What will ye see in the Shulamite, who cometh like choirs of camps?* (LXX.) He does not say, "camps of choirs," but *choirs of camps*. For the choirs are gathered out of the camps, since when brave soldiers in camps have been victorious, they return singing the pæan, and chanting in the dance the song of triumph. So the old Western hymn for All Saints:

Spouse of CHRIST, in arms contending,
O'er each realm beneath the sun,
Blend with prayers for help ascending,
Notes of praise for triumphs won.

The Hymn,
Sponsa
CHRISTI.

What will ye see? Nothing else save these military choirs? No blood of victims, no rite of circumcision? No, all is gone save combat and praise, because "it seemed good to the HOLY GHOST to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." And observe, that as in choirs it is necessary that the singers and dancers should keep time together, we have here a type of the need of harmony and union in the Church. And if we dwell on the phrase *dancing*, we shall remember how the women of Israel went out after Miriam with timbrels and dances, when she sang of the overthrow of the Egyptians; how the Psalmist bids the children of Sion praise their King in the dance and with the cymbals; how the saddest of Prophets can yet declare that in the day of the LORD's redemption "the virgin shall rejoice in the dance." But this dance, as Theodoret has already told us, is not merely one of girls, nor yet of peaceful priests, such as David shared in when he danced before the ark. It is one of tried warriors, whose swords and shields make the music to which they keep step; and it is of *two armies*, not met in deadly rivalry, but in close and perfect alliance, met in her who is the Peaceful, the Church Triumphant, where the two bands move beneath Jacob's staff, Jew and Gentile in the

Ps. cxviii.
15, 27.
2 Cor. x. 4.
Eph. vi. 13.

S. Mat. xxv.
1.

Rupert.

Acts xv. 28.

Cassiodor.

Exod. xv.
20.

Ps. cxlix. 3;
cl. 4.

Jer. xxxi. 13.

2 Sam. vi.
14.

Philo Carp.

Dion. Carth. Church Militant on earth, men and Angels in the Church Triumphant in heaven. Until the great day of the last battle against the hosts of evil shall dawn, these two choirs join in the mingled Song of Moses and the Lamb, but the time will come when the Song of Moses, with its echoes of war, shall be forgotten, and only the new Song of eternal peace shall be heard from the lips of the Peaceful as she sings the praises of the Prince of Peace, her Spouse.

Silius
Italicus, ii.
595.

Pax optima rerum
Quas homini novisse datum est, pax una triumphis
Innumeris potior.

Peace, best of things
Granted for man to know, peace, which alone
Excelleth countless triumphs.

S. John
Cassian.
Ep. i. 11.

For, as a great Saint has said, it is for the glory of the Prince, if peace be loved by all. For what can better proclaim the ruler's virtues than a tranquil people, a united council, and the whole commonweal clothed in dignity of character?

Bern.
Cluniac.
Rhythmus.

Yes, peace! for war is needless,—
Yes, calm! for storm is past,—
And goal from finished labour,
And anchorage at last.

That peace—but who may claim it?
The guileless in their way,
Who keep the ranks of battle,
Who mean the thing they say.

And they will truly be *Mahanaim*, the two heavenly armies of the LORD of Hosts, for the ranks of the celestial hierarchies, long broken since the fall of the rebels under Lucifer, shall be filled up with ransomed men, now "like the Angels which are in heaven."

CHAPTER VII.

I How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

There are three views as to the speaker and the person lauded here. Some hold that the virgins are celebrating the loveliness of the Bride, but the majority ascribe the words to the Bridegroom, varying, however, in explaining the Bride here either as the Christian Gentile Church, or as the converted Synagogue. The Chaldee paraphrast comments thus: "Solomon in the spirit of prophecy said before the face of the LORD, How beautiful are the feet of Israel, when they go up to appear before the LORD thrice yearly with their sandals of yew, and offer their vows and free-will oblations." A more literal rendering of the Hebrew than that of the A. V. is found in both LXX. and Vulgate, which read, *How beautiful are thy steps (or goings) in sandals.* And they agree, for the most part, in explaining the words of the proclamation of the Gospel to distant lands. Her *goings* are commended, but if her feet stood still, their beauty would win no praise. They cite, too, in illustration, the language of the Prophet Isaiah, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" on which the Apostle gives a comment, saying, "Stand, therefore, having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." So shod, her goings are straight, and keep to the King's highway alone. There is much diversity, however, in explaining what the sandals are with which the Bride hastens on her way. A favourite view is, that they denote the examples of departed Saints, typified by the skins of dead animals, of which the sandals are made. Another cognate interpretation is, that mortification of the flesh is intended, which is not very far from S. Jerome's view that voluntary promises of chastity are the shoes of the Bride. S. Ambrose, however, taking a somewhat wider view, tells us that the soul which subdues the flesh, and keeps it under, using it as a sandal, taking good care also not to defile it with mire nor to plunge it in the waters of sin, is truly beautiful in its progress towards its Country.

And S. Gregory supplies us with yet another interpretation, saying, that the Church, in her task of preaching, is said to be shod, when she is strengthened by the death of CHRIST to endure the evils which rise up against her; while another, confining the words to

Tres Patr.

S. Greg. M.

Targum.

Philo Carp.
Theodoret.
Cassiodor.
S. Just. Org.

Isa. lii. 7.

Eph. vi. 14,
15.

Theodoret.

Cassiodor.

S. Ans. Laud.

S. Hieron. in
Jovin.S. Ambros.
Serm. 17,
in Ps. cxix.
5.

S. Greg. M.

Thom. Verc.

the faithful soul, teaches that the delight she feels in drawing nearer to GOD preserves her feet from being wounded by the thorns and stones of the steep way of perfection as she climbs. Durandus enters at much length into the mystical signification of the episcopal sandals of the Western Church, saying, amidst much else, that the sole is solid and continuous, and the upper leather of open-work, to denote that the steps of the preacher ought to be guarded below, lest they be defiled by earthly things, according to the LORD'S saying, "Shake off the dust of your feet;" while they are open above, to receive the revelation of heavenly mysteries, as it is written, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law." Nor does the East come behindhand in this symbolism, as the prayers of the priests of the Syriac rite testify while they vest for the Liturgy. Putting on the left sandal, they say, "Shoe me, O LORD, with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, that I may tread upon serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy, for evermore. Amen." And then with the right sandal, "Put down, O LORD GOD, under the footstool of my feet every high thing that lifteth up itself against Thy knowledge, that through Thy help I may crush the passions of the flesh for evermore." Observe too, that whereas the Bride began the praises of her Bridegroom with His head, and thence passes gradually to His legs; here, on the contrary, the first commendation of the Bride is for her feet, and the last is her head. And the reason is, because the Bride desires to extol the humility and love of the Incarnate WORD, in that He vouchsafed to descend from His majestic throne to dwell amongst mankind, while He, on the other hand, wills to teach her how He intends to raise her from her present lowly condition to everlasting glory. He begins with the feet in shoes, says one, because the beginning of spiritual life is the trampling the flesh under foot, as we enter on the way of salvation and put away our evil works. He begins with the feet, the lowest members of the body, because the Gospel was first preached to the poor and ignorant, not to the mighty and wise of this world.

And as Moses was commanded to put off his shoes when he drew near the holy ground of the burning bush, so the time will come when the Saints, as they enter the borders of the Land of Promise, will not merely do as

Durand.
Ration. iii.
8.

S. Mat. x.
14.

Ps. cxix. 18.

Ordo Com-
munis.
Renaudot.
Lit. Orient.

Hugo Card.

Irimbert.

Luc. Abb.

Jews were wont, when reaching Palestine again after a journey into Gentile regions, shake off the heathen dust back on its own soil, not suffering it to pass the frontier, but will cast out the very shoe of mortality over Edom, and tread barefooted those streets of gold where is no mire or defilement.

Our feet be shod, as pilgrims,
With bands of Gospel peace,
Till life's long march be ended,
And strife and struggle cease:
Till on the ground most holy,
Our shoes from off our feet
We put, with holy gladness,
The pilgrimage complete.

W. C. Dix.
The Hymn,
O Christ,
Thou Son of
Mary, for S.
Crispin.

O prince's daughter. What *Prince* can this be, save the HOLY GHOST, the Comforter, Who says in the forty-fifth Psalm, "Hearken, O daughter, and give ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty, for He is the LORD thy GOD." Others tell us that CHRIST, the Prince of Peace, is meant, in His mysterious relation to the Bride, at once her Father, because she has been born to Him anew in the water of Baptism, when "of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth," and her Bridegroom, the nearest and dearest to her. And this close blending of dissimilar ties in One to Whom all obedience as well as all love is due has been figured for us in the pathetic words of a loving wife, as described by the greatest of heathen poets:

Theodoret.
S. Ambros.

Ps. xlv. 11.

Hugo Card.
Dion. Carth.

S. James i.
18.

"Ἕκτορ, ἀτὰρ σὺ μοι ἑσσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
ἢ δὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης.

Hom. II. vi.
429.

Hector, to me thou father art, and mother dear,
And brother too, who art my gallant spouse.

The Hebrew for *prince* here is נָדִיב *nadib*, which also means "noble" or "generous." And several of the ancient commentators, dwelling on the LXX. reading, *daughter of Nadab*, refer us back to the Amminadab of whom we heard just now, telling us that she is called His daughter, because it is only of His free-will and loving-kindness, not of right, that she has been adopted. Theodoret boldly compares her to that Nadab, son of Aaron, who died for offering strange

Cassiodor.

S. Ambros.
Serm. 17 in
Ps. cxix.

Theodoret.
Lev. x. 1.

- Numb. iii. 4. fire before the LORD. For the Bride bore no legal fire into the sanctuary of GOD, but a new fire which she received from her Spouse, that of which He spake
- S. Luke xii. 49. Himself: "I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" The Bride bearing this new fire of the New Testament into the
- 2 Cor. v. 17. Divine tabernacle, crieth out and saith, "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." And others tell us that in her title, "daughter of the generous one," we may read her own liberality and nobleness. Observe, too, that as her Bridegroom in this Song is both King and Shepherd, she, that she may be a fitting consort for Him, is shepherdess and princess too.¹ The whole context is also explained by S.
- Cocceius. Ambrose and many who have followed him as applying especially to that princess of the House of David, that elect daughter of GOD, who was beautiful with the shoes of that pure body whence the Redeemer took His flesh, the sandals which bore His Godhead in its pilgrimage through the world, in that mystery of the
- S. John i. 27. Incarnation of which the Baptist said, "Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose;" that is, I cannot solve the secret of His birth. For so the Prophet had foretold, saying, "Who shall declare His generation?" "Thy goings, O glorious Virgin," exclaims the Universal Doctor, "are thy noble race, thy purity of body and soul, thy fruitfulness in offspring. Thy shoes are thy thoughts in meditation, thy results in working, thine advance in longings, thy trances in joy. For thou art the princely daughter of that Prince Who is GOD, Prince of princes and LORD of lords, Who begat thee specially by grace, and specially formed thee, so that thou art as truly daughter of GOD as thou art stainless Mother." It was by no
- Isa. liii. 8. swiftness of foot, but by purity of affections, observes another, that she went from strength to strength till she beheld the GOD of GODS in Sion, uniting in herself the innocence of Abel, the obedience of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the lowliness of David, the patience of Job, and the purity of Daniel. It is recorded of S. Francis Xavier that he cited these words to
- Alanus.
- Gullielm.

¹ This term, *prince's daughter*, is one of the most difficult things in the Song to square with the literalist interpretation, and accordingly no little

pains has been employed, somewhat ineffectually, to explain it away, by the upholders of that view.

Queen Katharine of Portugal, wife of King John III., and sister of the Emperor Charles V., to induce her to forego a large sum paid annually from the Indian revenue to her privy purse, under the name of slipper-money, that he might devote it to missionary purposes, assuring her that she would enter more easily into heaven shod with the sandals of the prayers of the poor than with the royal buskins which the tribute was intended to provide. And this sense may be not inaptly illustrated by the rude old Border dirge, addressed to the departing spirit, now setting out on its dread journey :

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,
Every night and alle;
Sit thee down and put them on,
And CHRIST receive thy saule.

Scott.
Minstrelsy.
*Lyke-wake
Dirge.*

If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gavest nane,
Every night and alle;
The whinnes shall pricke thee to the bare bane,
And CHRIST receive thy saule.

The joints of thy thighs are like jewels. Instead of *joints*, we should rather have *roundings*, denoting the graceful form of the limb; and so the LXX., which has *ῥυθμοὶ μηρῶν*, explained by Theodoret as typifying the practical virtues which carry out the intentions of the will, just as the thighs bear us along upon our journeys; or, as another Greek Father takes it, the harmonious outlines of a life guarded by temperance and holiness; or, as a Western writer says, the two thighs are lowliness and purity, the twin supports of sanctification. But the Vulgate, agreeing with the A. V., is usually interpreted in a different fashion. Following the Targum, which explains the clause of the children of the congregation, sprung from the *thigh* (a frequent type of parentage in Holy Writ), and like the precious studs in Aaron's mitre, they take the thighs of the Church to be her spiritual offspring, born of the word of preaching and the laver of regeneration; while the *joints* refer to the union of two natures, Jew and Gentile, in one faith.

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.
Irimbert.

Targum.

Exod. i. 5,
marg.
Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.
S. Just. Org.

Like jewels. The LXX. and Vulgate, with more exactness, *like necklaces*. And that because as gems shine set in gold, so these good works, done in wisdom, are beautiful to look on; and further, as they are not done independently of each other, but con-

S. Greg. M.

Hugo Card. tinuously and regularly, so they are united with the bond of charity, which joins the separate jewels into the necklace which adorns the Bride. And this ornament is the work of no human hands, but of that *cunning workman*, the Almighty LORD Himself. And applying the words to the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin, they bid us think on that costly jewel, the pearl of great price, the glorious ornament of every believing soul, CHRIST JESUS Himself, Begotten, not made, as GOD, but made as Man by the FATHER in the mystery of the Incarnation.

2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

Targum. Here, as so often, the Chaldee strikes the key-note, and gives an explanation which, with but slight change, is that of many Christian Fathers. It paraphrases the first clause thus: "The Prince of thy school,¹ by whose merit all the ages are ruled, as the unborn child is nourished in its mother's womb by the navel, is resplendent in the Law, like the round disk of the moon, when he comes to purify and to make unclean, and to justify and condemn: and the words of the Law never fail from his mouth, as the waters of the river fail not when it goes forth from Paradise." Very close to this is the comment of S. Gregory the Great: The *navel* is the order of holy preachers, fitly styled a *goblet*, because when the people are taught from its mouth, they are filled with spiritual wine by its ministry. It is *round*, because the preachers' tongue must needs go round all subjects, according to the character of all classes of men. It *wanteth not mixture*, because it must drink more abundantly than others that which it offers to them as a draught, and contain more than it gives. S. Epiphanius and Philo Carp. agree in holding that the Priesthood is here intended, compared to a *goblet with mixture* (i.e. wine and water), because of the mystery of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, whereof it has charge, and with which the people are mingled by faith and love. The Priesthood, as in the centre of the Church, reconciling

¹ President of the Rabbinical College which took the place of the Sanhedrim after the fall of Jerusalem.

the people to GOD, is the *navel*; it is a *goblet* because it gives them to drink of the love of GOD; it is *round*, because all its angles have been smoothed away according to the will of GOD, that His Hand may find no inequality in it. The womb of Mary, observes S. Ambrose, was in truth a round goblet, wherein was Wisdom, Who mingled that wine, the grace of unfailing and loving knowledge of Him, the fulness of His Godhead. As the navel is the weakest part of all the body, it may not unfitly typify a heart conscious of its own weakness, holding, as in a goblet, the memory of former sins, which memory, by acting as the cutter of a lathe to remove all that is superfluous, vain, and evil, makes the goblet *round*. It wants not liquor, because it is full of the tears of compunction for its past offences. And so the Wise Man saith, "Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the LORD, and depart from evil; it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." As the navel is the centre of the body, so temperance is the mean of life. It is a round goblet, full of liquor, because it is rounded by circumspection, and is red in wisdom. And as drink assuages thirst, and gladdens the heart, so temperance quenches the heat of sin, and checks unruly zeal in better things.

Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies. The Targum, carrying on its paraphrase, tells us that this denotes the seventy members of the Sanhedrim, gathered round their Prince, and enriched with all the tithes, oblations, and free-will offerings set apart for them by Ezra, Zorobabel, and other chiefs of the Great Synagogue. The *belly* denotes the multitude of the faithful, say the Fathers, because the womb signifies fruitfulness, and these are here denoted, begotten in the Gospel, and born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of GOD. This multitude is compared to a *heap of wheat*, because the LORD saith of the fruit of the Bride: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is a *heap*, and not a quantity of scattered grains, because as a heap is piled up with many grains, so the one Church of all the faithful is formed by the union of many natures, one in the communion of one Baptism and the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST. And as a

S. Just. Org.
S. Ans. Laud.S. Ambros.
de Inst.
Virg. 14.

Irimbert.

Luc. Abb.

Prov. iii. 7.

Honorius.

Targum.

Dion. Carth.
Philo Carp.S. John xii.
24.

- Cassiodor. *heap* is wide at the base, growing smaller towards the summit, so in the Church there are many who live self-indulgently, and but few who aim at the height of perfection; as, for instance, there are many more found who will give alms of their goods to the poor than will leave all their possessions for GOD. This heap is *set about with lilies*, because all the good works which the Saints do are for the sake of heavenly sweetness and light. Or, as another Father puts it, the heap of wheat, while awaiting here removal to the granaries of the LORD, is fenced on all sides by the bright and lovely examples of the Saints. Philo takes the lilies to be the good works to which all Christians are bound to devote themselves, and the holy discourses which should fit them for their dwelling in heaven. Others take the heap of wheat, pure, wholesome, and nutritious, to be those divines who are versed in Holy Scripture, and by their teaching win over many not merely to purity, but to vows of perpetual chastity. And with this latter view agrees that explanation of Cardinal Hugo, that the lilies which fence the wheat are the cloistered Orders in the Church.
- Theodoret. They teach us also that memory is the belly of the soul, containing the food which is her support, those hidden mysteries whereof we can here but just discern the beauty and fragrance. Or, more precisely, the heap of wheat may symbolize the words of Holy Scripture stored up in the mind, and the lilies the pure and lovely thoughts which they supply for meditation. And, spoken of S. Mary, they do not fail to remind us how she bore within her that wheat elected which was ground in the mill of the Passion that it might be made into the Bread of Life, and how He was fenced around by the lilies of her spotless virginity. In the Virgin's womb, comments S. Ambrose, there were at the same time the heap of wheat and the blooming lily-flower, because she bore Him Who is the corn of wheat and the Lily too: The corn of wheat, according to that Scripture: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." But in that the single grain became a heap of wheat, that prophecy was fulfilled, "The valleys shall be thick with corn," for that grain dying brought forth much fruit. This grain also filled all men with the perpetual food of heavenly gifts, and thereby that other speech of the Prophet's mouth
- S. Greg. M.
S. Mat. xiii.
30.
- S. Just. Org.
Luc. Abb.
- Hugo Carl.
- Theodoret.
- S. Ambros.
in Ps. cxix.
- Irimbert.
Hon. Aug.
- Guilielmus.
- S. Ambros.
de Inst.
Virg. 14.
- Ps. lxx. 14.

which the same David uttered, was brought to pass: "He fed them also with the finest wheat-flour, with honey out of the stony rock did He satisfy them." Ps. lxxxl. 17. And the Divine oracles testify that a Lily too was in this seed, for it is written, "I am the flower of the plain, and the lily of the valleys, as the lily among thorns." CHRIST was the lily among thorns, when He was in the midst of the Jews. Cant. ii. 1, 2.

3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

There is but little to add here to the expositions cited on the previous occurrence of these words.

Taking them, as before, to refer to the preachers of the Church, twofold, as Jew and Gentile, or as deriving their teaching from both Testaments, or, again, as inculcating the two great precepts on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, they have yet a word or two of counsel. Thus, we are reminded that preaching, to be useful to the hearers, must come from those who draw their lessons from a living source, and have not merely got up a single sermon for each occasion by borrowing, or by learning the subject of the day apart from all its true context; a style of preaching often hurtful to the hearers, as the milk given to Sisera out of the bottle was the prelude of his death. Had Jael fed him from her breast, she could not have slain him. Hugo Card. Judg. iv. 19.

4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

Already the neck of the Bride has been likened to a tower, but here the materials of which that tower is formed are first mentioned. Those officers of the Church, whether preachers, through whom comes the voice of doctrine, or priests, by whose ministry the Body and Blood of CHRIST pass to the people for their spiritual food and drink, or Martyrs, because they put their necks under the yoke of CHRIST, and never withdraw them, are all compared to *ivory* because of its whiteness and purity, while the word *tower* serves to remind us that the grace of purity is found allied with Chap. iv. 4. Cassiodor. Philo Carp. Luc. Abb.

- strength rather than with weakness. Note, too, that as only that part of ivory which is uncovered by flesh is valuable, and suited for the adornment of a king, so the Martyrs, by putting off their fleshly covering, became a tower of beauty in the City of God; and similarly, all those who here mortify the flesh and live, while in the body, as though out of it, are more precious than their fellows. The knowledge of Scripture, observes a Saint, is also the spiritual neck of the Bride, and it is styled a *tower of ivory*, because they who occupy themselves with God's Word rise daily higher in spiritual progress, in shining righteousness. The soul has its ivory neck too, that pure and shining observance of the unsullied precepts of God, that perfect righteousness and holy bond, which is the means of union between the faithful soul and CHRIST, her Head.
- Another tells us that as the neck is the channel of speech, so we may here understand penitent confession of sins, compared to a *tower* because it needs strong and steadfast resolution to acknowledge our transgressions, not shrinking back and cowering in shame. And this tower is *ivory*, because confession makes the soul white, firm, and clean. *Thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon.* The eyes of the Church, says Cassiodorus, are her Doctors, who watch for the whole body, and point the way it should go. These eyes are compared to *fishpools* built at the gate of the city of Heshbon, because holy teachers wash in the bath of life the people who believe in CHRIST, and refresh them with the draught of saving doctrine. These pools are *by the gates*, because none can enter the Church unless he be first washed in the water of Baptism, and have been given to drink of the fount of saving doctrine. This was typified by the brazen sea which Solomon placed in the porch of the Temple, that the priests, when about to enter the Temple and to sacrifice victims, might wash themselves there. The gate at which it stands is that of *Bath-rabbim*, "daughter of a multitude," because the Church is rightly so named, as daily gathering in the multitude of the Gentiles. This explanation is closely allied to the Chaldee paraphrase, which interprets the clause of the scribes, full of *wisdom* and *calculation*, signified by *Heshbon*, because one of their main duties was to compute the occurrence of the great festivals, and their post was at the door of the Great Council of the
- S. Just. Org.
- Philo Carp.
- Irimbert.
- Cassiodor.
- 2 Chron. iv. 2, 6.
- Philo Carp.
- Targum. Aquila.

people. The spiritual eyes of the soul are also, they tell us, like fishpools in Heshbon; like *fishpools*, because containing the water of heavenly wisdom, ever full of tears for their own sins and those of others, in *Heshbon*, because of the depth of thought with which she ponders in clear and pure meditation, and thus *by the gate of the daughter of a multitude*, because she draws the springs of thought from many lips and various sources. Again, the eyes of devout meditation need to be at the *gate*, at the very entrance of the soul, to guard against all access of foes, to catch the first glimpse of the King as He draws near. And a truly devout soul is called the *daughter of a multitude*, because in her lowliness she is content to class herself as but one of the meanest of God's countless elect, and not to claim any pre-eminence as hers by right.

Theodoret.
S. Ambros.
Serm. 16, in
Ps. cxix.

Philo Carp.
Dion. Carth.

Hugo Card.

Amidst the happy chorus
A place, however low,
Shall show Him us, and showing,
Shall satiate evermo.

Bern. Clun.
Rhythmus.

Although a few of the Latin commentators rightly follow the Greek in explaining *Heshbon* as "thought" or "contemplation," yet the majority of them prefer to interpret it as "girdle of mourning,"¹ and thus dwell much on penitential sorrow as a special grace of the Bride. There are several reasons assigned for the likeness of the eyes of the devout soul to fishpools. The chief are as follows. First, that as fish is kept alive in these pools, so devout thoughts and affections are retained in the meditations of the heart. They might well add that the fish, from its Greek name, *ἰχθῦς*, is the familiar symbol of the Ancient Church for her LORD, as the several letters of the word are the initials of *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτῆρ*, JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, SAVIOUR, and that He is the living tenant of all her thought. Next, these pools are clear and limpid, and reflect images, as the soul, when contemplating GOD, should receive His image in her bosom. Thirdly, as fishpools are deep and full of water, so abundant tears of devotion and contrition flow from

Corn. à Lap.

¹ There is a word *צִנְדָּה*, *cin-*
gulum, from the same root
צִנְדָּה as *Heshbon*, and perhaps
צִנְדָּה, *luxit*, may be assumed as

the supposed root of the termi-
nation. The etymon is thus
not so utterly wild as it looks
at first.

holy souls. Fourthly, as these pools are at the gates of the daughter of multitude, so meditation and contemplation are by the gates of Paradise, where is the innumerable company of the elect. Fifthly, as the water in such pools is still, and therefore calm and peaceful, so meditation quiets and tranquillizes the soul.

Philo Carp.
Cassiod.

Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus. Because with the nose we distinguish between fetid and fragrant odours, the same holy teachers are rightly understood to be the nose of the Church, as they know how to discern skilfully the sweet teaching of the Catholic Faith, and the deadly stench of heretical error. For among the divine gifts of which distribution is made by the HOLY GHOST, it is said, "To another is given by the SPIRIT discerning of spirits." This nose of the Church is compared to the *tower of Lebanon*, because holy teachers occupy the highest place in the Church, and stand, as it were, on Mount Lebanon, to guard the Church from the assaults of evil spirits. This tower is said to be *toward Damascus*. Damascus is the chief city of Syria, which once, under very powerful and cruel kings, warred against the children of Israel. And Damascus is interpreted, "a draught of blood" or "an eye of blood."¹ They say that Abel was slain there, and it therefore denotes the powers of this world, who thirst after blood, because they delight in the pleasures and allurements of flesh and blood. It also signifies the powers of the air, who thirst for our blood. Therefore this tower is *against Damascus*, because those fortified by the help of CHRIST, always resist the devil and his members. Another, slightly varying from this interpretation, takes the nose to denote all those Saints who perceive the sweet savour of righteousness which is in CHRIST, and transmit it to the body, and who are likened to the tower of Lebanon because of their eminence and purity. And if we take the *tower of Lebanon*, as a third does, to denote the Manhood of CHRIST, holding Lebanon to mean "frankincense,"

1 Cor. xii.
10.

S. Just. Org.

Luc. Abb.

¹ The true meaning is probably "red land," contrasting aptly enough with the *whiteness* of Lebanon, and sufficiently suggestive of the colour of blood. If the Arabic ety-

mology, "swiftly built," be preferred, we may then see another contrast, that between the hasty, unsubstantial buildings of man, and the "everlasting hills" of God.

then those will be like Him who are filled with earnest zeal and ardent faith, and, shining with virtues, overthrow the devil-worship of the Gentiles among whom they dwell. Yet another view sees here the Guardian Angels, keeping ceaseless watch against the enemies of mankind. The nose of the holy soul is also her power of discerning between good and evil spirits, like a lofty tower on the summit of Lebanon, looking towards Damascus, to watch for the approach of any enemy against Israel. It looks towards Damascus in another sense also, taking that word still as implying blood, in that its gaze of contemplation is ever fixed on the Passion of JESUS, and His bloodshedding on the "red ground" of Gethsemane and Calvary. And this is the view taken by S. Jerome, saying of S. Mary Magdalene, "She weeps at the Cross, she makes ready the ointment, she seeks in the tomb, she questions the gardener, she recognizes the LORD, she proceeds to the Apostles, she tells what she had found; they doubt, but she is trustful. Truly towered is she, truly a tower of whiteness and Lebanon, which looks towards the face of Damascus, that is, the BLOOD of the SAVIOUR, calling her to holy penitence." And another, applying the words to a greater than the Magdalen, exclaims: Thou, O Lady, art that fair nose, of which the Bridegroom saith, "Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon." The nose hath two orifices, through which it emits the breath from the head; so thou, O Lady, by thy virginity and lowliness drewest down the SON of GOD from heaven, CHRIST the LORD, Whom the Prophet calls "the breath of our nostrils," for He warms us unto charity, and cools our desire, urges us to will what is good, justifies us by faith. Thou therefore art the nose of the Church, and like to a tower; lofty in thy dignity, strong in thy sedateness. Thou art the tower of Lebanon, for Mount Lebanon, which is interpreted whiteness, signifies thine innocence, exalted above all others.

Hugo Card.

Tres Patr.

Irimbert.

S. Hieron.
Ep. 140, ad
Principiam.Pseudo-
Bernard.
Serm. 4, sup.
*Salve Re-
gina.*

Lam. iv. 20.

5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

Following the Targum, which interprets this head as the King, several of the Fathers tell us that CHRIST

Philo Carp.
Cassiodor.

- is the Head here promised. They accept also, for the most part, the reason assigned by the Chaldee paraphrase for the comparison, which is a reference to the history of Elijah. But whereas the Jewish expositor dwells on the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, the Christians prefer to remember the descent of the fertilizing rain on the parched and thirsty ground. CHRIST, comments S. Gregory, is the Head of the Church, and is well said to be *like Carmel*, because He was exalted unto the FATHER by the Passion He endured. Of which is written, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains." For Elijah, praying on Carmel, obtained rain, and we, praying on Carmel, ask for rain, when, believing in CHRIST, we long for CHRIST, and obtain from the FATHER the bestowal of the grace for which we intreat.
- S. Greg. M. And as Elijah and Elisha, Saints of the Old Covenant, often found a refuge on Carmel, so too the dwelling of the righteous is in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Head of His Church, from Whom the multitude of the people derive their food. The intellect or reason is also, as many of them add, the head of the soul, as ruling and guiding it, and this is like Carmel, the "fruitful," because, as Theodoret adds, it is filled with all good things. For God, when rebuking by His Prophet the ingratitude of the Jews, saith, "I brought you into the land of Carmel, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof." Thine head, then, saith He, is like Carmel, bringing forth all kinds of good things, and producing every fruit for Me, its Husbandman.¹ *The hair of thy head like purple; the King is bound in the galleries.* This version, which follows the Masoretic pointing, is practically that of the LXX., save that there, instead of *galleries*, we find *παράδρομαίς*, *verandahs*, running round the lower story of a house.
- Isa. ii. 2. This *hair* of the Bride, observes the Bishop of Car-
- S. Just. Org. Jer. ii. 7, marg. Philo Carp.

¹ The majority of the Fathers interpret *Carmel* as "knowledge of circumcision," and observe that the Head or ruling part of the Church knew circumcision literally under the Law, and spiritually under the Gospel. The marginal reading of A. V., "crimson," is an

error, as old as Abenezra, and arises out of confounding פְּרָמֶל and פְּרָמֶל. But it is probable that the reference to *purple* which follows was suggested to the poet by the resemblance of these two words.

pasia, is the innumerable company of the Christian people, which adorns the Church as abundant tresses are the glory of a woman's head. And the epithet *purple* bears a reference to the prophecies and oracles of the coming death of the Bridegroom Himself and of the Martyrs, for as purple resembles the colour of blood, so the Bride, who is the multitude of the faithful, was first washed and dyed with the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, her divine Spouse, and then was further increased and stablished by the death of the Martyrs. This is His royal apparel, of which Jacob prophesies to his son Judah (of whom the Bridegroom was born after the flesh) saying, "He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes." For the Holy Church is the robe and garment of CHRIST. Theodoret, dwelling on the word *πλόκιον*, "twined" or "plaited" hair, and explaining the word to denote the doctrine and teaching of the Church, says that it is so described to point the contrast between the orderly sequence of Christian dogma and the dishevelled opinions of Gentilism, while he agrees with Philo in holding that the purple tinge comes from the Precious Blood. Both fail us in the last clause, Theodoret, because he passes over it altogether, and Philo, because he adopts a reading peculiar to himself (at least found now in no extant text,) *The King is terrible in His goings-forth*; words which he explains, with eloquence and fervour, of the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of CHRIST. Ainsworth, however, may supply the lacuna, suggesting as the spiritual interpretation of the A. V. that the King is so tied with the cords of love to the dwelling of His Bride, that He cannot, so to speak, leave it if He would; according to His own saying by the mouth of the Psalmist: "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." But it is to be noted that the Hebrew word here found, *רְהַטִּים* *rehatim*, means, in the only other places in the Bible where it occurs, *gutters* or *troughs* for cattle to drink at, and therefore the Vulgate rendering is here to be preferred. *As a King's purple, bound in the conduits (canalibus.)* That is, as they variously explain it, laid in the dye-troughs, and thus in the first freshness of its colouring, before

Gen. xlix.

11.

Theodoret.

Philo Carp.

Ainsworth.

Ps. cxxxii.

14.

Gen. xxx.

33, 41.

Exod. ii. 16.

Cassiodor.

Weissbach.

Leo Juda.

ought has dimmed it; or else, newly washed in running water, and so clean and bright, and shining in the sun. Before passing to the interpretation of this version, the other views proposed may be stated. One is that the word *παραδρομή* or *canalis* does not mean a literal water-trough, but a gold or silver stripe, binding, and yet running like a bright stream across, the purple robe, so that the comparison is then made with the *fillets* wherewith the Bride's dark tresses are bound.¹ The other opinion, which is that of most modern critics, is that the *flowing curls* of the Bride are metaphorically intended, and that the King is caught and tangled in them, as in a net. Mystically, says Cassiodorus, the *conduits* signify the lowliness of the Saints, in which the purple of the Everlasting King is dyed, when those Saints, by imitating the lowliness of their Redeemer, aim at being conformed to His Passion, that they may be changed into the dignity of purple, that is, working for CHRIST may attain to be crowned and to reign with CHRIST. And this purple is said to be *bound*, because the hearts of the Saints are fixed and stablished in the fear and love of their SAVIOUR, so that they can never be separated from His love. The poor of the people, remarks the Chaldee paraphrast, who surround the Prince, because of their need, will one day be clothed with *purple*, as Daniel was in Babylon and Mordecai in Susa, for the sake of Abraham's merit, whom GOD made a king, and for Isaac's righteousness, who was *bound* by his father, and for Jacob's dignity, who peeled the rods at the *water-troughs*. And so, rendering the words in a Christian sense, it is the weakest and lowliest of CHRIST's members who shall inherit the kingdom, and are made true kings for His sake Who is the Friend of GOD, the Father of Nations; for His Who was bound on the Cross for us; for His, the Prince with GOD, Who stripped the Tree of Life, in part at least, of the bark or outer letter, that we might see the wood itself.

Tres Patr.
Rosen-
müller.
De Wette.
Ewald.
Hitzig.
Cassiodor.

Targum.

S. Ambros.

Rupert. in
Gen. xxx.

¹ And in support of this view two facts may be cited. One is that the Talmud actually uses the word *תפוח* to denote the ribbons used in decorating the Paschal Lamb, (Talmud,

de Agno Paschali, c. 3;) and the other is that the technical name in the modern Greek Church for the wavy stripes on a cope is *ποταμοί*, "rivers," (Goar. Eucholog.)

And observe, that either of the meanings given to the conduits or ducts yields a spiritual lesson. If they be the actual dye-troughs, then we learn that the first true beauty of the Saints must be derived from conformity with the Passion of JESUS, and that the fairest loveliness of all is martyrdom for His sake. If the reference be to water in which the purple, after being dyed, is washed to make it clean and bright, then we have the font of Baptism for the first such washing, and the tears of penitence to cleanse subsequent defilement. There is a variant of the Vulgate, *joined with canals (juncta canalibus,)* which is explained to mean either Holy Scripture, or the secret counsels of GOD which decreed the Passion and royalty of CHRIST, or else those wise prelates and teachers, who form as it were the ducts for the streams from the Heavenly Jerusalem by which the precious Blood of CHRIST is supplied to the people, that they may be truly a kingly robe for Him, and not, as too often, a prickly hair-cloth on His sacred form; or, yet again, as the rules and ordinances, especially of the Religious Life, which are the outer troughs in which we are placed, that the costly dye may saturate us. Or, again, the examples of the Saints are not inaptly called canals, because the effect of the LORD'S Passion does not confine itself to them alone, and sink, as it were, into the ground through them, but the stream passes on after dyeing them, to perform the like office for others, in that they become agents of conversion in their turn.

Note, too, that the praise of the Bride's loveliness is directed to ten beauties of her person successively, denoting thereby that the fairness of the Church consists in fulfilling the commandments of GOD. And, applying the verse to the Blessed Virgin, they tell us how when the nails and spear had made the white Beloved ruddy with the purple of His Passion, then the sword of Simeon's prophecy pierced His mother's heart, so that all her thoughts were dyed in the purple of her compassion, as it lay bound by her perfect obedience in those conduits of GOD'S grace which flowed abundantly upon her in that time of suffering, whereby she was crowned as Queen of Martyrs, and therefore fitly clad in royal apparel. It remains only to mention the curious variant found in the Syriac and Arabic versions. *Thy hair is like a kingly purple awning spread above a theatre (Arab.) or race-course (Syr.)* And the

Cassiodor.

Irimbert.
Dion. Carth.S. Greg. M.
Rupert.
Hugo Card.

Gerson.

S. Just. Org.

Guilielmus.
Card. Hail-
grin.

Heb. xii. 1. most obvious mystical import of this seems to be that the examples of the triumphant Saints, the witnesses of our struggle in the arena, serve to alleviate the burning heat of our trial, that we may endure to the end, and conquer.

6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

Cassiodor. *Fair* in her faith, *pleasant* in her works. Above she was called "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners;" here she is said to be fair and pleasant in *delights*. There seems a contradiction in this, for to be terrible as an army in array and to be in delights are incompatible, since delights enervate the valour of soldiers. But the Holy Church can be both, arrayed as an army in resisting unbelievers, heretics, and evil spirits, to whom she is terrible by her holiness and perfection: and in *delights*, because with her mental palate she ever tastes the dulcet savour of heavenly sweetness, and amidst the troubles of the world seeks to attain those delights and to be ever satisfied therewith. And she who is like this, is rightly said to be *dearest* (Vulg.) to the Bridegroom. She is fair and pleasant in delights also in that she possesses meekness and deep lowliness of heart in the abundance of grace. And all the gifts of grace, and the understanding of the Scriptures, are true delights, while lowliness is true beauty, a pleasant thing, and a virtue loved by God. The Carthusian, urging that the Church is never so fair and pleasant in the Bridegroom's eyes as when she is thinking of Him only, and bearing tribulation not merely patiently, but gladly, for His sake, reproduces the Chaldee interpretation, which is, "Solomon the king said, How fair art thou, O congregation of Israel, in the time when thou bearest the yoke of my kingdom, in the time when I correct thee with sufferings because of thy sins, and thou receivest them in love, and they seem delights unto thee." The LXX. rendering, as A. V., *love* instead of *dearest*, gives rise to a slightly different type of exposition. Thou art made *fair*, comments a Greek Father, which thou wast not before, and whereas thou wast full of all unpleasantness, now thou hast at once become *pleasant*, and this thou hast gained because thou delightest in love, for, loving the

Rupert.

Dion. Carth.

Targum.

Theodoret.

Bridegroom who loves thee, and counting His affection thy one delight, thou hast slighted all things besides, and art fair and pleasant. And if so even here, what shall be her beauty in the delights of everlasting blessedness? They apply the verse also to the Virgin Mother, *fair* in her maternity, *pleasant* in her virginity, *dearest* to GOD in both, as He graced her with the *delights* of tending her Divine Son, and of meditating on her own marvellous destiny.

Honorius.

Guillielmus.
Card. Hall-
grin.

7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

The *stature* of the Church is the uprightness of her good works, because, despising to be bent down towards the desires of earth, she lifts her whole form upwards to attain heavenly things; of which the Apostle counsels, saying, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men." Of which the LORD also saith, "I am the LORD your GOD, Which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright." And, besides, the hand of a conqueror was decked with palm, and also, amongst the ancients, the victors in a contest were crowned with palm. Therefore the stature of the Bride is likened to a palm-tree, when all the intention of the faithful stands erect in love for heavenly things, and meanwhile ponders, when standing in the ranks of battle, that prize which shall be the conqueror's meed when the struggle is over. Moreover, because the palm is rough in its lower portion, but displays its beauty and the sweetness of its fruit at the summit, the stature of the Church or of any faithful soul is fitly likened to it, which bears upon earth harsh troubles for the LORD's sake, but hopes to receive from that LORD a precious reward in heaven. The palm is rough near the ground, because the elect suffer persecution for righteousness' sake. It is fair and sweet at the top, because they rejoice and are glad in their afflictions, knowing that their reward is great in heaven. And as the palm is clothed with enduring foliage, and retains its leaves without intermission; who does not see that it presents a type of the stature of faith, which, amidst the varying conditions of the shifting world, keeps ever to the same words of true confession, as leaves which will never be

Beda.

1 Cor. xvi.
13.
Lev. xxvi.
13.

renewed nor fall, and that it preserves unharmed in its elect unto the end of the world that perfection of works which began from its first origin, just as the palm retains its beauty?

S. Greg. M.
Mor. xix.
16.

Further, the palm tree is slender below and expands above, and similarly the holy soul begins in the depths with small things, and growing slowly up to that which is greater, at last branches out into the full beauty of divine love. It is elastic, and springs up under any weight which may be laid on it; it grows in a dry and thirsty soil. And by the palm we may understand also the Cross of CHRIST, for it grows to a great height, and bears sweet fruit, just as the Cross of CHRIST prepared heavenly food for us; and the stature of the Bride is likened to this, because any one who truly loves and imitates CHRIST, does not hesitate to die for Him.

Idem in loc.

De Wette.

Theodoret.

And thy breasts to clusters of grapes. Or rather, more probably, clusters of *dates*, as continuing the reference to the palm tree. And so Theodoret takes it: "Tall and exalted as thou art, reaching to the height of heaven, yet thou bowest down to the feeble, and yieldest the breast of thy teaching to those who are in need of teaching. For the palm tree has clusters which hang downwards. And the HOLY GHOST signifies this by blessed David, saying, 'The righteous shall flourish as a palm tree.'" The breasts of the Church, adds Cassiodorus, are, as has been said already, holy teachers, who nourish with the milk of simple doctrine them who are born again in CHRIST. But these breasts are likened to *clusters of grapes* when these same teachers proclaim more perfect things to the perfect. And so the Apostle, when speaking to

Ps. xcii. 11.

Cassiodor.

1 Cor. iii. 1.

the less instructed, said, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in CHRIST. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat." These are breasts full of milk, which breasts were turned into *clusters of grapes* when he said, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." The two breasts are also the two Testaments, the two precepts of love, and the active and contemplative lives of Christianity, all of them yielding sweet and gladdening wine to cheer the heart of those who imitate CHRIST. And as He hung, Himself, as the bunch of grapes upon the pole which the spies brought from the Land of Promise, so the Martyrs, who are close to His heart, and are most like to Him, are fit-

1 Cor. ii. 6.

Philo Carp.

Luc. Abb.

tingly styled the breasts of His Bride. Spoken of the Blessed Virgin, one devout writer bids us look to that verse of the Gospels, "Now there stood by the Cross of JESUS His Mother," and ponder whether, as she stood beside that palm tree, her stature was not indeed likened to it, nay, whether she was not herself a very cross of suffering then. Another, working out the simile at greater length, comments: Her outer bark was rough, in that she was weak in worldly honour, poor in temporal riches, but yet she possessed vigorous strength in her constancy of soul. She was erect in stem, because shooting upwards to heaven in the resolution of her mind; firm at the summit, by reason of her exalted virginity and lowliness; lovely in flower, because with no thought of sin she conceived the Flower of the plain, the Lily of the valley; sweet in her fruitfulness, because she painlessly bore the Redeemer of the world. She is set before us as an emblem of victory; that as she overcame the world, the flesh, and the devil, so we too may overcome according to our power. The breasts of Mary are her virginity and lowliness, wherein CHRIST delights, and they are set before us for our learning and instruction, that we should follow her footsteps. They are compared to clusters of grapes, because the grape yields perfume in flower and sweetness in fruit. It warms and refreshes, and so too the Maiden's virginity and lowliness are fragrant with the savour of devout thought, warm with love, and refreshing with spiritual fulness.

Guillelmus.

S. John xix.
25.

Alanus.

And it is well to sum up all this description of the Bride's comeliness with the frequent comment of Cornelius à Lapide, that all the eulogy may be interpreted of the Humanity of CHRIST JESUS, that Sacred Body which was, in a sense, the Bride to whom the Eternal WORD united Himself for ever.

Corn. à Lap.

8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples:

It is more than merely going to the palm tree, and the words denote a harder and higher task; *I will climb up into the palm tree*, high enough to reach the fruit which hangs near its summit. Who then is the

S. Cyprian.
Serm. de
Pass.

speaker, and when were the words said? *I said*, quoth the LORD, from all eternity, when I determined to die, of My perfect love and free-will. *I said*, by the mouth of My prophets, that I would *go up to the palm tree*, that is, the Cross, itself formed in part of palm-wood, and exalted on high like a palm, that JESUS, lifted up on it, might draw all unto Him. Of old, too, victory was denoted by the palm, which victory CHRIST won gloriously, as He triumphed upon the Cross. *I said*, unto My FATHER, before all worlds, that I would go up to the palm tree and conquer the tyrant there. And that is the reason why thy stature, in thy perseverance, is like to a palm tree, because I went up to the palm tree for this one thing, and drew thee after Me to victory. I went up to this palm tree by the hands of the soldiers, who ignorantly fought against My divine majesty. As regards them, they crucified a man to die by a miserable death, as regards Me, I ascended the palm tree as a King about to triumph. And the Jews, unknowing the decrees of GOD, bid Me come down from it, saying, If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross. I had gone up to the palm tree, and therefore I willed not to come down while the fruits were not yet formed—the palm tree had already flowered when they so spake to Him—but when, after tasting the vinegar, I said, “It is finished,” and bowing My head, gave up the ghost, then, the fruits of redemption were upon the palm. This verse has originated, or at least encouraged, two opinions in the Church. One is the tradition that the Cross was made of four kinds of wood: cedar, cypress, olive, and palm, and that this last formed the transverse beam to which the sacred Hands were nailed. So runs the distich:

*De cedro est truncus, corpus tenet alta cupressus,
 Palma manus retinet, titulo lætatur oliva.*

Cedar the trunk, tall cypress holds His frame,
 Palm clasps His hands, and olive boasts His Name.

Suarez. The other view based on this passage is that CHRIST literally went up to the Tree, that is, that it was fixed erect in the ground before He was nailed to it, as the more painful and degrading mode of execution; an opinion followed by SS. Gregory Nazianzen, Bernard, Bonaventura, and Birgitta. But the view more gene-

Henr.
Harph.

Cassiodor.

Honorius.

Rupert.

Gretser et
Lipsius de
Cruce.

rally accepted is, that He was laid down upon the Cross while it was still flat upon the ground, and even then the going-up may be well interpreted of the weary journey by the Way of Sorrows to the hill of Calvary. There is a secondary meaning of the words, as applied to the Redeemer, inferior to this alone. The palm tree, observes Cassiodorus, signifies the Church, or even the soul of any faithful believer, who is mindful of the LORD his GOD, Who saith, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." For she aims to be victorious over all sin and unrighteousness. He is well said then here to go up to the palm tree, of Whom we read before that He went down into the garden. The garden and the palm are the same, to wit, the one same Church. The LORD both goes down into it, and goes up into it; down, when sending the abundance of that grace from heaven; up, by increasing His gifts to her, and lifting her up to higher things, by progressive advances, as though by steps.

I will take hold of the boughs thereof. That is, as the Vulgate, with a justifiable paraphrase, reads, *of the fruits thereof*, hidden amongst the *heights* (LXX.) of the tree. And the fruits which the LORD gathered there were, first, the salvation of mankind, and then, as regarded Himself, the glorification of His Body, the hastening of His Resurrection, the splendid pomp of His Ascension, the manifestation of His Name, and the acquisition of authority as Judge. But, though these words belong primarily to the Bridegroom, yet His Spouse, because He endows her with all He possesses, can take them on her lips also. She can say, *I will go up to the palm tree*, to the Cross, by ever bearing CHRIST'S Passion in mind, by sharing in His sorrows, by keeping them alive within me, by imitating them faithfully. And that "because CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps," and "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." She can also be like Zaccheus, ascending above the worldly crowd to see her LORD Who is hidden from such as refuse the Cross. *And take hold of the fruits thereof*, not only those fruits of our redemption, by being grateful and giving thanks, but also the fruits of practical perfection, by faithfully imitating that perfection of all virtues. *I will go up*, she saith to her Bridegroom, by imitation in holiness to the perfection of Thy teaching, and will take hold of its heights by contemplation.

Cassiodor.

S. John xvi.
33.Henry Har-
phius.1 S. Pet. ii.
21; iv. 1.

Tres Patr.

Ps. lxxiii. 2.

Hugo Vict.
de Inst.
Mon. i. 20.Lev. xxiii.
40.

Neh. viii. 15.

2 Macc. x. 7.
1 Macc. xiii.
51.

Or, yet more deeply, interpreting the palm tree, tall and stately, bearing luscious fruit, and growing best in the sands of the "barren and dry land where no water is," to be CHRIST Himself, the Tree of Life, let us hear Hugh of S. Victor: "The toil of the climber is lessened, when he perceives the fragrance of the fruit upon the tree, for the sweetness of its taste does away with the difficulty of the ascent. The palm tree is CHRIST; His fruit salvation; the hope of salvation is in the wood of the Cross. Ascend therefore into the palm tree, that is, give heed to the victory of the Cross, for by the stair of the Cross thou shalt go up to the throne of the victor." Keeping to the literal Hebrew, *I will take hold of the boughs*, we have two further meanings which the verse bears in the mouth of the Bride, besides that of promised conformity to the Passion. Palm-branches were amongst the green boughs commanded for use by the Jews in token of rejoicing at the feast of ingathering of the harvest, and also at the feast of tabernacles, in token of rest in the fertile Land of Promise after the weary march through the barren wilderness. They were used also, as by the Greeks and Romans, in token of victory, as when Judas Maccabeus took the citadel of Jerusalem, and when Simon dedicated the sanctuary, and thus they typify a more glorious triumph of CHRIST than that entry into the earthly Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, namely, the true feast of ingathering, of tabernacles, of dedication, and of victory, when the LORD's harvest shall have been gathered by His reapers, the Angels, into His garners, when the tents of the great army of heaven shall encamp round the pavilion of their victorious Leader, when the true Land of Promise has been won by the people of GOD under their greater Joshua.

Giles
Fletcher,
*Christ's Tri-
umph*, xxii.

Here may the band that now in triumph shines,
And who (before they were invested thus)
In earthly bodies carried heavenly minds,
Pitch round about, in order glorious,
Their sunny tents, and houses luminous:
All their eternal day in songs employing;
Joy is their end, without end of their joying,
While their Almighty Prince destruction is destroying.

And, again, it was the wont amongst the Jews, until after the fall of their city, to use palm-branches as well as nuptial crowns in bridal rejoicings, and therefore

the Bride may well declare how she will prepare herself and her companions for the glad procession of that great day when "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready," and when the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And that, because they have "come out of great tribulation," for by the palm which the Bride ascends may be understood the plain of combat and victory, and as CHRIST ascended the Cross to fight for us against the devil, and gathered from that Tree the fruits of redemption and salvation, so the Church went up into her battle-field to fight against tyrants and unbelievers for the faith of CHRIST, and also to war against the flesh, the world, and false brethren. Thus there were four armies that went up to the palm tree for the combat. First went the choir or army of Martyrs, to fight against tyrants, princes, and unbelievers. Secondly, the army of Virgins went up to war against the flesh. Thirdly, the army of Contemplative and Monastic Saints went up to war against the world and its pomp. Fourthly went up the army of Doctors to fight against heretics. And because these four battalions so went up to the palm tree as to a battle-field, the Church was said above to be "terrible as an army in array."

Rev. xix. 7.

Rev. vii. 9.

Parez.

Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine. "For as the clusters of the vine, when trodden and pressed, yield the pleasant juice of wine to their husbandman and vine-dresser, so righteous and holy men of GOD, when afflicted and tortured like grapes, bring forth and produce from themselves, through their victory of salvation, heavenly gladness to GOD their Husbandman, and to JESUS CHRIST, and to the Bride; and by the fragrance of their holiness and virtue attract and draw on others to be imitators of CHRIST in like manner, for which reason it follows suitably, *And the smell of thy nose like apples:* denoting thereby most plainly the perfume of unconquered faith and hope and glowing charity, according to that saying of the Apostle, 'We are a sweet savour of CHRIST in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life' everlasting. The *nose* denotes the Orthodox

Philo Carp.

2 Cor. ii. 15.

Church, which inhales the perfume of virtues with both nostrils, that is, the two Testaments. So too, though there is but one nose, to wit, one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one life everlasting, one and the same God, the goal of the blessed, yet there are two Churches, divided in name, not in fact, in race, not in faith, by distance of place, not by ultimate aim, to wit, Greek and Latin, Eastern and Western;¹ or, if I mistake not, the Synagogue and the Church may be here understood, derived from the one Author, the SPIRIT of distribution and of unity. And for all this reason, the Bride is compared to apples, because as apples yield both food and drink, both which they contain, so the sweet odour of the Church in true faith and love unfeigned possesses the mystic drink and food of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, and gives them to others."

S. Greg. M.

Beda.

S. Luke
xxiv. 27.

Acts ii. 13.

S. Luke v.
38.

Rupert.

Theodoret.

Tres Patr.

Cassiod.

Beda.

It is by the Cross, observes S. Gregory, that the breasts of the Bride become like clusters of grapes, because in the death of CHRIST the powers of the soul received the two precepts of charity, and when the soul is nourished by them, she is inebriated, so as to forget what is behind, and to reach forward to what is before. Yes, continues Beda, expanding this thought, since the first Doctors of the Church, that is, the Apostles, obtained far more knowledge of the doctrines of salvation when the Passion and Resurrection were fulfilled, than they had before; when He, appearing to them after His Resurrection, opened to them the Scriptures that they might understand, and sending down the SPIRIT upon them, gave them knowledge of all languages, that time when it was falsely said "These men are full of new wine." But they were in truth made like clusters of the vine, because they were refreshed with the grace of spiritual gifts, when that saying was truly brought to pass, "New wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved." That, observes Rupert, was the autumn, when men eat of the grapes, and the sweet perfume is everywhere diffused. They do not fail to remind us also of that True Vine, from which these clusters hang which yield the wine of salvation for mankind. The Vulgate reads *the smell of thy mouth*, and the Latin Fathers accordingly explain the clause as denoting the preaching of

¹ This statement of an external severance, not incompatible with internal unity, of the

Eastern and Western Churches in the fourth century is noteworthy.

the Word; and S. Gregory, who supposes the *apples* S. Greg. M. to be pomegranates, dwells, as before, on their ruddy hue, as typifying the Martyrs, chief preachers of the Church either in word or example. Honorius, taking Honor. August. the whole verse of the final glory of the redeemed, comments thus: "The Church Triumphant ascends the palm tree, because by the victory of the Cross she reaches the Tree of Life, of which is written, 'To him Rev. ii. 7. that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' She hath already taken hold of its fruit, whereof whoso eateth shall never die. Her breasts are as clusters of grapes, because the joys wherewith she is inebriated in return for her sufferings in the world, are like the joys of CHRIST when He was pressed out upon the Cross. For He is the cluster of the vine, the drink of the Church, the fount of life, wherewith she shall be inebriated, when it shall be said unto her, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.' Then shall her smell be like apples, that, is, her delights shall be as those of the Angels; and her throat like the best wine, that is, her praise shall be as the praise of them that feast."

S. Mat.
xxv. 21.

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

For *roof of the mouth* or *palate* the LXX. and Vulgate read *throat*. But the inner meaning, that of the Heiligstedt. speech of the Bride, is alike. The preaching of the Cassiod. Church is *like the best wine*, because it exhibits its great power to the hearers. And whereas the perfume of apples is best when they are new, and that of wine when it is old, this signifies that the preaching of the Church possesses all sweetness and grace alike in its beginning and in its perfection. And wine, pleasant to the taste, and beautiful in colour, denotes also cheerful and devout praise of GOD by His Saints, of Guilielmus. whom is written, "Let the praises of GOD be in their Ps. cxlix. 6. mouth." Philo urges that CHRIST Himself is the throat Philo Carp. or palate of the Bride, because it is only through Him that she can taste how sweet He is in His own Sacrament of love, wherein He gives her the *best wine*. But the Bride, hearing Him thus speak, can no longer Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M. contain herself, and catching up His words, adds, *For*
 Beda. *my Beloved*. It is, as the Vulgate adds, *worthy for*
 Rupert. *Him to drink*, for the preaching of the Gospel to the world can be effected by Him only, and by no other; for it is fitting that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should not be disclosed to the world by any save the "Mediator between God and man."

That goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak. In this passage there is much divergence amongst the renderings, and it will be most convenient to take them in order. The LXX. reads, *Going to my Beloved unto straightness, sufficient for my lips and teeth*. That is, as Theodoret paraphrases it, the doctrine which flows from thy throat, preferable to any perfumed wine or to all the pleasures of this life, is that which Thou givest, my Beloved, to guide aright the souls which believe in Thee. And this Thy teaching is enough and sufficient for me, that I should in part disclose it and proclaim it, using the organ of my lips; and partly guard and hide it, using my teeth as a barrier to encompass it. It is sufficient, say others, for my *lips*, in readily satisfying my desires, sufficient for my *teeth* also, in supplying difficult problems for my understanding, needing much careful mastication before they can be assimilated as spiritual food. The Vulgate reads the whole clause thus: *Worthy for my Beloved to drink, for His lips and teeth to ruminate*. The idea here is the slow tasting of very choice wine, sipping it gradually, and allowing it to remain some time in the mouth, in order to perceive its full bouquet and flavour; and they explain it, accordingly, of sedulous meditation in the precepts of the Gospel, in order to extract their full meaning and beauty. And on this S. Gregory says very well: "Such is the wine of the Bride, that it is worthy for her Beloved to drink, because while Holy Church preaches the true faith, and rouses her hearers to holy works, and shows them by word and deed how good it is to love, imitate, and embrace CHRIST alone, what else does she do but make the wine worthy of her Beloved, that it may taste sweet in the Bridegroom's mouth? And on this act it is to be noted, that all drink, but only the lips and teeth ruminate, because while the Church preaches by her Saints, all hear, but not all perceive the whole force of the sayings which are uttered. The lips and teeth ruminate,

since the more perfect, after hearing, recall the words to their memory while pondering in earnest thought what they have heard, as those animals which bring again into the mouth the food they have received, taste the full flavour of that food they had eaten. Therefore it is written in the Law that animals which do not ruminate are not clean, implying that any one who does not ponder again on good things which he hears or reads, by not being occupied with holy thoughts, necessarily collects unclean ones." And S. Albert, in a similar spirit, aptly applies the text to meditation after Communion of the Blessed Sacrament.

S. Alb. Mag.

The A. V. reading, *Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak*, may be explained in two ways, either that the sweet wine of the Gospel breathed a new meaning into the dark sayings of the dead Seers and Prophets of the Old Testament, and gave a living force to seemingly inert types and oracles, so that the whole meaning of such mysteries as the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the offering of Isaac, the burning bush, the brazen serpent, and the fleece of Gideon; the inner sense of prophecies like Balaam's, Joel's, and Isaiah's, were revealed, just as sympathetic ink, heretofore hidden from the eye, stands out in relief under the influence of heat; and thus it might be said of each old Seer that "he, being dead, yet speaketh," in bearing witness to CHRIST. The other meaning is the revival of souls dead asleep in the lethargy of sin, roused by the Voice of CHRIST, the sweet wine going down as a medicine *straightly*, in the direct simplicity of the Gospel message, to tell the sinner, "'I say unto thee, Arise,' and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, and He delivered him to his mother." And this interpretation, which is supported by the Targum, here citing the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and the awaking of the dry bones which Ezekiel saw, is in the spirit of that ancient hymn in honour of the Cross:

Delitzsch.
Hengsten-
berg.

Heb. xi. 4.

A. V. Marg.
S. Luke vii.
14.

Targum.

O branches rich and passing fair, O sweet and noble Tree!
What new and precious fruit is that which hangs for all on thee?
Whose fragrance breathes the breath of life into the silent dead,
Gives life to them from whom, long since, earth's pleasant light
had fled!

S. Venant.
Fortunat.
The Hymn,
*Crux bene-
dicta.*

Two other renderings are suggested by modern critics, *gliding gently over the lips of sleepers*, which seems to mean that the wine has a gently lulling effect, gradu-

Hitzig.

Weissbach.

ally bringing a peaceful slumber, which may then be interpreted of the tranquillizing influence of the Word; or, with another version, *causing the lips of sleepers to taste it*, meaning that the wine which was so good at the banquet as to *go down straightly* (because men not only made no difficulty about swallowing it, but bent back the head to drain the cup,) left the memory of its flavour so clear, that the banqueters seemed to taste it again in dreams. And then, it will come to much the same meaning as S. Gregory's explanation of ruminating, to wit, the contemplation in time of rest of all that has been said or done for God in the time of action.¹

10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 8.

This is the third time that the close union and mutual affection of the Bridegroom and Bride is mentioned in the Song. And there is, observes S. Ambrose, a threefold diversity in the manner of expression, to denote the three stages of the Bride's progress in the love of God, to wit, her beginning, advance, and perfection. She said, at first, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feedeth among the lilies until the day break, and the shadows flee away," because when she is beginning to learn, the Bride still sees the shadows, not yet disturbed by the approach of the WORD, as, in fact, the Gospel day did not shine upon the Church at her origin. In the second place she says, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine; He feedeth among the lilies," for in her progress He gathers her sweet perfumes, untroubled by clouds. And thirdly, in this place she says, "I am my Beloved's and His desire (LXX. and Vulgate *turning*) is toward me," because, now made perfect, she makes herself a resting-place for the WORD, that He may turn towards her, and lay His head upon her, and take His rest. And that, observes Theodoret, because she can say, I have con-

Chap. ii. 16.

Chap. vi. 3.

Theodoret.

¹ The considerable variants in the renderings of this difficult verse are mainly reducible to two causes, viz., the reading וְשֵׁנִים "and teeth" instead of

שֵׁנִים "sleepers," and the erroneous derivation of דּוֹכַח, as though connected with דָּרַךְ *locutus est*, instead of the true etymon דָּרַךְ *repsit*.

secrated myself to Him, and have looked with loathing on the common fellowship of Gentiles, Jews, and heretics. For He hath preferred me to all others, and turned unto me, and whereas He once had not where to lay His head, He hath now found a place to lay it. I will now, comments another, be the servant of the SON of GOD, and He will reward me abundantly when He shall descend at His second coming to sit as Judge of all. But we must be turned to Him first, as it is written, "Turn ye unto Me, saith the LORD of Hosts, and I will turn unto you." And Henry Harphius, understanding the word *turning* to denote turning in to dwell in a place, tells us here how the Bride should prepare herself to become the kingdom, temple, and abode of CHRIST, adorned with that love in the midst of which He is ever pleased to tarry. Of such love a Saint has wisely said: Love divine is fire, light, honey, wine, and sun. Fire, in that it purifies in meditation the soul from all uncleanness. Light, in prayer, illuminating the soul with the radiance of holiness. Honey, in thanksgiving, sweetening the soul with the sweetness of God's bounties. Wine, in contemplation, inebriating the soul with sweet and pleasant delight. Sun, in eternal bliss, giving splendour to the soul in unclouded light, gladdening it with the genial heat of unspeakable joy and everlasting jubilation. He turned to us here long ago in taking our flesh upon Him; He turns again and again in answering our prayers. He loved us sweetly, wisely, strongly. Sweetly, in clothing Himself with flesh; wisely, in being pure from sin; strongly, in undergoing death. Therefore, O Christian, learn from CHRIST how to love CHRIST; learn to love Him sweetly, that we fail not when enticed; wisely, that we be not deceived; strongly, that no force can make us yield. And where love is, there is no toil.

But if you will have the other rendering, *His desire is toward me*, the Psalmist can tell us how it has been attracted: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." Hear the Word of GOD with attention, obey it with alacrity, leave behind all former evil conversation; leave, if need be, country, and home, and closest ties of kindred, and follow CHRIST, and He will desire thee, and with desire will eat His Passover with thee, feeding thee with His own Body and Blood.

Philo Carp.

Zech. i. 3.

Henr.
Harph.S. Hrabanus
Maurus.Cassiodor.
S. Just. Org.
Dion. Carth.S. Bernard.
Serm. 20
in Cant.Idem,
Serm. 86.

Ps. xlv. 11.

Ayguan,
in loc.

Honorius. And when even Sacraments shall vanish, the Bride will turn to her Beloved as she passes from the world to heaven, and He will turn to her, welcoming her into the fellowship of the Angels.

11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.

S. Ambros.
Serm. 19
in Ps. cxix.

There are three main interpretations of these words of the Bride. And first; it is a prayer for the Incarnation. Observe, comments S. Ambrose, how the Bride invites the WORD of GOD to come unto the earth, and to take away the sins of the world. This *field* was once desert, rough with the brambles of our sins, bristling with thorns. It was the *village* whither Adam was banished, and where he bound his heirs and posterity in perpetual exile. Thither the Church leads CHRIST to set Adam free; and when the exiles were loosed, the field of this world began to have competent tillers, and though it once was barren, it became fruitful with the everlasting plantation of the Vine.

S. Greg. M.

Or, as S. Gregory more briefly puts it, the Bridegroom goes *into the field* with the Bride when the WORD is manifested to the world in the flesh which He took in the chamber of the Virgin. He *lodges in the villages* when He visits the Gentiles by that faith which He bestows on them that receive Him.

Cassiodor.

Secondly; the invitation is to convert the heathen. The field, says Cassiodorus in his Master's words, is the world. *Let us go forth into the field*, that is, let us preach to the world. *Let us lodge in the villages*, that is, let us proclaim faith in Thee even to the Pagans. For every one knows that *Pagan* is derived from *pagus*, a village, and Pagans are fitly so named because they are far from the City of GOD. *Come*, saith the Bride, *my Beloved*. Thou hast already raised Thine assumed Manhood to the heavens by the mystery of Thine Ascension, yet *come*, visiting me often with the presence of Thy divine Majesty. *Let us lodge in the villages*, not merely passing through them as we preach, but tarrying there till we make the Pagans Catholics, and the aliens Thine own.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 8.

Thirdly; they take it of the field of the Church, into which the Bridegroom is called, that He may note the progress of the faithful; and as S. Ambrose aptly points out, see not only flowers and spices, as in the

garden, but the firm and solid produce of wheat and barley, denoting the more vigorous kinds of holiness. Theodoret varies somewhat from this view, saying, The Bride urges the Bridegroom to undertake the cure of souls as yet poor and lowly, which, as being lowly and insignificant, she typically calls by the names of *field* and *villages*. For she does not say, Let us go into the City, but into the field. And so Hugh of S. Victor takes it also: The soul goeth forth from contemplation to look round about her; she goeth forth from care for herself to care of her neighbour, to comfort the feeble, to rebuke the restless, that the field, once full of brambles and thorns, may be full of virtues. And she saith, *Let us lodge in the villages*, to wit, in them who are villeins; that is, clowns, and slow in understanding the rules of CHRIST'S royal court. *Let us go forth*, showing them our spiritual union in holy principles expressed by action. *Let us lodge* in those souls, which, as villages, have given up all their inhabitants, faculties, and senses, to Thee. Make there a dwelling for Thyself in the HOLY SPIRIT, and I will give myself to them as an example that they may learn to please Thee. And in this sense, let us hear what a holy writer of another land and age has to tell us: "We are made so to abound and be more than full, that we ought to flow out with JESUS over all creation, that God may be all in all. And we should desire this to be brought to pass no less in every one else than in ourselves, because we ought to have as hearty a desire, longing, and good will that all should have everything which is good as God Himself has. And thus we make all good things which belong to others our very own, an easy and facile matter for them that love, since wherever true love is, it is impossible for it not to flow out and love, for there is nought so like and so peculiar to the Image of God, as to flow forth evermore and to share with all. There is no clearer mark and sign of union with the WORD, than thus without any straitening of internal breadth to converse in common love, giving all things, filling all things with Jesus, that nothing may remain which hath not its rightful share. Thus, so far as in us lies, we can fill heaven and earth, and all that therein is, with our love, which is God." Another interpretation sees here the Church in the days of persecution, driven out of the cities where the tribunals of the heathen judges

Theodoret.

Origen.

Hugo Vict.
de Claustr.
Animæ, 7.

Tres Patr.

Gerlach
Petersen,
Soliloqu.
Ignit.

Parez.

Acts viii. 1. were set up, and forced to withdraw into desert places, as the Thebaid, or, as we read in far earlier times, "And there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria." Wherefore, the Bride, cut off from the visible fellowship of the Saints and from the solemnities of public worship, prays her Beloved not to leave her, but to go with her in her exile. And finally, the Church here in the pilgrimage with CHRIST desires to go with Him into that flowery *field*, the Paradise of delight, and to *lodge in the villages* formed of the many mansions in His FATHER'S HOUSE. So our own poet:

Francis
Quarles,
Emblems,
iv. 7.

Our country mansion, situate on high,
With various objects still renews delight;
Her archéd roof's of unstained ivory,
Her walls of fiery sparkling chrysolite;
Her pavement is of hardest porphyry,
Her spacious windows are all glazed with bright
And flaming carbuncles; no need require
Titan's faint rays, or Vulcan's feeble fire,
And every gate's a pearl, and every pearl entire.

12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

Philo Carp.

The Bridegroom had lodged during the night in the villages, where up to the night of His death He was a pilgrim, despised and hated, in the clownish souls, the hard and obstinate minds of the Jews, and when He lay in the grave for two nights, and on the third day before the light *got up early to the vineyards* of His disciples and the Gentiles who should believe, and when He called us and His Bride from the darkness of ignorance of GOD and from blindness of mind, from the night of sin and the worship of devils, to His marvellous light, and to the true and saving Faith. He rises early to the vineyards, because, sitting after His Resurrection in the glory of the FATHER, He defends the Churches which He has founded. He sees *if the vine flourish*, because He tests with strict examination every progress of the Church. He sees *whether the flowers are bringing forth fruits* (Vulg.) because He looks to see what progress the weak and imperfect are

S. Greg. M.

making. He sees also *whether the pomegranates bud forth*, because He looks to the perfect also, and sees what profit they are to their neighbours, as though looking for the fruit of a tree amongst its flowers. In the early morning of the new Gospel light, He marks the first rudiments of faith in the healthy growth of the vine, its progress in the appearance of the young fruit, its maturity in the likeness to His Passion in the ruddy pomegranate, fit emblem of His Martyrs. And note, though He says, *Let us get up early*; yet, however soon she may be at the sepulchre, her LORD forestalls her, and she finds the stone rolled away; however early she is at the vineyard, the Gardener is there awaiting her, lest any delay in the Resurrection should weaken her faith.

Cassiodor.

Angelomus
Luxov.

S. Just. Org.

I got me flowers to straw Thy way,
I got me boughs off many a tree;
But Thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st Thy sweets along with Thee.

George
Herbert.

Honorius, agreeing in other respects with the interpretation already given, differs in one particular. He takes the night to be the time of Antichrist's persecution of the Church, and the early morning the beginning of the new age, when the Synagogue shall be converted, and CHRIST and the Bride will visit the new Churches formed out of her.

Honorius.

The same commentator agrees with several others in explaining the verse of the faithful soul, which *gets up early*, that is, exhibits diligence and zeal, because, as is well said by one annotating this passage, "they who wish to urge others to rise to their tasks must get up early themselves, not sluggishly, but taking the lead in example and activity." *Early*, in the dawning of life, as it is written, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;" *early*, because the manna must be gathered in the cool of the morning, since "when the sun waxed hot, it melted;" *early*, because Joshua must beset Ai before its inhabitants are aware, must come suddenly, by a forced march all night, on the unprepared forces of the confederate kings; *early*, in the most literal sense, that the first-fruits of the day may be offered to God.

S. Ans. Laud.

Hugo Vict.
de Claust.
Animæ, 7.

Lam. iii. 27.

Exod. xvi.

21.

Josh. viii.

10; x. 9.

When first thine eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun

Henry
Vaughan,
*Rules and
Lessons.*

The spirit's duty. True hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun.
Give Him thy first thoughts then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in Him sleep.

Yet never sleep the sun up. Prayer should
Dawn with the day. There are set, awful hours
'Twixt heaven and us. The manna was not good
After sun-rising; far-day sullies flowers.
Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens when this world's is shut.

Tres Patr.

Then, in quiet self-examination, it is possible to learn whether the True Vine is flourishing in the soil of our hearts, if the flower promise fruit in the formation of character, if the pomegranate of outward self-restraint and inward fervour be developing within us, if purity of life and true confession of faith be ours.

Angelomus.
Philo Carp.

There will I give Thee my loves. Or, with LXX. and Vulgate, *my breasts.* In the field, in the scene of labour, not in the palace of rest, is it that my love and devotion will be chiefly kindled, there only can I bring forth children to suckle and bring up for Thee, there only shall I be able to train them for martyrdom.

Tres Patr.

Cassiodor.

S. Just. Org.

Honorius.

Idem.

Or, taking the *vineyards*, with Honorius, to denote the cloisters of the Religious Life, there, apart from the disturbances of the city, in the still quiet of the field, will the love of God be best nourished in the soul. And there comes a time too when this world's night is ended, and the Bride rises *early to the vineyards*, lifting herself up to the Churches on high. The Day of Judgment is the morn of that everlasting day, which is better than a thousand years; or, you may take it that man's life is the night, and the life to come is the morning, in which morning each of the faithful gets up to the vineyards when he arrives after death at the Heavenly Churches. There he beholds the flowers of the vineyard, the fruits of these flowers, and the buds of the pomegranates, that is, the reward for the faithful and righteous, given to those who labour diligently, and the wages which shall be paid to the Martyrs. And *there* the Church will *give CHRIST her breasts*, because she will, in eternal glory, present to Him the teachers of the Old and New Law.

13 The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new

and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

The mandrake, or love-apple, a narcotic fruit, was supposed to have the powers of a philtre, to excite love and to produce fruitfulness; and for this latter reason Rachel asks Leah to give her the mandrakes which Reuben had gathered. The root is also said to resemble a headless human body, and these two opinions about the plant have influenced much of the exposition of this passage. Theodoret, confining himself to the notion of an opiate,¹ holds that the words here imply a further progress in grace beyond that last stage of the previous verse, and denote deadness to the world and sin, and tranquil sleep, free from all disturbance and passion, attained by quaffing the chalice of holy doctrine. S. Gregory, also holding to the view that advance in religious perfection is here intended, refers, following Cassiodorus, to the medicinal use of the mandrake, and takes the plant here to denote those more perfect Saints who are not merely fruitful in good works themselves, but are able to heal others with the wholesome odour of their good example. He does not, however, dwell on the special use which Cassiodorus ascribes to the mandrake, that of being given as an anæsthetic to persons about to undergo severe surgical operations, which, he hints, signifies the power of faith in overcoming the tortures of martyrdom. Philo sees in the shape of the mandrake's root, the buried Saints of the Old Testament, hidden from the glory of God, but yielding a sweet savour until the early morning of CHRIST'S Resurrection, when they received the reward of their fragrance in the gift of everlasting life. The Vulgate couples this clause with the succeeding one thus, *The mandrakes give a smell at our gates*. These gates, says Cassiodorus, are the Apostles and their successors, because no one enters the Church, which is the City of God, save he who has been regenerated in Baptism and taught the doctrine of life by holy teachers. Of these gates the Psalmist said, "The LORD loveth the gates

Gen. xxx.
14.

Theodoret.

S. Greg. M.

S. August.
in Faust.
Man. xxii.
56.

Cassiodor.

Philo Carp.

Cassiodor.

Ps. lxxxvii.

¹ "Not poppy, nor mandradora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of
the world,

Shall ever medicine thee to
that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dst yesterday."
Othello, Act iii., sc. 3.

of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." The *mandrakes* denote the perfume of holiness, and thus the mandrakes gave a smell at the gates of the Church when the Apostles and their successors spread far and wide the fame of their sweet teaching, the fragrance of their holiness. And Rupert, who accepts the view that the mandrake produces fruitfulness, adds: The reason why they give a smell in our gates is because that is now at hand to be fulfilled which the spirit of prophecy spake to the yet barren Gentile race: "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." *In our gates*, while we are still within our own borders, in the land of the Jews, we smell this odour. The Ethiopian eunuch had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning sitting in his chariot and reading Esaias the Prophet, when, lo, the HOLY SPIRIT, smelling the odour, said unto Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." We were even then in our gates when the alms of Cornelius the Centurion gave their smell in the sight of God. And to this smell too belongs that vision which appeared in the night to one of the Bridegroom's friends, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." In these and other like ways the mandrakes gave a smell at our gates, denoting fruitfulness where sterility had been. And the resemblance to a headless body is dwelt on by more than one commentator. The mandrakes, says an early writer, were the Gentiles, living by the law of nature, and so far like natural men, but without the head of faith. These, not in the field, but *at our gates*, at the very utmost limit of our tenure, that is, near the end of the world, will be converted to God, and yield their perfume to Him. Another, not dissimilarly, tells us that in the evil times of the latter days, Antichrist will be for a time the visible head of the faithful, but when he has been smitten off, when the body lies as it were headless, then the Bride will call on her Beloved to go with her again for a new preaching of the Gospel and the new foundation of Churches amongst the helpless people lying at her gates. And S. Anselm of Laon reproduces this idea, confining it, however, to the Jews, as lacking CHRIST their true Head, but who will give a pleasant smell at our gates

Rupert.

Isa. liv. 1.
Gal. iv. 27.Acts viii. 29;
x. 4.

Acts xvi. 9.

Luc. Abb.

Honorius.

S. Ans. Laud.

when they exhibit signs of conversion, and seek admission by faith into the Church.

At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my Beloved.

There is a general agreement here that the substantial unity of the Church under the Law and the Gospel is intended, and that the Bride tells her Beloved that she will bring Him her children, the Saints of both covenants, that she will preserve the types and promises of the Old Testament along with the fulfilment of them in the New. There are, however, some additional meanings which they draw from the words.

One reminds us that the Church offered her LORD His sacrifices without distinction of sex or age, that child-martyrs like Agnes and Cyriac, young maidens as Lucy and Agatha, and aged prelates such as Polycarp, Urban, and Marcellinus, alike were given as choice fruits for the Master's garners. Another interpreta-

tion sees here the comparison made, by co-ordinate study, of secular literature and natural religion along with the teachings of the Gospel, that the superiority of the latter may be clearly manifested, and the soul may profit by all. And a modern commentator wisely adds that the Church has not merely to keep in mind the records of former achievements of the Saints and the imitation of their examples, but also to employ new methods, and to practise duties formerly neglected or, at any rate, not brought into prominence.

At our gates. Many are these *gates* of the Bride, whether Church or soul, where the fruits must be piled as an offering for her Bridegroom and King as He enters His own City in triumph, that He may accept her service and laud her devotion, according to that saying, "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." These are the gates of faith, hope, and charity; the gates of the Sacraments; the teaching of Holy Scripture and of the Saints; the eight Beatitudes; the two low and narrow gates, through which few are to enter, of patient suffering and of perfect meditation on GOD alone. There are, besides, the five senses, gates through which thoughts pass from the body to the soul. At all these the Bride *lays up*, in the recesses of a devout and thankful heart, fruits for her Beloved, since she knows not where He may choose His place of entrance, and she brings *new and old* alike, all the works she once

Theodoret.
S. Greg. M.
Beda.
Honorius.

Parez.

Tres Patr.

Thrupp.

Prov. xxxi.
31.

Nic. Argent.

Hugo Card.
Vieyra.

did for GOD in fear, and all those she now does in love, all those of her early life and those of her later years, and she lays them up not for herself, but for Him, not because He is her LORD, but because He is her *Beloved*, and all that she has done, all the fruits she has stored, come from Him and are perfected in Him. One and all, they illustrate their expositions by citing those words of the Redeemer: "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasures things new and old."

Beda.

S. Mat.
xiii. 52.

CHAPTER VIII.

I O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Cassiodor.

S. Athan.
S. Ambros.S. Epiphanius.
Philo Carp.

Theodoret.

Cassiodorus justly remarks that the expression of this wish, so inconsistent with the conditions of earthly love and marriage, is an incidental proof of the spiritual intention of the Song. Accordingly, the usual exposition of the verse is that it is the prayer of the Synagogue for the Incarnation of CHRIST. There is, however, no little variety in the details of this interpretation. Thus S. Epiphanius and his pupil Philo agree in alleging that the *mother* of the Bride is eternal Wisdom, and her *brother* the LORD JESUS CHRIST in the human form which He took and bore; and that when CHRIST comes to the newly-baptized, as though to the infants of the Church, by the grace of His visitation, then He is said to *suck the breasts*, while, in their persons, He begins, as it were, to know GOD and taste heavenly things, that is, to suck the two breasts of the Old and New Testament and of the twin precepts of love. And Theodoret points out that the LORD condescended even more than in this wise, since He did not merely learn in the persons of those with whom He was pleased to identify Himself, but that He "grew, and

waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom," that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Thou wast willing to suck the same breasts as I, that in this also thou mightest avouch Thy brotherhood. Thou didst suck, not because Thou neededst it, but to teach me how I should suck, and from what breast I might draw grace. Therefore, too, Thou camest to Baptism, not to wash away the stain of sins, for Thou didst no sin, nor was guile found in Thy mouth, nor that Thou mightest receive the grace of the All-holy SPIRIT, for Thou wast full thereof, but to show me what are the gifts of Baptism, and how I might suck the grace of the SPIRIT. Others take the mother of the Bride to imply the substance of human nature, and give a literal turn to the clause, as denoting a longing for the nativity of the Infant SAVIOUR. And only the *mother* is named, because it is only through the Blessed Virgin's flesh that the Redeemer is our Brother, since by the FATHER's side He is Almighty GOD. Another view, however, is that the mother of whom the Bride speaks is neither the Synagogue, nor human nature, nor yet S. Mary, but the Heavenly Jerusalem, "the mother of us all," and that her breasts, which CHRIST is prayed to suck, are that new wine which He has promised to drink with us in His Kingdom, so that the prayer is for the hastening of His second Advent. With this agrees the view of several commentators, that we are to look in this place not to the original proclamation of the Gospel, but to the final conversion of the Jews.

I should find Thee without. Where? Some take it literally, outside Jerusalem, and remind us that "JESUS also, that He might sanctify the people with His own Blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach." Or, as S. Ambrose prefers to explain it, He was *within* from all eternity, in the bosom of the FATHER, *without*, when He was manifest to the world, coming to seek us, heal us, and be again within us; *without*, ruling among the Gentiles, Who was once *within* the Jewish people only. Again, He was *within*, when hidden under the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, *without*, when the veil was withdrawn and the types fulfilled. Or, once more, *I should find Thee without* this world, myself quitting the flesh in order to find Thee; either spiritually, as S. Ambrose, in another

S. Luke ii.
40, 52.1 S. Pet. ii.
22.Cassiodor.
Beda.

Rupert.

Tres Patr.

Gal. iv. 26.

S. Mat. xxvi.
29.Luc. Abb.
Honorius.
S. Ans. Laud.
Rupert.S. Epiphan.
Philo Carp.

Heb. xiii. 12.

S. Ambros.
de Inst.
Virg. 1.
Dion. Carth.

Hugo Card.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 8.

- place, observes: That soul is happy, which is without, that the WORD may be within; without the body, that the WORD may dwell within us; or else literally, passing without the body through the gates of the grave, that the spirit may flee away and be with CHRIST. I would find Thee *without*, publicly honoured, and openly worshipped, as when peace was at last granted to the Church, no longer within, hidden in the secret rites of the catacombs and other lurking-places. I would fain find Thee *without*, even in all my external actions, and the active occupations of my life, being ever mindful of Thee, and doing all for Thee, and unto Thee. I would gladly find Thee *without*, in all Thy visible creation, contemplating Thee as the glorious Maker of all, marvelling at Thy wisdom, majesty, and honour. I would see Thee in the beauty of the order of the universe, in flowers, and shrubs, and trees, in grass, and in jewels, in the fruitfulness of the earth, in the vastness of the ocean, in the wide expanse of air, in the blaze of fire, in founts, and rivers, and seas, in sky, and stars, and planets, and in all living things, fain would I contemplate with pure heart Thy boundless excellence, reverence it fitly, love it fervently, praise it devoutly, and ever honour it with all my might, and so be caught away to inner things, and *kiss* Thee, my Bridegroom, clasping Thee to my heart, embracing Thee with the fondest love.
- Corn. à Lap.
Lyranus. I would *kiss* Thee, reaching up to Thy lips upon the Cross, to receive that parting kiss of peace and love which Thou didst offer when, bowing the head, Thou gavest up the ghost; *kiss* Thee, in intimate fellowship with Thy Humanity; *kiss* Thee, in bearing Thy reproach; *kiss* Thee, in loving reception of Thy Sacraments; *kiss* Thee, with the mystical kiss of everlasting peace in the heavenly Country.
- Dion. Carth. I should not be despised. If the words be those of the Synagogue, they mean that the contumely which has for nineteen centuries been the lot of the Jewish race will be turned into honour when their conversion to the Gospel has taken place; if the speech be ascribed to the Church, she, in like manner, looks from her time of depression and suffering to the first ingathering of the Gentiles by the conversion of the Roman Empire, and the later and more ample one yet to come, which will shut the mouths of unbelievers. Applied to the faithful soul, the words are variously taken. Philo supposes the meaning to be that the Angels will no
- S. Epiphan.
S. Ans. Laud.
Rupert.
Ghislerius.
S. Ans. Laud.
Dion. Carth.
Philo Carp.

longer regard her with contempt, when they see how great a Deliverer has condescended to interest Himself in her salvation. But Theodoret takes a deeper view, which also avoids the unsuitableness of ascribing such a feeling to the heavenly host. He represents the Bride as saying, "Intoxicated with love for Thee, not only in my chamber, nor in the portico of my dwelling, but in the market-place and publicly I would find Thee, embrace Thee, and kiss Thee, nor would the spectators blame me for it, when they knew the ardour of my love." And in this wise the words may be aptly taken of those pure virgins who were not ashamed to confess their LORD in the arena, stripped before the gaze of myriad spectators, and lying gladly down upon the bridal-bed of martyrdom. There is yet another sense in which the faithful soul utters the words, *O that thou wert as my brother*. She desires not merely union with her LORD, but likeness to Him; she asks not merely for His love, but for the perfect interchange of thought, the unclouded intimacy, which can come only of unbroken fellowship from childhood; the thorough familiarity which, born of kindred, has grown through the advancing years. A bridegroom, however loved and honoured, is most frequently unlike his bride, and is a comparative stranger to her up to the time of marriage. It is only afterwards, in the course of a long and happy union, that the likeness in thought, expression, and even in feature, which is often seen in long-wedded pairs, is slowly developed, that mutual trust and confidence is perfected. But the Bride has no mind to wait for all this. She desires to be conformed to her Beloved at once; to know all His thoughts, even as He knows all hers, to have been His from her tenderest years, and not merely won to Him in later life. And in this sense it is also true that she escapes being despised, since the contumely and derision frequently heaped on one who turns to CHRIST from the world, are rarely directed, even by scoffers, against such as have been always consistent in devotion.

2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

Cassiodor.
Beda.

The favourite interpretation of this verse by the Fathers is that the Bride is looking forward to the joys of heaven. *I would lead Thee*, not in the sense of guiding or influencing, but of processional attendance, clinging to Thee in faith and love, following Thee with eyes and prayers, as did the Apostles, when returning unto heaven at Thine Ascension, back to that Jerusalem which is above, the *mother* of us all. I would follow Thee even more perfectly, not ceasing till I joined Thee; and *there Thou wilt teach me* (as the Vulgate correctly renders the next clause, mistranslated in the A. V.) all that truth and wisdom which man cannot learn in the present life, all that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." *I will cause Thee to drink of spiced wine*, the wine of my love and devotion, *spiced* with good works and holiness, *of the juice of my pomegranates*, because I would offer Thee the passion of all the holy Martyrs in proof of the fervour of my affection.

Honorius.
1 Cor. ii. 9.

Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M.

Luc. Abb.

S. Ans. Laud.

Rupert.

S. Epiph.
Philo Carp.

A second view, explaining the verse of the return of the Jews, represents the Church as promising to lead and bring CHRIST, by her preaching, into the house of her mother the Synagogue, and there receive His teaching. She will then give Him spiced wine to drink, in that she will offer the Synagogue the strong rough wine of the testimony of the Law softened and blended with the sweet tidings of the Gospel, and will also bring forth the juice of her pomegranates, by using the examples of the Martyrs as arguments on behalf of the Faith for which they were glad to die. And Rupert, preferring to see here the final conversion of the Gentile world, explains analogously, that the *mother's house* of which the Gentile Church speaks, is to be taken as denoting the palaces of idolatrous kings and the temples of heathen worship, while the spiced wine which she will offer is that Cup of salvation which she takes as the reward of her Bridegroom for all that He has done for her, the Sacrifice of thanksgiving wherein she unites His Passion with that of His Martyrs. And in that case, the spicing of which the Bride speaks, will not be honeyed, but the bitter myrrh of death, the same which was blended in the cup offered to Him on the Way of Sorrows. There is a singular exposition, connected with the idea of the Passion, which sees in the mother of the Bride, the earth, as the parent dust out of which human nature was formed,

and in the *mother's house* the grave, wherein the Saints are treasured till the Resurrection. Thither the Bride is ready to go with her LORD, thither she did go down with Him, when she brought Him in to conquer the realm of death, and to spoil it of its accumulated wealth. A widely different interpretation sees here the Holy Scriptures, the dwelling of that wisdom whence the Bride has sprung, wherein she holds frequent colloquies with her Divine Spouse, and is refreshed by Him with the wine of understanding and of endurance. Theodoret, who explains the verse of the devout soul, will have it that the Church, GOD's temple, imitating the heavenly Jerusalem, is her *mother's house*, wherein is the *wine* of wholesome doctrine, and the *pomegranate juice* of practical benevolence, drawn from the fruits of charity. This exposition is akin to that of the Targum, which, as it explains the previous verse of Messiah the King, showing Himself as the brother of the Jewish nation, and studying the Law with them, takes this of His being brought into the sanctuary to teach the will of GOD, and to sit down with His subjects at the mystical banquet prepared from the creation for the chosen people. The Three Fathers, also taking the clause of the holy soul, will have it that her *mother's house* is that higher understanding in which dwells the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, of which she was born in Baptism. There she offers her LORD that knowledge of Him which she holds within her, *spiced*, because mingled of various ingredients, of natural religion, which contemplates Him in His creatures, and of Holy Scripture, where He is seen in revelation. And as the juice of pomegranates has a mingled flavour, sweet and yet tart, so the love which the Bride offers her LORD, and which is the one gladness of her spirit, is blended with reverential awe and longing for full possession. And there is yet another way in which the devout soul can bring her LORD into her *mother's house*, when by her own holy conversation and example, she wins those of her own earthly kindred, or of her own local Church, or, again, as another takes it, her own cloister, to serve Him faithfully, and to offer Him the cup of their conversion and instruction, the juice of their zealous works, to drink.

Theodoret.

Targum.

Tres Patr.

Dion. Carth.

Honorius.

3 His left hand should be under my head,
and his right hand should embrace me.

Honorius.

The *left hand* of the Bridegroom, notes Honorius of Autun, shall be under the Bride's head, because she will see all the glory of the world under the sway of CHRIST; and His *right hand* shall embrace her, because the fellowship of the Angels and the unity of the Saints, who are to stand at CHRIST's right hand in the Judgment, will join her to their company, and in the clasp of that right hand she rests free from all disturbance, and no one will rouse her from that rest, because her joy no man taketh from her.

S. John xvi.
22.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.

Hugo Card.

This is the third time these words occur, to impress on us the alternations of religious training, and the reciprocal succession of the parts of our holy calling.

Gen. i. 5.

For, as "the evening and the morning were the first day," so the soul ought to enjoy seasons of contemplative rest, with nevertheless a set purpose of returning at the proper time and place to active work, and

Job vii. 4.

conversely, according to that saying, "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone?" And the verse occurs thrice, because sleep is threefold. First in the devotion of love, brought on by memory of bounties, and thanksgiving for them. Secondly, in the contemplation of the truth, which is caused by anxious search and fruitful toil. Thirdly, in the foretaste of future blessedness, brought on by eager longing for our Country, and forgetfulness of earthly things. Wherefore the first of these three adjurations checks the restless, lest by their irreverence they should break the holy repose of their devout Mother, rather than wait patiently till she return from the house of wine, full of blessings for them. Next, she warns the uninstructed, who have no capacity for understanding exalted subjects, that they may be no hindrance to those who can attain to them. And this third adjuration is addressed to the angelic hosts, to which they who have a foretaste of eternal bliss are united as in the third heavens, which hosts are said to stir up or awake the faithful soul when they oblige her to come down and pay attention to the needs of human nature. And in saying *until she* (Vulg.) *will*, it is signified, that

she ought sometimes to be willing to be roused, for sleep draws on work, and work sleep. And it is to be noted that in the two former adjurations it is said, *By the roes, and by the hinds of the field*, by which are signified the angelic hosts, in whose name the adjurations are made; but it is not said here, because the Angels themselves are adjured, and cannot be so by their own name. For as the less is always blessed by the greater, so also is the less always adjured by the greater. And others more briefly tell us that this triple warning against untimely waking is to remind us that the LORD prefers the tranquil listening of Mary to the busy service of Martha, cumbered about many things.

S. Just. Org.
Rupert.

5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

It is, says Cassiodorus, the voice of the Synagogue, marvelling at the Church gathered out of the Gentiles. She had been given up by God to idolatry and ignorance of the truth, and she *ascended from the wilderness*, that is, from the error of unbelief, wherein she had been left up to that time, by the gradations of holiness. Here the Vulgate amplifies a little, by giving a double sense to one phrase, and adds, *abounding in delights*,¹ while the LXX. omits *wilderness*, and reads *made white*.² She is abounding in delights, because full of holiness and of the graces and gifts of the SPIRIT, she is *made white* in the waters of Baptism, not by her own power or merit, but by His mercy Who saith, "Though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be white as snow," and so she is *leaning on her Beloved*, because, unlike the elder Synagogue, which trusted in the Patriarchs and the ceremonial Law, she puts her whole trust in CHRIST, and ascribes all her virtues and good works to His grace, knowing that she can do nothing of herself, and therefore saying with the Apostle, "By

Cassiodor.

Rupert.
Philo Carp.
S. Ambros.
Serm. 14 in
Ps. cxix.

Isa. i. 18.
Nic. Argent.
S. August.
de Grat. 6.
Cassiodor.

1 Cor. xv. 10.

¹ The verb *קָרַח*, found here only, means "leaning on the elbow;" but some Jewish interpreters explain it as

signifying "delighting one's self."

² Reading, possibly, *קָרַח*, or rather *קָרַח*.

- the grace of God I am what I am." The holy soul, observes S. Gregory, cometh up from the wilderness, because set as she is in the exile of pilgrimage here, she strives towards heavenly joys in spirit and meditation, whence Paul saith, "Our conversation is in heaven." She abounds in delights, because, occupied in study of Holy Scripture, she constantly feeds her spirit with heavenly food. She leaneth on her Beloved, because, trusting in the help of CHRIST alone, she is translated by His bounty from exile to her country. She went down into that wilderness, comments another, by her birth; she comes up through it, by advancing from one virtue to another; she comes up over it, despising all worldly pride; she comes up from it with everlasting blessedness. And this wilderness is threefold: that of the passing vanity of the world, out of which the Bride comes; that of humility, truly a wilderness, because so few Christians are willing to dwell there, through which she must pass; and that of pure and simple innocence, to which she must attain.
- And akin to this last remark is the stress laid by the Greek Fathers on the LXX. reading, *made white*. It is not *white* simply, but *made white*, for the Bride, herself black, saith of the Bridegroom, "My Beloved is white;" not "made white," because He is such by nature. But though she was dark, since the sun had looked upon her, she hath been made white, and partaker of the whiteness of her Bridegroom, Who, being Himself Light, hath made her and calls her light, being holy, hath made her holy, being the Resurrection, hath counted her worthy of the resurrection, and thus shared His own whiteness with her. S. Bernard suggests yet another meaning of ascending through the wilderness, when the prayer of the Bride goes up in the silent watches of the lonely night.
- She is *leaning on her Beloved*, that she may not dread the fear of men, that she may not fail in tribulations which find her out, or in the persecutions of her seen and unseen foes. How would she hold her ground amidst all these, unless she were leaning on her Beloved? Ought she to lean on herself, or on any chance arm? If she did so, she would surely fall, not stand. But now she saith, "The LORD is my light and my salvation! whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life! of whom then shall I be afraid? Though an host of men were laid against me, yet will
- S. Greg. M.
Phil. iii. 20.
Alanus.
Hugo Vict.
Erudit.
Theol. Misc.
iii. 82.
Theodoret.
S. Bernard.
Serm. 86 in
Cant.
Rupert.
Ps. xxvii. 1.

I put my trust in Him." And observe further that this is the third ascent of the Bride mentioned in the Song. The first was when she came up out of the wilderness like a pillar of smoke, denoting compunction and suffering, and answering to the Bridegroom going up to Jerusalem to be crucified. Next is her advance in holiness, when she arose as the morning, and became as the moon and sun, even as her LORD arose in early morning from the grave, in the twofold glory of His Manhood and Godhead; and thirdly, this coming up, when she is abounding in delights, filled with heavenly contemplation, and thus typifying the Ascension of JESUS to the celestial throne. Parez sees here, not inaptly, but with far less beauty, the three stages of the Christian Church: in its first obscure birth, in its long trial and suffering, and its final victory under Constantine. The whole of the picture, representing the Bride as slumbering, as desiring and receiving the kiss of her Bridegroom, and as then leaving all to go with Him, finds a curious type in that old nursery tale, itself a relic of a vanished creed, which tells of the Prince who found the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, and waked her from her mystic slumber to be his bride.

Hugo Card.

Parez.

And on her lover's arm she leant,
 And round her waist she felt it fold,
 And far across the hills they went
 In that new world which is the old.

Tennyson,
The Day-dream.

Across the hills and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 And deep into the dying day
 The happy princess followed Him.

"O eyes long laid in happy sleep!"
 "O happy sleep, that lightly fled!"
 "O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep!"
 "O Love, Thy kiss would wake the dead!"

"A hundred summers! can it be!
 And whither goest Thou, tell me, where?"
 "O seek My FATHER's court with Me,
 For there are greater wonders there."

And o'er the hills, and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 Beyond the night, across the day,
 Through all the world she followed Him.

Targum.

The Targum, which explains the passage to mean the resurrection of the dead of Israel, coming forth from the valley of Jehoshaphat and passing through the opened Mount of Olives, abounding in delights through the mercy of GOD, finds a parallel in the Christian view that the migration of the holy soul from the wilderness of earth to the full enjoyment of the glories of heaven is here intended, viewed with loving admiration by the choirs of Angels. And it has been especially applied to the passage of the Blessed Virgin to her home in a happier world. So runs the mediæval hymn :

Honorius.

Guilielmus.
Card. Hail-
grin.Hymn. in
Assumpt.
B. V. M.

Affluens deliciis
David regis filia,
Sponsi fertur brachiis
Ad cœli sedilia,
Et amica properat
Sponsum, quo abierat,
Quærens inter lilia.

She, abounding in delights,
Child of David's kingly line,
Borne to the celestial heights
In the Bridegroom's arms divine,
Hastes to seek Him, as His love,
Thither, where He passed above,
Where the mystic lilies shine.

Theodoret.

Chap. ii. 3.

Cassiodor.

I raised thee up under the apple tree. It will be easy for us, observes Theodoret, to understand these words, if we remember what the Bride said in the earlier part of this Book. For she said to the Bridegroom, "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." For when we, believing the preaching concerning our SAVIOUR, have come to Holy Baptism, so coming, we receive regeneration, wherefore is added, *There thy mother brought thee forth*, for it is the grace of the HOLY GHOST which hath borne us. But the general consent of the Latin Fathers takes the words differently, following also, as they do, the Vulgate reading in the second clause, *There thy mother was defiled, there was she forced that bare thee.*¹ By the *apple tree*, notes Cassiodorus, we should understand the LORD'S Cross, under which

¹ Perhaps reading הַצֵּיטֹן for הַצֵּיטֹן.

tree the Synagogue was *raised up*, because she was redeemed by the Cross of CHRIST from the rebellion of original sin, and from the power of the devil; she was raised up, who had been dead in sin. *I raised thee up*, saith the Bridegroom, for My redeeming Blood poured on thee in five streams from My Body as it hung upon the Tree. And as the LXX. and Arabic read, *There thy mother bore thee with pangs*, a Greek Father adds, The Church was brought forth with pangs of heart and body on the Cross; for the Flesh of CHRIST, suffering the torture of the Cross, brought forth a Bride for itself redeemed with His Blood, regenerated and washed with the water from His side, united and bound to Him, and to His abiding Godhead, by the HOLY GHOST.

When we remember how He sought His love, the Church, while she was still under the rule of her mother the Synagogue, how He made His first visit to woo her when He went up to Jerusalem at twelve years of age, and sat in the midst of the doctors in the Temple, and how He died by the sin of His people, we may see the aptness of that citation from a heathen poet which several of the later commentators adduce :

Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
(Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem,
Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus;
Jam fragiles poteram a terra contingere ramos,
Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error!

Virg. Eclog.
viii. 37.

I saw thee, yet a child,
(Myself your leader) by our garden hedge
Plucking the dewy apples with thy mother,
Then my twelfth year of life was just attained,
And I could reach the frail boughs from the ground,
I saw, I died, ill error wrought me woe.

Another interpretation, closer to the Hebrew text, ascribes the words to the Bride, who is here represented as it were in travail with CHRIST, and therefore an especial type of His Mother. She raises her Beloved up under the apple tree when she invokes Him to aid her, in the words, "By Thy Cross and Passion, Good LORD, deliver us." And under that Tree His dear Mother was outraged, when the cruelty of the Jews caused the sword of Simeon's prophecy to pierce her virgin heart. The Vulgate rendering of the latter clause finds its interpretation in that the Synagogue

Ainsworth.

Lyranus.

Cassiodor. was *defiled* and *deflowered* under the Tree by her own
 S. Greg. M. sin in crucifying her LORD, and imprecating the curse
 Dion. Carth. of His Blood on herself and her children. S. Ambrose,
 S. Ambros. taking the whole verse in a slightly different sense,
 de Isaac, 8. understands by the *apple tree* public confession of
 CHRIST'S Passion and triumph, and by the *mother*
 who there brings forth the devout soul, the Church,
 S. John i. 48. or divine grace. And as the LORD saw Nathaniel
 under the fig tree, so, he adds, happy is that soul
 which rests beneath a fruitful and fragrant tree, for if
 Nathaniel was good, in whom was no guile, and who was
 seen under a fig tree, doubtless that soul is good which
 is raised up under the apple tree by the Bridegroom,
 for it is a greater thing to be raised up than to be
 seen, and greater still that the raiser should be the
 Bridegroom. S. Anselm of Laon will have it that
 S. Ans. Laud. the Cross is called an apple tree, to remind us of that
 tree of knowledge in Paradise whereby our first pa-
 rents sinned, and he recounts the twofold legend that
 the Cross was actually made of wood sprung from a
 bough of that tree, and that it was set up on the very
 spot where Adam lay buried. And though we may
 not receive the legend itself, yet there is no need to
 turn away from the allegory it contains :

Donne,
Divine
Poems.

We think that Paradise and Calvary
 CHRIST'S Cross and Adam's tree, stood in one place ;
 Look, LORD ! and find both Adams met in me :
 As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
 May the last Adam's Blood my soul embrace.

So in His purple wrapped, receive me, LORD !
 By these His thorns give me His other crown ;
 And as to others' souls I preached Thy Word,
 Be this my text, my sermon to mine own ;
 Therefore, that He may raise, the LORD throws down.

Corn. & Lap.

Delitzsch.
 Renan.

Canta-
 cuzene.

But, whereas the all but universal consent of the Fa-
 thers ascribes the verse to the Bridegroom, the He-
 brew text, as now read, makes the suffixes masculine,
 and therefore holds that the Bride is the speaker,
 though many scholars have urged that the points
 ought to be changed, as the sense clearly makes for
 the traditional interpretation. If, however, the pre-
 sent pointing stand, there are not wanting expositions.
I raised Thee up, that is, I brought Thee forth, that
 Thou mightest in turn bring forth the fruit of life ; I
 raised Thee up under the apple tree, because my sin

in eating of the forbidden fruit was the cause of Thy death upon the Cross. Or, I raised Thee up, myself being under Thy Cross, crying to Thee in prayer to help me in my need, that the Cross might be to me for pardon, grace, and salvation.

Tigurinus.

Vatablus.

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

There is in this verse also a diversity of opinion as to the speaker. The Hebrew points ascribe it to the Bride, the great majority of the Fathers to the Bridegroom. Taking these views in their order, we find, in the first place, that the Targum paraphrases thus: "The children of Israel will say in that day unto their LORD: I pray Thee, set us as the graving of a ring upon Thine heart, and as the graving of a ring upon Thine arm, that we may be exiles no longer."

Targum.

The Bride desires to be ever close to her Bridegroom's person, to be His peculiar property, to bear upon herself the inscription of His Name, to be the means wherewith He stamps and marks the sheep of His pasture. Signets were worn upon the breast or upon the arm, amongst the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians, suspended by a cord, as well as set in rings for the finger, and it is to this custom that the verse refers. And the force of the metaphor is clearly brought out in one passage of Holy Writ, "As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, were the signet upon My right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." Another meaning of the petition may refer to the "breastplate of judgment" worn by the High Priest, with its twelve jewels "with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet," that he might never forget them when pleading the sacrifices before God, as is written in another place, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands, thy walls are ever before Me." The Bride therefore implores the love of her Spouse and Priest, signified by His *heart*, and His power, denoted by His *arm*, to aid her and commemorate her unceasingly in

Jer. xxii. 24.

Ainsworth.

Exod. xxviii. 21.

Isa. xlix. 16.

the perpetual mediation of His everlasting Priesthood before the golden altar in heaven. The one old commentator who takes the words as spoken by the Bride gives, however, a different explanation from this. "O my Beloved," says he, speaking in the person of the Bride, "what is Thy heart in this world, and what Thine arm, save the Scriptures of truth, which are written after Thine own heart, and the record of Thy wondrous works, whence is known how great and mighty is Thine arm? Set me as a seal upon that heart of Thine, set me as a seal upon that arm of Thine. Wherefore? Because of the triple rage which lifts its voice against me, Jewish, pagan, heretical. I am ready, I am prepared, I am sworn, on my part, to defend that heart of Thine, to guard that Thine arm as Thine imperial signet, as Thy faithful testimony, with wondrous vigour, with wondrous hardness, which no man can break through." But the more usual view has been copiously illustrated by the Fathers, and that with sufficient diversity. It is, one of the earlier commentators on the Song of Songs tells us, the seal and sign of the Cross which needs to be impressed first on the heart, and then on the arm of the Bride, that we may learn to imitate our Head, so far as may be, by giving up our own will and all desire of earthly things beyond mere necessaries, as the Bridegroom Himself has taught us, saying, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The *heart* is the contemplative, the *arm* the active portion of the soul, which is the reason why the breast and the shoulder of sacrifices were set apart for the priests from the offerings of the people. Our SAVIOUR therefore desires that we should have Him impressed as a seal upon all our thoughts and reasonings, and to stamp His mark upon our words and deeds. For so shall they be royal medals, and no false coin, but bearing the image of the King. Cassiodorus, less forcibly, explains the words merely of keeping CHRIST's benefits to us in our memories; but another gives fresh point to the idea, by comparing the impress on the heart to the private watchword given by a general to his soldiers, by which to distinguish friend from foe, and the seal on the arm to be an outer badge of his service, that none may in error wound his fellow-soldier. And the soul needs to have as the seal on her heart the devout belief that CHRIST

Rupert.

Philo Carp.

S. Mat. xvi.
24.

Theodoret.

Exod. xxix.
27.

Cassiodor.

S. Just. Org.

Luc. Abb.

is the Wisdom of GOD, upon her arm the not less deep certainty that He is the Power of GOD too. Again, as one use of a seal is to protect secrets from prying eyes, so CHRIST, as the Bridegroom, gives His spouse a signet whereby she may seal up the treasures of their house, which are intrusted to her charge. And He is Himself this seal, set upon our heart, when the mysteries of the Faith are committed to our charge, in such wise that when the enemy sees that our hearts are sealed with faith, he dares not attempt to force them open by temptation. We are then to keep our dear LORD as a seal upon both heart and arm, by remembering that all His words and all His actions are alike secrets and mysteries, belonging to Divine Wisdom, and given to us to ponder and imitate. Also, as a seal gives authenticity and force to a deed, so we have CHRIST set as a seal upon our heart and arm, when we accept and follow His commandments as the sure pledges of the reward He prepares for us. CHRIST, observes a Western Father, is a seal on our foreheads, a seal on our heart. On the forehead, that we may ever confess Him; on the heart, that we may ever love Him; and a seal on our arm, that we may ever work for Him. And as the seal is also a mark of ownership, another Saint paraphrases thus: "Set Me as the ruler of thy heart and thoughts, that My friends may plainly see that thou holdest My secrets, and Mine enemies may as plainly know that the secrets thou possessest are closed to them, and that thou hast Me as thy guide in all thy works." The power which presses down this seal, so that it leaves its stamp indelibly upon heart and arms is, they wisely tell us, love. "Be thou printed by Me, as by a seal, clinging to Me closely by love, that thou mayest receive Mine image as from a seal, and derive likeness unto Me from that clearly-cut impression. And as forcible as is the impress of love, so distinct will be the expression of likeness, and the more eagerly thou clingest to Me by love, the more like Me shalt thou be. The more forcibly thou pressest thyself against Me, the more clearly shall I, CHRIST, be formed in thee, and thou be transformed and reformed in Me." So S. Jane Frances de Chantal branded the Holy Name upon her heart, that she might never forget her LORD, but ever ponder upon His marvellous grace, and on the yet more painful graving of our names on

S. Clem.
Alex.
Pædag. iii.
2.

S. Greg. M.
Mor. xxix. 4.

Beda.

S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 8.

S. Ans. Laud.

Guilielmus.

His Heart and arms, by the nails of the Cross and the spear of the soldier.

For love is strong as death. Whose love? We may take it in two ways,—the love of GOD towards man, or the love of man towards GOD. The love of CHRIST for us was *strong as death*, because it made Him, though immortal and impassible in His divine nature, endure bitter pangs and death for our redemption.

Cassiod.
Dion. Carth.

Hupton,
The Hymn,
*Come, ye
faithful.*

Ere He raised the lofty mountains,
Formed the sea, or built the sky,
Love eternal, free and boundless,
Forced the LORD of Life to die,—
Lifted up the Prince of princes
On the throne of Calvary.

S. Ambros.
Serm. 15 in
Ps. cxix.

S. Greg. M.

Col. iii. 3.
Philo Carp.

And man's love to Him, though falling infinitely short of His, may yet be as strong as death, and that in two ways, by the mortification of sin, and by the endurance of martyrdom. Love, observes S. Ambrose, (taking the former of these views,) is strong as death, for love slays guilt and every sin; love destroys the blows of death. And, besides, we die to our vices and to sin when we love GOD's commandments. GOD is love, love is the WORD of GOD, which "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." And so too another Saint, working the idea out further: That which death effects in the bodily senses, love does in the desires of the mind. For there are some who so love GOD as to take no heed of any visible things, and while straining in soul towards that which is eternal, they become almost insensible to all temporal matters. In such as these, without doubt, love is strong as death, because as death destroys all the natural properties and desires of the outward bodily senses, so love in men of this stamp, forces them to despise all earthly inclinations, and to keep the thought fixed elsewhere. To those who are dead and yet alive in this way the Apostle saith, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD." And in the other sense they remind us of the joy with which the Martyrs faced torture and death for the sake of their LORD, not merely bearing, but welcoming the pangs which were bringing them to Him. So in many of their Acts, so in many of the hymns which commemorate them. There is a

third reason why love is strong as death, common to God and man; namely, its constraining might, for God's love compels man's salvation, man's love wins answer from God to prayer. And therefore the Doctor of Grace, summing up all these, observes, "Love is rightly called strong as death, either because no one can conquer it, any more than death, or because in this life the measure of love is until death, as the Lord saith, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,' or rather, that as death forces the soul away from the bodily senses, so does love force it from carnal desires." That great light of the Church of France, who earned by learning and holiness the title of the Most Christian Doctor, closing his life, like S. Gregory Nyssen, S. Bernard, Gilbert of Hoyland, and S. Thomas of Villanova, while labouring on the Song of Songs, repeated these words over again and again in his last sickness, as he meditated on the Passion which had ransomed him, and fell asleep at last, saying, "Love is strong as death."

Jealousy is cruel as the grave. The word *hard*, as given in the margin of A. V., is better than *cruel*, and agrees with the LXX. and Vulgate. The varying meaning of the first word in the two great versions has led to different treatment by the Eastern and Western Fathers. The LXX. ζήλος is usually explained as *zeal*, the Vulgate *æmulatio* as *rivalry* or as *envy*. Taking the former, we observe further that the LXX. correctly renders the Hebrew שְׂהוֹל *sheol*, which means the place of all departed spirits, by *Hades*. Neither the Vulgate *infernus*, which in Christian language denotes the place of punishment, nor the A. V. *grave*, which goes no further than the idea of sepulture, is at all so exact as this. Two widely different interpretations are found in two nearly contemporary Greek Fathers. One tells us that the zeal for God which we ought to feel and display against sin, should be as relentless as death, and like that of Phinehas and Elijah, who slew the rebels against God, a view not very unlike that of Rupert, who explains the words of Ecclesiastical censures and excommunication. Another, in a far more loving spirit, tells us that *zeal is hard as Hades*, for that just as Hades itself formed no obstacle to the Bridegroom, when He descended thither to deliver the souls of them who had gone down there before His

S. Ans. Laud.

S. August.
Ep. 39, ad
S. Hieron.S. John xv.
13.Polychro-
nius.Rupert.
Philo Carp.

Advent, so it is no barrier now to our prayers, which we can still offer for the faithful departed, who are there undergoing the purification which is to fit them for their dwelling in heaven. The same Father shows that our zeal may be as strong as Hades in another way, that as those who pass into the unseen world are stripped thereby of all their earthly possessions, so too such as are inspired with true zeal for CHRIST are ready to give up father and mother, wife and brethren, houses and lands, for His sake and the Gospel's, and to follow Him with neither staff, nor scribe, nor purse, a thing which is, as a Western writer notes, hard as hell to those who do not truly love God. Akin to this is one Latin exposition, which says that as rivalry is hard as hell, so the Saints, imitating CHRIST, do not hesitate to undergo suffering and death in loving emulation of Him. His rivalry with hell in contending for man's redemption was hard as it, for as hell never yields up those it has once received, so CHRIST's love never lets go those it has ever embraced; wherefore the Apostle saith, "Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And as hell knows not pity, nor any alleviation of the pains of sufferers, so CHRIST's love can never cease to be merciful, nor can it be wrenched from the love of mankind by any wickedness on the part of those that persecute Him. Again; the yearning of the devout soul for GOD is hard as hell, because of the pain and restlessness it occasions, knowing no satiety in doing and giving all for the Beloved. And so S. Teresa :

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

Oh, what a bitter life is this,
Deprived of God, its only bliss;
And what though Love delicious be,
Not so is Hope deferred:
Ah then, dear LORD, in charity,
This iron weight of misery
From my poor soul ungird.
For evermore I weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

Absent from Thee, my SAVIOUR dear,
I call not life this living here,
But a long dying agony,
The sharpest I have known;
And I myself, myself to see
On such a rack of misery,
For very pity moan,
And ever, ever, weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.

And in that other sense of *envy*, they explain this jealousy to denote the bitter hostility with which the Synagogue pursued the LORD and His disciples, persecuting them even unto death; an envy manifested still by false Christians in the relentless hatred they bear to the Church, the Bride of the Lamb. *The coals thereof are coals of fire.* For *coals*, (more properly *glowings*) the Vulgate reads *lamps*, and the LXX., perhaps having regard to the rapid flashings of fire, or to the whirling of sparks, reads *wingings round*, *περίπτερα*. And this the Greek Fathers interpret as meaning that love of God serves as wings to the Bride to lift her above the world and waft her to heaven. And S. Ambrose, following the same reading, adds, "Good is that love which has burning wings of fire, whereon it flies through the hearts of the Saints, scorching up whatever material or earthly is there, and tries whatever is genuine, purifying what it touches with its flame. This is the fire which JESUS sent upon earth, and therewith faith glowed, devotion was kindled, love enlightened, and righteousness made glorious. And with this fire He inflamed the hearts of His Apostles, as Cleophas beareth witness, saying, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while He opened to us the Scriptures?'"

Following the Vulgate reading, *Her lamps are lamps of fire and flames*, we find the more usual exposition to be that which sees here a type of the Saints. The *lamps* of love are the hearts of the Saints, in which love dwells, as though in vessels. These lamps are of *fire and flames*; of *fire*, because they glow in hearts through love; of *flames*, because they shine outwardly in their works. It is the LORD's will that they should do so, for He said to us, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." These are the lamps which the virgins must have when the Bridegroom cometh, and they are to enter with Him into the chamber of His everlasting kingdom. These virgins have set His love and fear on their hearts and arms, that is, have put all their thoughts and deeds under His commands. Then are the lamps of the foolish virgins extinguished, because the works which they seemed to do before men shall be darkened, when the inward Judge shall appear and make manifest the secrets of all hearts, because they did their good works for the sake of human praise. The fire with which the true lamps shine is the glow of the HOLY GHOST, Who

Cassiodor.

Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.
Theodoret.S. Ambros.
de Isaac, 8.S. Luke
xxiv. 32.

Cassiodor.

Beda.

S. Mat. xxv.
1.

Luc. Abb.

S. Just. Org. makes them bright in precept and example, and especially in the fervour of chastity, inasmuch as flame is always pure. And in this sense the title of lamps is given to eminent Saints, as to the Baptist in Holy Scripture, and to the Apostles in ancient offices of the Church, as, for instance, in the hymn,

The Sequence,
Alleluia
nunc decantet, in
Comm.
Apost.

These are lamps, with splendour shining
In the Face of GOD most High,
These the nobles of the Monarch,
Who is throned above the sky,
Salt of earth and light of mortals,
Stars that beam eternally.

Targum.

And if, following the Targum, jealousy be here taken in a bad sense, of the hostility of unbelievers to the people of God, S. Gregory will tell us what its lamps are, "As fire consumes what it kindles, so their envy destroyed all the power of faith in the Jews. This fire of envy shot forth flames when, by the examples of those amongst whom it was kindled, it spread through all the world, even amongst the Gentiles, to the martyrdom of Christians." *Which hath a most vehement flame.* This clause is practically omitted by the LXX. and Vulgate, because they both take it as no more than an amplification of the word *fire*, occurring just before. Nor does the A. V. do it much more justice. The whole passage should run, "The glowings thereof are glowings of fire, a flame of JAH." This is the one solitary place in the Song where the Great Name occurs, and then only in a compound word, for it would be a violation of the strict laws of allegory to unite type and antitype in the one composition. The flame of His love, then, which melted the hard hearts of men, purging away the dross and leaving the pure gold behind; the flame of His love, which descended in tongues of fire on the Apostles; the flame of His jealousy, burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire; are alike divine, eternal, the emanation of His justice and His mercy. A devout servant of God has coupled these two ideas together in a hymn to the Holy Paraclete:

Bianco
da Siena,
The Hymn,
Discendi
Amor santo.

Come down, O Love divine,
Seek Thou this soul of mine,
And visit it, with Thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
Within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

S. Greg. M.

Ainsworth.

Cocceius.

S. Mat. iii.
12.

O let it freely burn,
 Till earthly passions turn
 To dust and ashes in its heat consuming ;
 And let Thy glorious light
 Shine ever on my sight,
 And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And therefore it follows most fitly:

7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it : if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

The waters and floods might perchance quench the *lamps*, but they cannot quench the exhaustless fountain of heavenly fire at which those lamps are kindled, for that fountain and stream of fire is CHRIST Himself. The Targum here again gives the tone to the most usual patristic interpretations. In it the *many waters* are the nations of the world gathered together against Israel, and the *floods* are the kings of the earth, endeavouring to uproot the chosen people, but alike unable to overcome the mercy of God. So the Christian teachers tell us that the waters and floods are the fierce threats of persecutors, or even their flatteries, whereby they endeavour to separate the Saints from the love of God. And of these threats the LORD saith in the Gospel touching the man who built his house on a rock : "The floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." The holy Martyrs, comments S. Gregory the Great, burned so with charity as to blaze forth marvellously in love of God and their neighbours. Many waters could not quench this love, because their sufferings, how great soever, could never change them into hatred. For this would have been the quenching of love, if by the sufferings heaped upon them, they could have been lowered so far as to hate God or their neighbours. And Theodoret gives another part of the same picture to our view, by citing the troubles through which the Saints of the Old Covenant, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, Elijah and Elisha, Daniel and the Three Children passed. The last example is also cited by S. Ambrose, showing that the miracle wrought in

Hugo Card.

Targum.

Cassiodor.
Gerson.S. Mat. vii.
25.

S. Greg. M.

Theodoret.

S. Ambros.

- the fiery furnace is the exact converse of the spiritual marvel here described, and identical with it in meaning. It is the same thing if fire fail to burn and if waters fail to quench. And the reason is the same in both cases, because beside the sufferer stands the Form of the SON of GOD, Who saith, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." And we know that we can trust His promise, for His love was not quenched nor overwhelmed when that was fulfilled which He spake by the Psalmist: "The waters are come in, even unto My soul; I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over Me." And as they distinguish between *waters* and *floods*, as noting severally temptations and persecutions, striving to put out the fire of love, so they distinguish also between *quenching* and *overwhelming*, as the first is effected when the light of holiness flickers, wanes, and goes out, utterly exhausted, through the allurements of sin; and the second when terror or violence from without overthrows the lamp, leaving it dark and useless for the time within the heart, the mere corpse of itself, but capable of being rekindled, as it was in S. Peter after his fall. Not only do the waters and floods fail to quench love, but "which is most to be wondered at, the fire had more force in the water, that quencheth all things, for the world fighteth for the righteous." Cardinal Hugo, with a certain aptness, reminds his readers of the Greek fire used in the warfare of his days, which was said to burn fiercely in water, and to be extinguishable by vinegar alone; whence he draws the lesson that though temptation and suffering cannot hurt love, yet hatred, which is the vinegar put to the lips of the dying SAVIOUR, can quench it, and therefore, "when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."

If a man were to give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. Once more the Chaldee paraphrase will help us. "If a man give all the substance of his house, that he may gain wisdom in the Captivity, I will render him twofold in the world to come, and all the spoil which he shall take in the camp of Gog, shall be his." The verse, says Cassiodorus, needs no explanation, for no worldly sub-

Dan. iii. 25.
Hugo Card.
Isa. xliii. 2.

Ps. lxxix. 1, 2.

Honorius.

Guallielmus.

S. Leo M.

Henr. Har-
phius.

Wisd. xvi.
17.

Hugo Card.

S. Mat.
xxvii. 34.

Targum.

Cassiod.

stance and no riches are aught in comparison with love. We read that the Saints gave up all for the love of CHRIST, and yet they seemed to themselves to give up nothing in comparison with that love which was so dear to them. Wherefore the Apostle, when he had not only given up worldly possessions, but the traditions of his fathers, for CHRIST, said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win CHRIST." "O love," exclaims a holy writer of a later time, "if I knew thy worth, I should be ready to pay the price. But it may be that thou exceedest my narrow means, and thy price is not in my power. Yet I will give that I have, and all that I have, and will barter all my house for thee, and when I have given all, I will count it as nothing. All the pleasures of my flesh, all the enjoyments of my heart, I will cheerfully give up for thee, that I may possess thee alone. Thou alone art dearer to me, thou alone more valuable, sweeter, more pleasant, more delighting, more satisfying, preserving more safely, protecting more happily." It needs not, adds another, taking up this saying, that thou shouldest doubt, O man; for He wills that all should be satisfied with this love, Who graciously invites us all to this fountain of life, saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." But we must buy the pearl of great price with our own money, not with that which is the LORD's, Whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, to wit, all things temporal, bodily, spiritual, and eternal. The price of this pearl lies hid within ourselves, and we must therefore open our purse, and produce our own money. Our purse is our heart, in which lies hid our money, that is, our faults and sins, which, paid out by lowly contrition and true confession, the LORD and Fount of Love willingly accepts as the price of love. Hear David paying this price, "I said, I will confess my sins unto the LORD." Hear him receiving the pearl of Divine love, "And so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin." O boundless sea of love, what doest Thou, what dost Thou endure? O height of the wisdom of God, which passeth all understanding, how

Phil. iii 8.

Hugo Victorin.

Henr. Harph.

Isa. lv. 1.

Ps. xxxii. 6.

Thou seemest as though made foolish by love, gladly receiving the coins of our sins, and mercifully bestowing the plenteous gift of Thy love, to make us blest therewith for evermore!

The LXX. reading somewhat differs from the Vulgate and A. V., and runs, *If a man give all his substance in love, they will contemn him with contempt.*

Theodoret.

1 Cor. iv. 12.

Tres Patr.

S. Ambros.
Ser. 21 in Ps.
cxix.

Philo Carp.

That is, says Theodoret, whoever gives away all his goods in charity, will be despised by those who are not charitable, as the Apostle saith: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." The Three Fathers say that those who will so despise the liberal giver are the evil spirits. S. Ambrose sorrowfully adds, that such mockers will be found even in the Church of God, and among the followers of the Crucified. And no marvel, as another observes, for CHRIST Himself, the Head, fared no better than His members, when He counted all the substance of His house, all the Divine glory of His Godhead, all the time of His mortal sojourn, as nothing, but gave up all for love, and was despised and mocked, spitted on, scourged and crucified by the Chief Priests and Pharisees, who utterly contemned Him.

8 We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

There is a variance as to the speaker here. The Targum and some of the Greek Fathers take the verse as uttered by the Bride, the majority of Latins will have it that it is the Bridegroom's, and S. Ambrose gives it to the daughters of Jerusalem, agreeing therein with Theodoret, who assumes the Saints of the Old Testament to be the speakers. There is no real antagonism between the first and second of these views, since at this part of the Song the Bridegroom and Bride are represented as so united that their possessions are in common. Hence, whichever speaks, says *we*, not *I* have a sister. There is complete agreement in the next point, which is that the condition of an imperfect Church or soul, not yet fitted for spiritual

Theodoret.

bridal, incapable of producing offspring, or supplying milk to babes, is here symbolized. But the views again diverge as to the particular object intended. The most satisfactory view is also one of the oldest, that the Gentile Church, in its lowly beginnings, when it depended on the Apostles and other Jewish teachers for all instruction in Divine things, is represented under this figure of an immature maiden. Another view sees here the Synagogue, converted at the close of the world, a younger sister of the Church, as but recently born again in Baptism; *little*, because few in number and weak in faith and steadfastness, and without breasts, as having few or no preachers of her own nation, and rather leaning on the aid of the elder sister to teach her children. She is CHRIST'S *sister* too, not only because of His descent from Abraham, but because she will come in the latter days to the full glory of being so entitled by Himself. The soul which is just beginning to believe in CHRIST and to be fed with the milk of faith, but is yet uninstructed in the two Testaments and in the two great precepts of the Gospel, is also a *little sister* of the more advanced and perfect Christians, and is not rejected, but permitted and encouraged to pray for increase of knowledge and charity.

What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? That is, in the day when she shall be asked in marriage, as may be seen by comparing that other text, "And David sent and communed (lit. "spake concerning") with Abigail, to take her to him to wife;" and the difficulty proposed is that which so long disturbed the early Church, as to the relations which were to exist between the new Gentile communities and the race and polity which gave them their doctrines and laws; whether the new Churches of Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy were to be retained in a sort of tutelage under Jewish supremacy, like the proselytes of the old Law, or to be given full powers of self-government, and exempted from the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic dispensation. But the Hebrew, being a little vague in expression, may be rendered also, *when speech shall be made of her*, whether for or against; or even *in her*. The former of these is the Chaldee explanation, which represents the Angels as asking what shall be done for Israel in the day when the Gentile nations shall speak together of warring

Cassiodor.
S. Greg. M.

Tres Patr.
Luc. Abb.
Honorius.

Guilielmus.

Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.

Cocceius.
Ainsworth.
1 Sam. xxv.
39.

Targum.

against her. And not unlike this is the explanation of some Latin writers, though following the Vulgate rendering, *when she shall be spoken to*; namely, that the words refer to the interrogation put by Nero and other Pagan rulers to the Church, asking her concerning her belief and practice. And when the question was first put, in the earliest persecution at Rome, the Gentile Church was indeed little, and without breasts, in that she had no native teachers and but small acquaintance with the Law out of which the Gospel had sprung. Another view is that the little sister is spoken to when God addresses the Church or any faithful soul either by secret inspiration or by outward preaching, and that the HOLY TRINITY debates, as it were, whether she is to be intrusted with only the minor precepts of the Faith, or, to the end that she may become great, with the deeper mysteries of heavenly secrets. And in this sense *the day* in which she was so spoken to was that Day of Pentecost, when CHRIST sent the HOLY GHOST on the Apostles, and speaking to them inwardly, taught them all the languages of the world. And Philo, explaining the LXX. reading, *in the day wherein if it be spoken in her*, as though it stood for *when she hath spoken within herself*, interprets the words as denoting that stage of spiritual progress which leads to careful self-examination and to calls for the aid of the brethren of the young sister, those teachers of the Church whose task it is then to assist her with counsel and prayer. There are yet two other interpretations; one somewhat resembling this, namely, that the words are those of long-established Churches, considering what is to be done to help and encourage a newly-planted one, in the day when its progress and good works are such as to cause it to be spoken of and praised for its zeal. The other, conversely, takes the day to be that of temptation and trial, when the adversary is speaking against the youthful maiden, and there is need that she should be defended against his craft by older and wiser friends, so that nothing may hinder her from being, in good time, the Bride of her Beloved.

Rupert.
Hugo Card.
Dion. Carth.

Cassiodor.

S. Greg. M.

Philo Carp.

Ainsworth.

Honorius.

9 If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

The Bride of CHRIST, whether Church or soul, is both *wall* and *door*, and therefore fitted to receive the costly decorations promised by the speakers, whether these be the Blessed TRINITY, the Angels, (as the Targum holds) or the daughters of Jerusalem. The Church, comments S. Ambrose, is a wall, which has twelve Apostolic gates, through which access into the City is afforded to the nations. But even though a wall include the circuit of the entire city, yet it is all the stronger, if it have *battlements* (LXX. and Vulg.) prepared, whence the garrison can safely keep a look-out. Yet as this city is rational, and all its hope is in GOD, it needs not iron battlements, but *silver* ones, since it is more wont to repel the attacks of the enemy with the sacred writings than with bodily pleasures. Defended with such a bulwark, shining with such splendour, she is counted fitter for union with CHRIST. And since CHRIST is the Door, Who saith, "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," so the Church also is called a *door*, because through her there is a way made to salvation for the people. Lest this door should be eaten away by the moths and worms of heretics, the daughters of Jerusalem, or the Angels, or the souls of the righteous, say, *We will inclose her with boards of cedar*, that is, the sweet perfume of a lofty faith, which neither worm nor moth can injure. Cassiodorus prefers to divide, instead of blending, the two metaphors, and will have it that the *wall* denotes the abler and more learned disciples won over by Apostolic teaching, to whom, as capable of defending others as well as themselves, the custody of Holy Writ is assigned. The *door* represents the weaker converts, unable to resist any powerful attack, but useful in their degree, as teaching the easier and simpler doctrines of the Faith, and admitting fresh disciples by Baptism and the other Sacraments into fellowship with the Church. These are to be fortified with the examples of the Fathers who preceded them, who, like *cedars* with their incorruptible timber, have works which fade not, and who are broad like *boards* in the width of their knowledge and charity. For the width of the boards denotes the width of the heart (wherein there ought to be width of charity and knowledge,) as the Psalmist saith, "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst widen mine heart." With these boards of cedar, then, we inclose this door,

S. Ambros.
Serm. 22,
in Ps. cxix.

S. John x. 9.

Cassiodor.

Ps. cxix. 32,
Vulg.

that is, with the examples of the Saints, that by imitating them, there may be a gate or door of entrance opened for others into the Church. Another ingenious explanation of the *door* is, that as a door is opened and shut only when wanted, so those members of the Church who know when to speak and to be silent are doors too, and are inclosed with boards of cedar when they are taught to glory only in the Cross of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Again, as the wall denotes firmness and constancy, so the door is the type of docility and obedience, admitting only the Master of the house and His friends, while excluding all others, wherefore the one is adorned with the pure and shining virtues of holiness, and the other with the incorruption of that practical life of devotion whereof is written, "The righteous shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus."

So far it is obvious that all the ancient commentators have taken the twofold clauses of this verse as parallel, not as antithetical. But a theory was suggested in the seventeenth century that the two sets of ideas are opposed to one another, and that the meaning is, If our sister remain pure, and resist all temptation, we will reward her with great gifts, but if she allow ready access to every one, and yield to pressure, then we will punish her by confining her closely. This view has been adopted by most of the modern literalists, but rejected by others on the very sufficient ground that the silver battlements and cedar panels answer to one another as costly decorations, and are not opposed in any way as rewards and punishments, independently of the tameness and obscurity of this new idea thus introduced into the Song. It only remains to point out the further meaning, that as some commentators have seen in the preceding verse the Angels discussing what should be done for the Blessed Virgin, in the face of her vow of perpetual purity, on the day when she should be addressed by Gabriel's greeting, so they see here the pledge of those graces of shining and constant faith and of incorruptible purity of soul and body wherewith she was endowed, who was that temple through whose gate the King alone had passage.

10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers;
then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

The younger sister, be she the Gentile Church, the newly-converted Synagogue, or the elect soul, makes joyous and thankful reply to the doubts expressed by her elder, and declares the strength and increase she has obtained through the Bridegroom's love. *I am a wall*, because I am founded upon a sure Rock, and cemented with the mortar of divine love. *I am a wall*, because built up of living and elect stones, the Saints of GOD; *and my breasts like towers*, because I have those within me who are able to nourish others with spiritual instruction, and defend and guard them like *towers*, and who stand eminent, like towers on a high wall, amongst my other members by virtue of their learning and godliness. And this I have not of my own merit or free-will, but by the gift and grace of my Bridegroom, for *then*, from the time when He shed His Blood for me, and propitiated the FATHER on my behalf, *I was in His eyes as one that findeth peace*, (LXX., Vulg., A.V. marg.) for He put an end to the enmity between GOD and man, and made peace for me with heaven. And so the Apostle saith, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST." The *wall* of the Church, observes another, is the Manhood of CHRIST; the towering *breasts*, supported on that wall, and containing within them the arms of the garrison, are the Apostles, whose example and teaching are the weapons of our Christian warfare. Philo, applying the words to the holy soul, represents her as saying: I am now fortified in faith and filled with charity, and my breasts (I call them mine, for they are given to me and to all who do after them,) namely, the two Testaments and the two precepts of love, and moreover the two kinds of life, active and contemplative, are tested by the workings of righteousness. And these, under the guidance of divine grace, have raised me like a tower to the highest grade of approval, and there I have begun to be a stranger to all anxiety, disquiet, and care for human things, and to take my rest. *And I was in His eyes as one that findeth peace*, for He who foreknew me also foreordained me, and knowing that I should seek peace and ensue it, and ensuing, obtain it, called me then Peaceful, and Shulamite, and made me an impregnable wall, terrible to the enemy; and lifted on high my breasts, that is, my moral and theological teaching, and made them like a tower, that warring thence, I might repel the

Cassiodor.

Rom. v. 1.

Luc. Abb.

Philo Carp.

Theodoret.

- S. Ambros. Bridegroom's foes. *Findeth* peace, as the LXX. and Vulgate more correctly read, for, as a Saint tells us, we are here only searching for it. We know where it is, but so long as we are in this world, we cease not from all kinds of sin, and so long as we are in sin, we do not yet enjoy perfect peace with Him Who lived in the flesh without sin. When we do find peace, it is only as His gift Who said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The verse has also been applied to various classes of Saints, and especially to Religious. S. Jerome bids Virgins take it on their lips when temptation assails them, and S. Ambrose had already taught them how the Church had been their bulwark and nurse through all the days of persecution, until peace was at last granted to the people of God. This peace, however, is not perfect. It is merely truce from outer suffering, peace from sin, peace in grace, peace from the noise of carnal nature, not the peace of the Vision, not the peace of an abiding mansion in eternal glory. But that will come too. "For the Church Triumphant, when she sees herself built up with living stones as a dwelling-place for God, and that she has been chosen to repair the angelic tower of the Heavenly Jerusalem, says exulting, *I am a wall, and my breasts towers*. I am built up by CHRIST the Builder, of the elect of mankind, a wall of stone to compass the Heavenly Jerusalem, as a wall in the circuit of a city; and *my breasts*, that is, my Doctors, who yielded me the milk of instruction, are erected like towers in the place of the angels who fell thence; and so the City began to be built by skilled workmen, the Apostles and their successors, from that time *when I was in His sight as one that findeth peace*. Mankind had no peace with God and the Angels after it transgressed by its first parent the commandment of God in Paradise, but it was as one that found peace with Him when it believed in CHRIST, Who is Very Peace. This is the Peace of which the choir of Angels sang to men of good will, when CHRIST the Prince of Peace came from the heavenly hall into the prison of this world. This is the Peace which He left His disciples when He ascended hence. This is the Peace which He brought back to the children of peace, the peace-makers, when, after conquering death and overthrowing the devil, who is the author of wars, He said, 'Peace be
- Philo Carp.
- S. John xiv. 27.
- Honorius. S. Hieron. Ep. 7, ad Lactam. S. Ambros. de Virg. lib. 1.
- Philipp. Harveng.
- Honorius.
- S. Luke ii. 14.
- S. John xx. 19.

unto you.' This is the Peace wherewith the Church ever desired to be reconciled to God, saying, 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth,' that is, let Him restore me, through CHRIST, that peace which I have lost. This peace she now hath in hope, and after shall have it in deed, when she shall see face to face CHRIST Who is Peace itself, and when all the borders of Jerusalem shall have peace."

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon ; he let out the vineyard unto keepers ; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

That is, the Church, which is the spiritual vineyard of the faithful, was planted by the Peaceful King in the *multitude of the nations*, for such is the meaning of *Baal-hamon*.¹ He let out the vineyard unto keepers, that is, He intrusted the Church to the Apostles and Doctors, who keep it vigilantly, that the multiform sects which arise against it may not lay it waste, and divide its unity into divers opinions. *Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.* A man (Heb., LXX., and Vulg.) shall bring this rent, that is, every one who is of the number of the perfect, who is a teacher of holiness, a hearer and doer of the law, and who has put away, in his bringing, the things of a child, *will bring a thousand pieces of silver*, that is, all the saving fulness of God's law and commandments, pure and shining, with him in his hand as his reward in his Country, where he will eat in eternal life and perpetual blessedness of the fruit of his hands. Or, if you prefer it, you may take it that it is we who must bring the fruit, and that the Man Who will give a thousand pieces of silver for it, is the LORD of the vineyard Who rewards the labourers, at the close of their toil, with the perfect gift of wisdom and love. Again, that man who spends his goods upon the poor, and gives his whole substance in charity, leaving all

Tres Patr.

1 Cor. xiii.
11.

Philo Carp.

S. Just. Org.

Irimbert.
Cassiodor.

¹ So Aquila and Symmachus, severally reading *ἐν ἔχοντι πλήθει* and *ἐν κατοχῇ ὄχλου*, both close to the Vulgate, *Quæ habet populos*. But the strict

meaning is, "Lord of the multitude." And so reads a variant of the LXX., *ἐν τῷ δεσπότῳ τοῦ ὄχλου*.

- that he possesses, that he may obtain the fruit of the heavenly vineyard, brings a thousand pieces of silver for it, according to the LORD's parable in the Gospel.
- S. Mat. xliii. 44. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." In that the vineyard is said to
- Corn. à Lap. be *in that which hath peoples*, we are taught that the
- S. Greg. M. whole Church, uniting the nations of Jew and Gentile,
- Luc. Abb. is here depicted, though some of the Fathers prefer to see the Synagogue alone here, because of that saying,
- Isa. v. 7. "The vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant."
- Theodoret. And the holy soul also, which is Solomon's vineyard
- Cocceius. in the midst of a gainsaying world, (for the full meaning of *Baal-hamon* is the "Lord of the multitude," the
- Thom. Verc. Prince of this world,) is intrusted to keepers, earthly ones, who are the priests of His Church; heavenly
- Nic. Argent. ones, who are the guardian Angels; and yet He Himself is the chief husbandman and keeper, ever present with His vineyard, as He promised, saying, "Behold, I am with you, even to the end of the world." It is not said to whom the man will bring the thousand pieces of silver, but it is doubtless to Him Who intrusted the vineyard to him, and thus, if CHRIST be the Man spoken of, He will bring His elect Saints, purified seven times in the fire, and stamped with His image and superscription, to His FATHER, that they may be stored in the heavenly treasury; and we shall bring the fulness of our works to CHRIST, in return for what He has given us, that at His coming, He may receive His own with usury. His own, for it is Solomon's vineyard, and we are not more than keepers. And being keepers, it behoves us to remember that the rent is fixed beforehand, at a *thousand* pieces of *silver*, the perfection of a pure life. If we be neglectful, if we allow His vineyard in our hands to be as that of a man of no understanding, and the stone wall thereof to be broken down, then, "it shall come to pass in that day, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briars and thorns." Then, too, we shall be debtors, unable to pay what is due, and must abide what followed in a like case: "His lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." Nor shall we prosper more, if, while cul-
- Prov. xxiv. 31.
- Isa. vii. 23.
- S. Mat. xviii. 34.

tivating the vineyard sedulously, we desire to keep all the fruits for ourselves, and not to pay the King His dues. For then we shall be like those husbandmen who beat, slew, and stoned the servants, and even the SON of their LORD, when He came to receive the fruits. And that because a life of selfishness does, as it were, kill the LORD JESUS within us, and cast Him out of our hearts, that His inheritance, our nature, may be ours to employ as we please. Wherefore the doom which follows is: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons."

S. Mat. xxi.
33, 41.

12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

My vineyard, that same vineyard which of old I had not kept, is *mine*, because the Peaceful One has given it back to me, and with it the thousand pieces of silver which I brought Him, because His sole reason for demanding the fruit is His desire for my salvation. Or, as others prefer to take it, this vineyard is distinct from that in Baal-Hamon, belonging to Solomon, which typifies the Synagogue, whereas this one is the Church, called hers, because she is given a co-ordinate share in its management, such as was not permitted to the Church of the elder dispensation, bound down as it was by a special and immutable code received from the LORD of the vineyard. It is, she says, *mine*, not only because of its freedom from any other owner but CHRIST, but by reason of the Communion of Saints, which is so perfect that each elect soul can truly say of all that the entire body possesses, It is *mine*; for every grace, every blessing, every promise, every intercession, every thanksgiving made by any one member of the Church belongs to all the rest, and the aggregate of that which the whole enjoys or effects, is the special property of each single partner in that great firm, alike in this world and the next. Wherefore is added, *is before me*, to denote the common vigilance, interest, and care felt by all alike in tending that mystic vineyard whose fruits are common to all without excep-

Theodoret.

Corn. & Lap.

Cocceius.

tion. And so S. Peter Damiani sings of the unity of the Church Triumphant :

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

And though each for divers merits there hath won a various throne,
 Yet their love for one another maketh what each loves his own,
 Every prize to all is common, yet belongs to each alone.

Cassiodor.
 Beda.
 Tres Patr.

The more usual interpretation of the Latin Fathers, however, assigns these words to the Bridegroom, and represents them as a reply to the remark of the Bride that He had let out His vineyard to keepers. It is true that He has so done, but He is nevertheless constantly present with His vineyard Himself, according to His own saying already cited, " Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," so that He says, *My vineyard which is Mine*. He ever superintends all that is done therein, for " the eyes of the LORD are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers," and therefore He adds, *is before Me*. And it is not only before Him here, but in the world to come it will be *before* Him in another and yet more blessed sense, because of the open vision of Him which the Saints will enjoy.

S. Mat.
 xxviii. 20.
 S. Just. Org.

Ps. xxxiv.
 15.

Tres Patr.

Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. This, say the Three Fathers, is the Bride's reply to the King's claim to be the true LORD and Husbandman of His vineyard. *Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand*, because perfection is Thy gift, Who art the beginning and end of all things, Who art Peace itself, and the bestower of peace. *And they that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.* For the renewal of our nature is effected by the keeping Thy commandments, which is the fruit of the Church. And this renewal is denoted by the number *two hundred*, because it is made up of twenty, the product of four and five, (signifying human nature, endowed with five senses and formed of four elements) multiplied by ten, the number of the moral commandments. The Latin Fathers have nearly all mistaken the meaning of this passage, by reason of an ambiguity in the Vulgate rendering, which is, *Mille*

Theodoret.

tui pacifici et ducenti his qui custodiunt fructus ejus. This should be read with the second and third words in the genitive case singular, thus: *A thousand are of Thee, the Peaceful One.* But as these same words may, so far as form goes, be the nominative plural, the Westerns have mostly supposed the meaning to be, *Thy peaceful ones are a thousand.* Cassiodorus, seeing plainly enough that the *thousand* must have reference to the pieces of silver mentioned in the preceding verse, and yet failing to note the true construction of the sentence, gives the very forced explanation that the thousand silverlings are the reward and gifts of peace which certainly await the faithful soul; and that the *two hundred* silverlings are also the peaceful reward of those who have earned a double prize for that perfection which a hundred denotes, either by holiness in faith and works, or by personal devoutness of life and by the conversion of others through preaching. And this double remuneration is implied by the LORD, saying, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." A hundredfold is promised to all who take up the Cross, and it will be doubled for them that persevere. Others, going yet further from the literal construction, suppose that the numbers refer to persons, not to coins, and explain it as though it were, *Thy peaceful Saints are a thousand,* that is, attain to the perfection of bliss which the mystical number denotes; and very nearly the same meaning comes out of another construction, *Thy peaceful ones shall have a thousand.* Yet again, there are some of the Latin Doctors who see the true form of the sentence, though failing to supply the right word after *a thousand*; and interpret either, *They who are a thousand,* who have reached perfection of life and holiness, are *Thine, O Peaceful One*; or, closest of all to the genuine sense of the passage, *A thousand fruits,* that is, all good things done in the vineyard of the Church, *shall be Thine, O Peaceful One,* because every such good thing does as it were return to CHRIST, whence it flowed out, and rewards Him; and *two hundred fruits,* the far less perfect, though yet superabundant

S. Greg. M.
S. Ans. Laud.
S. Mark x.
29.

Nic. Argent.

Hugo Card.

Dion. Carth.

Cocceius.

glory, shall be given to His servants, the keepers, whether they have been, like prelates and pastors, set over the charge of great tracts in His vineyard, or merely placed to tend the single vine of an individual soul.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice : cause me to hear it.

The LXX. and Vulgate are at variance here in the Hebrew text which they have severally followed. The LXX., reading the first verb in the masculine form, takes the Bridegroom to be the dweller in the gardens, Whose voice the Bride desires to hear. The Vulgate, conversely, following the present reading of the Hebrew, makes the Bridegroom the speaker, and the Bride the person addressed. Taking the former view, Theodoret paraphrases thus : " O my Bridegroom, Thou Who restest in Thy spiritual and Thy visible creation, planted, like gardens, with them that do Thy will, there are others besides us, who gaze unceasingly on Thee, because not drawn aside by the fetters of the body, namely, the ranks of the Angels, altogether immaterial. But I, who am bound by this chain, am in dread of change, and therefore, eagerly looking for Thy second Advent, I beseech Thee, make me to hear that desirable voice, ' Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.' " But the Vulgate reading, which is also that of the Chaldee, of Aquila, and of Symmachus, is to be preferred. It is, says Cassiodorus, the voice of the Beloved, addressing the Bride, that is, the Church : O Church, *that dwellest in the gardens*, which art busied in cultivating the plants of holiness, *cause Me to hear thy voice*, that is, preach the Gospel to all thou canst, declare the precepts of My law, and also the promise of heavenly rewards. *And the companions hear thee*, for the angelic spirits delight to listen to thy voice, they whom I made thy companions by the shedding of My own Blood, whom I have appointed as thy helpers and guardians against evil spirits. And those other thy companions, the spirits of the just, whom I have taken out of thy congregation to Myself in heaven, they hear thy voice also, for they delight in thy preaching and in the salvation of their brethren. Others will have it that the

Theodoret.

S. Ambros.
Serm. 22,
in Ps. cxix.

S. Mat. xxv.
34.

Cassiodor.

gardens in which the Bride dwells are those of Holy Scripture, and of delight in holiness; or, as the Eastern Fathers tell us, the churches for public worship, the shrines of the Martyrs, the convents of ascetic life. And Holy Scripture itself is divided into four gardens,—that of herbs, which is the literal sense; that of apples, which is the moral interpretation; that of nuts, denoting the difficult, yet sweet lessons of allegory; that of spices, which is anagoge, the foretaste of heavenly things. And the Religious Life also has this same fourfold classification of its gardens. Its kitchen-garden of pot-herbs denotes the temporal administration of the house, and the supply of necessaries for its inmates, especially the sick. And this garden is to be kept small. No vineyard is to be destroyed, as Naboth's was by Ahab, to widen it. The apples, comely and fragrant, denote ready and cheerful obedience. The nuts, hard without and sweet within, are the austerities of the rule; and the spices the joys of devout contemplation. In all these gardens dwells the truly cloistered soul.

And observe that there are two distinct and coordinate methods of interpreting the verse. It may imply that the Bride is entirely silent, or that she is speaking to the companions only, and not to the Beloved. In the former case, the meaning is, that she is commanded to preach, because she, and she only, is sure to be listened to by those who are willing to love and obey God. She is not to spend her time, as she would prefer, in silent meditation and prayer, but must occupy herself for the benefit of her companions. The other sense, conversely, is that in the zeal of active life and the work of bringing in neophytes to the fold, she has forgotten the care of her own vineyard. She has been speaking, earnestly and devoutly enough, in teachings and warnings, to the multitudes: she has failed in her more directly personal service to her Beloved, in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. *Make Me hear thy voice.* He then saith, Let Martha leave her serving for a time, and sit down with Mary at My feet. And therefore the vow of elect souls must be that which the Apostles made, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." And He calls on her to speak for yet another reason. He it is Who has made her to dwell in those pleasant gardens where

Rupert.

Tres Patr.

Hugo Card.

Philo Carp.
S. Greg. M.
Angelomus.

Ainsworth.

Acts vi. 4.

Nic. Argent.

grow His lilies and spices, He has clothed her in royal attire, He has made His companions, the Angels, ministering spirits for her service. They are waiting, watching, listening, to know what they are to do for her next, and He wishes to heap yet more blessings upon her. *Esth. v. 3.* *Make Me, then, to hear thy voice.* "What wilt thou, and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." And the Bride makes answer at once:

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

Make haste. The Hebrew is rightly given in the margin, and by the old versions, *Flee away*. But why does the Bride, who has all along been desiring the presence of her Beloved, and union with Him, reply thus to His invitation to speak? They give many reasons, but the best of all seems that of Philo and Cassiodorus, which may be conveniently cited in the words of Nicolas of Strasburg. The Primitive Church, because of those words of CHRIST, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;" and again, *S. John xvi. 7.* "It is expedient for you that I go away," desired her Beloved, to *flee away* in His Manhood, that she might more clearly comprehend Him according to His Godhead. And thus she was able to say: Since Thou hast come, and hast kissed me by Thine Incarnation, and hast tarried with me on earth, now *flee away* again, *my Beloved*, from me to the FATHER, that I may know Thy Godhead, and one day be able to follow Thee thither, where Thou hast ascended, since not till then canst Thou hear my voice, for not till Thy earthly work is ended, can I begin to preach Thee. And this is curiously in accord with the Chaldee paraphrase: *Targum.* "At that time shall the elders of the congregation of Israel say, Flee, O my Beloved, LORD of the world, from this unclean earth, and let Thy Majesty dwell in the highest heavens." Or it may be the voice of humility saying with Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD;" and with the centurion, *Rupert. S. Luke v. 8.* "LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof." *S. Mat. viii. 8.* *Flee away, then, my Beloved*, I seek not for glory in this life, but I long for grace. I seek not the renown of working miracles, but I desire the

remission of my sins. Flee away also, that thou mayest ever be incomprehensible, that Thou mayest always be desired and desirable, that we may never know, while in this body, how great is the abundance of Thy goodness which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee. Flee, flee, in Thy care and providence for us, that we may never fancy while we live that we have attained Thee, but that we may still follow in order to attain, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." It is not that she wishes Him to flee, observes a Saint, but that she sees it to be His wont to do so, and her only will is that His will may be done. Or, once more, as others will have, *flee away* from hard and sinful hearts which refuse to admit Thee, unto the hearts of the elect, open to welcome Thee, flee from the unbelieving Synagogue to the faithful Church. *Flee away*, too, by withdrawing Thy visible dispensation, Thine earthly kingdom, retiring, as it were, into the heights of heaven, on the Day of Judgment, and drawing us with Thee from the perishing world. *And be Thou like to a roe or a young hart.* We have here again in the Greek that word *δορκὰς*, meaning the "clear-eyed," and therefore the Bride asks her Beloved to flee away in such fashion as nevertheless to see her, and not lose sight of her during her toils, that she may be comforted with the thought of His ever-watchful eyes. Though I be unfit for Thy continual presence, yet show Thyself often and swiftly to me *on the mountains of spices*, in moments of contemplation, in the lives of those great Saints whom Thou visitest and inspirest; mount, O LORD, ever higher and higher above the mightiest Angels, that I, though far off, may behold Thee surpassing all, and perfect in majesty, and myself haste after Thee to those true *mountains of spices*, on which the Heavenly Jerusalem stands, and whence the incense of perpetual adoration ascends before the throne of GOD.

Beda.

S. Greg. M.
Dion. Carth.

Theodoret.

Corn. à Lap.

Hugo Card.

Nic. Arg.

Thom.

Vercell.

Alvarez.

S. Greg. M.

Hugo Card.

Lyranus.

Now, on those eternal mountains
 Stands the sapphire throne, all bright,
 Where unceasing Alleluias
 They upraise, the sons of light;
 Sion's people tell His praises,
 Victor after hard-won fight.

Hapton,
 The Hymn,
*Come, ye
 faithful.*

Bring your harps and bring your incense;
 Sweep the string, and pour the lay;
 Let the earth proclaim His wonders,
 King of that celestial day;

He the Lamb once slain, is worthy,
Who was dead and lives for aye.

S. August.
Meditat.
cap. 22.

Lyranus.

Rev. xxii.
17, 20.

“O truly blessed kingdom,” exclaims the Doctor of Grace, “free from death, having no end, where no seasons follow one another for ever and ever, where the perpetual day without night knows not time, where the victorious warrior, united with the tuneful choirs of Angels, sings to God unceasingly the Song of Songs of Sion, while the crown evermore encircles his ennobled brow!” *Make haste, then, O my Beloved,* for “the SPIRIT and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” And Thou, O dear and worshipped LORD, art not deaf to the call, “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, LORD JESUS.”



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