

Clavis Cantici:

or,

A Key of the Song,

Useful for opening up thereof.

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(1622-1658)

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Why study the Song of Songs?

This is a place of Scripture, the exposition whereof many in all ages have shunned to adventure upon. And truly I have looked upon it of a long time as not convenient to be treated upon before all auditories, nor easy by many to be understood—especially because of the height of spiritual expressions, and mysterious raptures of divine love, and the sublime and excellent expressions of the Bridegroom therein contained—which would require much liveliness of frame and acquaintance in experience with the things here spoken of, and nearness in walking with God, as being necessary for finding out the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God therein. Yet we are now brought by help of his grace to essay the interpretation of it upon these following considerations:

1. Because it is acknowledged by all, not only to be authentic Scripture, but an excellent piece thereof; and therefore is to be made use of by the Church, and not to lie hid, nor to be laid aside, as if the meaning thereof were not to be searched into, because it seems dark and obscure.
2. Because the subject and matter of it is so divine, carrying along with it many various cases, both of particular souls as also of the Church, both visible and invisible, with many excellent commendations of Christ the Bridegroom, which ought to be the subject of his friends meditations, and cannot but be profitable if he bless them—there being here maps, almost for all conditions.
3. Because the style and composition is so divine and excellent, carrying affections along with it, and captivating them in the very reading, so that few can read this Song, but they must fall in love with it. We would therefore see what is within it, if at least we may get a taste of that which doth so sweetly relish.
4. It seems the Holy Ghost, by putting it into such a mould, intended to commend it. And if it be true that all the poetical pieces of Scripture ought especially to be learned and taken notice of, so should this, it being so commended to us in that frame.
5. The strain and subject of it is so very spiritual, that it necessitates the students thereof to aim at some nearness with God. And ordinarily it leaves some stamp upon their affections, which is not the least cause nor the smallest encouragement to me in this undertaking.

We shall not stand to prove the authority of it. It carries a divine style in its bosom. Nor is there need to inquire who was the penman of it, it being clear that *Solomon*, who was furnished with wisdom and understanding, as never a king before or since was, is honoured to be the [*amanuensis of the Holy Ghost*](#), in putting this Song upon record. Whether after or before his backsliding, it is not much to us, though it be most probable that it was after, in the warmness of a spirit sensible of this so great a deliverance. For here we may, as it were, see him making use of that experience of the vanity of all things he had found, coming to the fear of God as the conclusion of the whole matter—whereof this Song of Love is not a little evidence, and which looks like his own saying (*Eccles. 12.13*).

The tools to understand the Song of Songs.

The means which are necessary for our more perspicuous handling, and your more profitable hearing, of this profound Scripture will be:

1. Some acquaintance with the whole Word of God, but mainly the Book of the *Psalms*, and other Songs recorded in the Word; as also, with the Gospel, and such places as have most likeness to it.
2. Acquaintance with the cases of others, either by reading or mutual fellowship. But most of all it is requisite, that one have some experimental knowledge of the way of God towards his own heart. He who is so wise as to observe these things, even he shall understand this loving kindness of the Lord. Such kind of experience is one of the best commentaries upon this Text.
3. Watchfulness over ourselves, keeping our heart with all keeping and studying a tender frame of spirit, that we may have a conscience always void of offence towards God. Looseness all the week will not be a frame for the *Canticles*. It is not the simple being of grace, but the lively operation and exercise thereof, which prompts and disposes either to speak to purpose, or to hear of this with profit. He would grow in grace who would grow in knowledge here. Neither have others ground to expect that this secret of the Lord shall be with them, or that they shall be of a quick understanding, who fear him not. One may have grace and not a lively frame for this, except grace be acting and in exercise.
4. Much conversing with the Bridegroom, especially by prayer, that he who causes the dull to understand doctrine, may manifest himself and open our eyes to behold these wondrous things, and that he may bless us in the knowledge of his will in this we undertake, which so especially concerns Him and us. For, this Scripture may be dark to these who speaks on it, if this be not, and a sealed book to you who hear it, if these things be wanting. Whereas, "*if these be in us and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful*" [2 Pet. 1.8] in the knowledge of this piece of Sacred Scripture.

Now, that we may have the more clear access to speak profitably of the matter of this Song, and that our way of opening and applying it (which may possibly in some things be different from others) may be the better cleared, we shall, 1. Permit some propositions concerning it. 2. Draw some conclusions from these. Both which we shall endeavour shortly to clear and confirm, as useful to be taken along in our proceeding.

Propositions.

I. Song of Songs is divine Scripture.

The first proposition then is this: This Song is a piece of divine Scripture, and a most excellent part thereof (which we shall speak to more fully on the title) and so of equal authority with other Scriptures (wherein holy men spake as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost) and tendeth to the edifying of the Church, and making of the man of God perfect, even as they do. For,

1. This Song hath ever been received into the Canon and accounted (as they speak) for canonical as the rest of the Scriptures were. It was never questioned by the Jews (as *Mercer. praefat. ad Cant.* cleareth) but was

still received by them and transmitted to the Gentile Churches, who received the Scriptures of the Old Testament from them, [who had the Oracles of God](#) in keeping. And that the same hath been universally received by Christians, may appear by the records of the Councils, and writings of the Fathers, where the catalogue of the Books of the Holy Scripture is set down.

2. It carrieth the authority of the Holy Ghost engraven upon it, as evidently as any piece of Scripture, not only as to its matter, manner of expression, divine style, but mostly in that divine power and efficacy it hath on hearts and spirits (especially of the more discerning, who best know Christ's voice, as his sheep) whereby it relishes so sweetly, and elevates them to such an holy ravishment, that it obtaineth the testimony from all, that there is something divine in it, and more than can be in human writings, even though they cannot particularly tell the meaning of it. That holding true here, which one said of a Book which was something obscure, "*That which I understand (said he) is excellent: therefore I judge, that which I understand not to be so also, though it exceed my reach.*" And that its Christ who speaketh, and that it is the language of the Holy Ghost, and can be applied to no other, is by a divine conviction extorted from the reader, and hearer of it; so that confessedly and deservedly it beareth this title, *A Song of Songs*.

This Song must either be attributed to the Spirit, as the chief author of it (though *Solomon* was the penman) or we must say, it was not only penned, but indited merely by some man, (*Solomon*, or whoever he be) led by his own spirit, or some other spirit, without the Spirit of God. But none of these last can be said. What other spirit can so speak of Christ and the Church? What other Song (even of the most holy men) can be compared to this? Was it ever equalled? Or can it be equalled? And if it cannot be the fruit of the spirit of a mere man (though in the most holy frame) then it must be inspired by the Spirit, in wonderful wisdom, and a most divine style, compacting the mysteries of communion with God in Christ, in this short Song. Wherefore we say, it is justly called *a Song of Songs*, whereby it is preferred not only to all human Songs, but even to other Scriptural Songs, which were blasphemous to do, were it not of a divine rise and authority.

Objections to its Canonicity.

There are two objections which sometimes have been started by some, but they will not be of weight to infringe this truth. The first is that there is no passage of this Song cited in the New Testament. But citation of Scriptures in the New Testament doth not give authority to them. They are cited as having authority, and not to get it. And therefore there are many Scriptures in the Old Testament, which were never cited in the New. Although it may be said there are many near resemblances (at least) in the New Testament to diverse passages in this Song: As the often styling the Church a "*Vineyard*" (*Mat. 20*), and comparing the Church's union with Christ to "*Marriage*" (*Mat. 22*), etc. That Christ "*standeth at the door and knocketh*" (*Rev. 3.20*), taken as it were from *Song 5.2*. The *Virgins falling on sleep* (*Mat. 25*). The efficacy of grace, called "*drawing*" (*John 6.44*, taken from *Song 1.4*), etc. Christ in the parables called a *King*, or *the King* (which by way of eminency is applied to him, *Psal. 45.1-2*). Neither is the second objection of greater weight, to wit, that no proper Name of God is to be found in this Song. For, 1. It's so also in other Scriptures, as in the Book of *Esther*. The Scriptures' authority doth not depend on naming the Name of God, but on having his [warrant](#) [*i.e.* authorization] and authority. 2. This Song being allegorical and figurative, it's not so meet nor consistent with its style to have God named under proper names, as in other Scriptures. Yet, 3. There are titles and descriptions here given to an excellent person, which can agree to none other but Christ, the

eternal Son of God. As “*the King*,” “*O thou whom my soul loveth*,” “*the chief of ten thousand*,” “*the Rose of Sharon*,” and the like, whereby his eminency is singularly set out above all others in the World.

In sum, there are none of the characters, usually condescended on as necessary for evidencing the authority of holy Scripture, wanting here. This Song being a divine subject, received into the Canon, bearing a divine stamp, having much majesty in it's style, agreeing with itself and other Scriptures fully; impartially speaking out the blots and adversities of the Bride, as well as her beauty and prosperity, and written by a prophet and penman of Holy Writ, to wit, *Solomon*.

II. This Song is to be taken Figuratively, not Properly.

The second proposition is, That this Song is not to be taken properly (and *κατα το ρητον*) or literally, that is, as the words do at first sound. But it is to be taken and understood spiritually, figuratively and allegorically, as having some spiritual meaning contained under these figurative expressions, made use of throughout this Song. My meaning is, that when it speaketh of a *Marriage*, *Spouse*, *Sister*, *Beloved*, *Daughters of Jerusalem*, etc. these expressions are not to be understood properly of such, but as holding forth something of a spiritual nature under these.

The Song is to be interpreted Literally.

I grant it hath a literal meaning, but I say, that literal meaning is not immediate, and that which first looketh out, as in historical Scriptures or others which are not figurative, but that which is spiritually and especially meant by these allegorical and figurative speeches is the literal meaning of this Song. So that it's literal sense is mediate, representing the meaning, not immediately from the words, but immediately from the scope, that is, the intention of the Spirit, which is couched under the figures and allegories here made use of. For, a literal sense (as it is defined by *Rivet* out of the Schoolmen) is that which floweth from such a place of Scripture as intended by the Spirit in the words, whether properly or figuratively used, and is to be gathered from the whole complex expression together, applied thereunto, as in the exposition of parables, allegories and figurative Scriptures is clear. And it were as improper and absurd to deny a figurative sense (though literal) to these, as it were to fix figurative expositions upon plain Scriptures, which are properly to be taken.

Twofold Literal Sense of Scripture: Immediate vs. Mediate.

For there is a twofold literal sense of Scripture. 1. Proper and immediate, as where it is said, *Solomon* married *Pharaoh's* daughter. The second is figurative and mediate, as when it is said, “*A certain king made a marriage to his son*” (*Mat. 22.2*), etc. both have a literal meaning. The first immediate, fulfilled in *Solomon*, the second is mediate, setting out God's calling Jews and Gentiles unto fellowship with his Son. And so that parable is to be understood in a spiritual sense. Now we say, this Song (if we would take up its true sense and meaning) is not to be understood the first way, properly and immediately, but the second way, figuratively and mediately, as holding forth some spiritual thing under borrowed expressions, which will further appear from these things:

Reasons the Song of Songs is Figurative.

1. There can be no edification in setting out human love (amongst parties properly understood) so largely and lively—and yet edification must be the end of this Song, being a part of Scripture. It must therefore have a higher meaning than the words at first will seem to bear.

2. There can be no parties mentioned beside Christ and his Bride to whom this Song can agree. Nor can any proper meaning thereof be assigned, which can make it applicable to these parties. And therefore it cannot be understood properly, but figuratively, and that not of any other, but of Christ and believers.

To *Solomon* it cannot agree in its application, nor to his Queen, yea, to no man, if it be taken in a proper sense. For, 1. These commendations given to the Bridegroom (*ch.* 5), to the Bride (4.6-7), if properly understood, would be monstrous, blasphemous, and ridiculous. Such as “*to have teeth like a flock of sheep,*” “*an head like Carmel,*” etc. and so on. 2. Some things are attributed to this *Solomon*, who is the subject of this Song, that were not within *Solomon's* reach, as that, his presence at the table “*maketh her spikenard to smell*” (1.12), which influence cannot proceed from one man more than another. And where it is said, “*he made a chariot, and paved it with love*” (3.11), which is no material thing, and so could be no pavement in *Solomon's* chariot. 3. That *Solomon* being the penman of this Song, yet speaketh of *Solomon* in the second person, “*thou, O Solomon*” (8.12), makes it appear that some other was designed than himself. And many such like expressions that fill up the matter of this Song (such as spices, gardens, etc.) cannot be understood properly of these very things themselves, but of some other thing veiled under them. And so also when she is called “*terrible as an army with banners*” (6.4, 10), it cannot be understood of *Solomon's* Queen, and applying it to the Church, we cannot understand it of any carnal terror, which the external aspect of the Church doth beget in beholders.

3. The style and expressions will bear out more than any human love, or any human object upon which men set their love. We are sure, no such love would be proponed to believers as a warranted pattern for their imitation, as if it would be commendable in them to be so much ravished and taken up, even with the most lovely creature.

4. Many things here are inconsistent with human love and that modesty that is required in it (as the *Hebrews* themselves (*with Mercer.*) observe). Such as to propone him to others, to excite them to love him, others undertaking to follow after him, her speaking to him in her sleep (5.2), running in the night through the streets, and slighting him at the door—which by no means can admit a proper, literal, immediate sense, but must aim at something figurative. Beside, what reason can there be to plead a proper sense here, more than in other figurative Scriptures of the same sort, as of those that speak of the soul's union with Christ under the similitude of a marriage, and particularly that of *Psalms* 45 which is (as it were) [a compend of this Song](#), and is looked upon by all as figurative?

Typical or Allegorical?

If it be enquired in what sense we call this Song figurative, whether as typical or allegorical? The answering and clearing of this question will further us in the interpretation of this excellent Scripture. We shall

therefore shew, 1. How *allegorical* properly so called, differeth from *typical*. And 2. Why we call this Song allegorical, and not typical.

I. The Difference between Types and Allegories.

Allegorical Scriptures, or allegories (we take *allegory* here as divines do, who take it not as Grammarians or Rhetoricians, for a continued discourse of many figures together) properly and strictly taken (for sometimes *allegory* may be taken largely, and so may comprehend whatever is figurative, whether typical, tropological, analogical, etc. As the Apostle taketh it speaking of *Abraham's* two sons (Gal. 4), which is yet properly a type) differeth from types or typical Scriptures, thus:

1. Types suppose still the verity of some history, as *Jonas* casting in the sea, and being in the fish's belly three days and three nights, when it is applied to Christ in the New Testament, it supposeth such a thing once to have been. Allegories again, have no such necessary supposition, but are as parables proponed for some mystical end. Thus, while it is said, "*a certain king made a marriage, planted a vineyard,*" etc. (Mat. 22.2), that place supposeth it not necessary—as to the being of the allegory—that ever such a thing was. It may be an allegory without that, but a type cannot be without reality in the thing or fact which is made a type.

2. Types look only to matters of fact; and compare one fact with another (as Christ's lying in the grave for such a time, to that of *Jonas*, who did lie so long in the whale's belly) but allegories take in words, sentences, doctrines both of faith and manners, as in the former examples is clear.

3. Types compare persons and facts under the Old Testament, with persons and facts under the New, and is made up of something that is present, prefiguring another to come. Allegories look especially to matters in hand, and intend the putting of some hidden spiritual sense upon words, which at first they seem not to bear. Whether the allegory be only in the Old Testament, or only in the New, or in both, it looks to the sense and meaning, being so considered in itself—as the words may best serve the scope, and teach or manifest the thing the Spirit intends—without any comparison betwixt this and that of the Old Testament and New. Yea, an allegory may be in precepts, as "*muzzle not the mouth of the ox,*" and "*cut off the right hand,*" etc. which have an allegorical sense in them.

4. Types are only historical as such, and the truth of fact agreeing in the anti-type, make them up, it being clear in Scripture that such things are types. For we must not forge types without Scripture-warrant. But allegories are principally doctrinal, and in their scope intend not to clear, or compare facts, but to hold forth and explain doctrines, or by such similitudes to make them the better understood, and to move and affect the more, or the more forcibly to convince, as *Nathan* made use of a parable when he was about to convince *David* (2 Sam. 12.1-2).

5. Types in the Old Testament respect only some things, persons, and events; as Christ, the Gospel, and it's spreading, etc. and cannot be extended beyond these. But allegories take in everything, that belong either to doctrine, or instruction in faith, or to practice for ordering one's life. Hence we may see that allegories are much more extensive and comprehensive in their meaning and application than types (which cannot be extended further than some one thing). And so are much more doctrinal, and concern both the faith and

manners of God's people much more, and may for that, more warrantably be applied and made use of for these ends.

II. Why Song of Songs is Allegorical and not Typical.

We say, that this Song is not typical, as being made up of two histories, to wit, *Solomon's* marriage, and Christ's, nor doth it any way intend the comparing of these two together in the events, as to their facts or deeds. But it is allegorical, not respecting *Solomon*, or his marriage, but aiming to set out spiritual mysteries in figurative expressions, in such a manner as may most effectuate that end, for enlightening the judgement, and moving of the affections, without any respect to that story or fact of *Solomon's*. For,

1. The strain and series of it is clearly allegorical, as the reading and considering of it will clear.
2. There can be no history to which it can relate, unto which the things spoken in this Song can be properly applied, as is said.
3. *Solomon's* marriage was at least twenty years before this Song was written (see on *Song* 7 concerning the "*Tower of Lebanon*," and compare it with 1 *Kings* 7.1-2 and *ch. 6 ult*). Therefore it cannot be thought so much as to be penned on that occasion, as an *epithalamium* which was to be sung that night on which he was married, (and although occasion of penning of it, were taken from that, yet would it not prove it typical, and to respect that as it's type).
4. What more is this allegory of a marriage to be accounted typical than other places of Scripture, where this same manner of expression is used?
5. If it be partly typical, how is this type to be made up? For Christ's love unto, and marriage with, his Church, is not only set out here as peculiar to the New Testament, but is applicable to believers under the Old. There can therefore be here no comparing of facts of the Old Testament with anything answering to them in the New.

If it be said, *Solomon's* marriage typified Christ's marrying of the Gentiles. I answer, beside that there is no Scripture for this conjecture (and it's hard to coin types without Scripture authority, otherwise we might make *Solomon* a type in his many wives, possibly, and in many other such things, also that of his marrying *Pharaoh's* daughter was against a law as well as this) it cannot be said that this Song setteth out only Christ's love to the Gentiles, or the believing Gentiles, their carriage and love to him. For, was it not fulfilled (in that which they would make it's anti-type) before Christ came in the flesh, in the believing Jews? Yea, before ever that marriage was, and therefore, there can be no typical respect had to that marriage here. Beside, it would much darken the spiritualness and divineness of this Song, to make it in such a way typical, as having any proper fulfilling or meaning, that were possibly verified in the deed of any man. We conclude then that this Song is simply allegorical.

III. The Scope of the Song is the Spiritual Union between Christ and the Church.

We come now to a third proposition, which is this: The divine mystery intended and set forth here is the mutual love and spiritual union and communion that is between Christ and his Church, and their mutual carriage towards one another, in several conditions and dispensations. The comprehensive sum of this is contained in this Song, and compended by the Spirit, for the comfort and edification of the Church, under these figurative expressions. This, we say, is the scope and subject matter of this Song. For,

1. If the intent of this Song be to set out the spiritual carriage amongst spiritual parties, and the spiritual love which each hath to other, then it must set out Christ's love to his Church, and her's to him. The reason is because there are no other spiritual marriage-parties known, but Christ and his Church. There is no other spiritual marriage, or spiritual marriage-love but this. But this Song in it's scope is to set out a spiritual marriage, of spiritual parties, and their spiritual love. Therefore it must set out this.

2. The scope of this Song must be agreeable to the matter contained in it. Now the matter contained in it can agree to no other parties, and be approved in no other love. Therefore these descriptions given to the Bridegroom, can be given to no other but Christ. And these given to the Bride by him, can be given to no other but the Church, and must speak out no less love, than that love of Christ's, the expressions being far beyond the love of all others. This will more fully appear in the opening up of the Song.

3. What is the scope of these allegories in other Scriptures, as that of: *Psalm 45* that of planting a vineyard, *Mat. 21* that of marriage, *Mat. 22* (which none can deny) is meant of espousing spiritually. (See this same allegory of marriage: *Jer. 3; Hos. 2.3; Ezek. 16; Mat. 22; Luk. 14; 2 Cor. 11.1; Rev. 19.8*) that must be the scope of this also. For, 1. There cannot be two spiritual marriages, to which these Scriptures and this can be applied. 2. Scripture must agree with Scripture, and one more obscure place must be expounded by others more clear. And therefore seeing this scope is clear in other Scriptures of this nature, we may conclude it's the scope here also. That *Psalm 45* doth agree with the expressions and strain of this Song is clear by comparing them—and that it speaketh of that spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and his Church is clear by the citations drawn from it and applied to that, and by the Apostle (*Heb. 1.8-9*).

4. Either this must be its scope, or it must have some other scope, or none at all. To say none at all is blasphemous. If it be said another scope than this, then it must either be such a scope as agreeth with these other Scriptures, or which differeth from them. But not such as differeth from them, that cannot be said, therefore it must be the same. And so it setteth out Christ's way with his Church, and her's with him, drawing them, as it were, in a map together.

Song of Songs is not a Prophecy.

Objection. If any would argue that it might better be prophetically applied, as foretelling events in the Church, as some do, we answer:

Answer. 1. We suppose, it would be hard to make that out to be the scope and intention of the Spirit.

2. It would be more hard to get help from other Scriptures in the application of it to such events, and such times. And so this would leave it wholly to uncertainty, or men's pleasure, as their invention and groundless conjectures would lead them to apply it (as we fear some good men have taken too much liberty, without any ground but mere conjectures, to wrest the scope of this Song). And beside, such an interpretation would exceedingly spoil believers of that instruction and consolation which the true scope giveth them. For then they were not to apply it to themselves, or to the Church, but at such a time and in such an age. Because, if it shall be once fulfilled in others, or, if it be not applicable to them because they live not in such a time, it will certainly mar their confidence in making any comfortable application of it to themselves.

The Song is Dogmatic and Practical for believers in all times.

Besides, these considerations may clear, that, in its scope, it cannot be properly prophetic of such, and such times, and events, but dogmatical and practical, for believers use, in all times and events.

1. If the scope and matter of this Song will agree to any one time, or if all of it will agree to believers at any time, then it cannot be prophetic. For, prophecy supponeth a diversity of time for diverse events, and cannot be said at any one time alike to be fulfilled. But all the subject of this Song may be fulfilled in one believer or other, at any one time. There are still some enjoying Christ, some deserted, some praying, some suffering, *etc.* and so of whatever part of it we can think upon, it may be said of one time, as well as of another, that it hath its accomplishment in one believer or other. And therefore, it is not properly prophetic.

2. If all of it may now be applied to believers, yea, and at any time before the end of the world, may be as well applied as being then fulfilled, as well as when it was written, then it is not prophetic, seeing prophecies have their particular accomplishments. But all parts of this Song, even the first parts, may now be applied, and will still agree to believers as properly as it did in *Solomon's* time. Therefore, *etc.*

3. If all the parts of it were in the same way applicable to, and true in, the cases of believers, then when it was written, even as now, or will be before the end, then it was not intended to be prophetic, but doctrinal, narrative, and consolatory. But the first is true. Was there any believer in *Solomon's* days, but these commendations, properties, promises, practices, *etc.* did agree to them, as they do to us? And was not Christ's way such to them also, as it is to us?

4. Consider further, if the scope of it be to set out Christ's way to his Church, and her's to him, as is said; and if according to this scope, it should be made use of by a believer in any time, then it is not prophetic, but doctrinal, as hath been said. But the former is true, as is cleared. Therefore, *etc.*

5. If it be applicable to believers according to their several cases, and if it be the case agreeing with any part of this Song, which grounds the application of it to any party, and not the time when that case is not; then it is not prophetic, deducing cases by times, but doctrinal, *etc.* applying directions, warnings, and comforts to believers cases, in whatsoever time.

6. The matter of it is the ordinary cases which are incident to believers in all times, and what may make it look prophetic-like, may be considered in the exposition.

7. If its scope be one and the same with other allegories of this kind, then it is not prophetic, but doctrinal. But the former is true. Therefore, *etc.* The truth of both which may appear by what is said, and will further appear in that which followeth.

Five Interpretive Keys to Song of Songs.

We leave this then, and come again to the proposition, to wit, that the great scope of this Song is to set out that mutual love and carriage that is between Christ and his Church. That this proposition—which is a main one—may be the more clear, we shall take it in five distinct branches.

I. The Church in all her conditions and dispensations.

First, it holdeth out (we say) the Church's case, and Christ's care of her, in all her several conditions and under all dispensations. Such as, 1. Her sinful infirmities, and failings in duties (1.6; 5.2-3), and also, under liveliness in duties (1.2-4 and 5.5), and almost throughout. 2. Under crosses (1.6), as being a "*lily among thorns,*" and hated of the World (2.2), and also in prosperity, wherein she is commended as terrible (6.10). 3. As deserted and sick of love (3.1-2 and 5.4-5), and again, as enjoying her Beloved (1.4; *chs.* 3-5). 4. As under faithful shepherds, and lively ordinances (1.4; 3.4-5), and also as under carnal watchmen (5.7). And in all these, her various conditions, in all ages, are painted forth, before Christ's incarnation, as well as now, without respect to any particular time or age. For, ceremonial things are not here meddled with, but what was spiritual. Beside, the Church then and now is one, as in the next consideration will be cleared. 5. As in private, dealing with Christ, and longing after him, and praying for him (4.16; 8.1, *etc.*), almost throughout, and also what she was in public duties, going to the watchmen (5.7; 3.3), and what she was in fellowship with others (5.8-9; 6.1-2). 6. It sets out believers as more strong and furnished with a greater measure of grace and knowledge, and also, as more weak in gifts and grace. 7. And lastly, It holds forth the same believers as more and less lively in their conditions.

This Book in it's matter, is a comprehensive sum of all these particulars formed in a Song, put together and drawn as on a board for the believer's edification. To shew, 1. What should be, and will be their carriage when it is right with them, as to their frame. 2. What are their infirmities, and what they use often to fall into, even they who are believers, that they may be the more watchful. 3. To shew what they may meet with, that they may make for sufferings, and not stumble at them when they come. 4. That the care and love of Christ to them, in reference to all these, may appear, that they may know upon what grounds to comfort themselves in every condition, and may have this Song—as a little magazine—for direction, and consolation in every condition.

Therefore this Song is not to be astricted to any particular case or time, and is (even by *Bernard*, Serm. 1) therefore observed to differ from other spiritual Songs, in three things: 1. That it's penned upon no particular occasion, as others are, such as that of *Moses* (*Exod.* 15 and *Judges* 5 *etc.*). 2. That it is composed by way of conference between several parties. 3. That there are in this conference more parties than two: *Christ*, the *Bride*, *Watchmen*, *Daughters of Jerusalem*, *etc.* all which do shew it's extensiveness and comprehensiveness in respect of its subject and use.

II. The Church is Considered in Four Ways.

This Song holdeth forth the Church's or Bride's conditions under all her several considerations. We may consider the Bride, or Church, four ways, all of which we will find here.

1. As visible, and visibly professing Christ, and worshipping him in ordinances. In this respect there are "*Watchmen*" spoken of, a "*Mother's house*," "*Gardens*" of many believers together, and a "*Vineyard*" let out to keepers, and a Mother having Children (called also "*Daughters of Jerusalem*") who are professing believers, and such like—which agree only to the Church as visible.

2. Consider her as invisible, having true faith in Christ, spiritual union with him, love to him, and real exercise of graces, *etc.* Thus Christ is her's, and she his [2.16]. She is drawn by him, and brought into the chambers of lively sense and communion [1.4]. Thus she is near him, or absent from him, and such like, which only agree to the Church, or saints as members of the invisible Church, having real (and not only professed) union with Christ. And thus she is distinguished from the mother's children [1.6], which are outward professors of the visible Church. And thus the most of the commendations she gets throughout this Song, agree unto her as invisible.

Neither can it be thought strange that both these considerations take place in one and the same Song. For,

1. That distinction of the Church in visible and invisible, is not a distribution of a whole into distinct parts, as, suppose one would divide a heap of chaff and corn, into corn and chaff. But this is a distinct uptaking of the same whole (to wit, the Church) under two distinct considerations. As, suppose one would consider the foresaid heap, as it is a heap comprehending both corn and chaff, or, as it is only comprehensive of corn. So the Church thus distinguished, is but one, considered in whole, as having both renewed and unrenewed in it, and as having renewed only. Yet so, as the renewed are a part of the whole, under one consideration, to wit, as they are visible professors, and also are the invisible Church, being distinctly considered, as they have more than a visible profession. Therefore, the sibness [*i.e.* relationship] being so great and near, it is no marvel they be frequently conjoined in this Song, so as they must be distinguished in respect of these distinct considerations, seeing the visible Church in its consideration as such, comprehends the invisible militant Church under it, but not contrarily.

2. It's ordinary upon this ground, thus to conjoin them in other Scriptures, as when an epistle is written to a Church, somethings are said of it, and to it, as visible, somethings again are peculiarly applicable to believers, who are members of the invisible Church in it. As by looking to these epistles, *Rev.* 2 and 3 is clear, all are comprehended in every epistle, yet is the matter diversely to be applied, and *these who have ears to hear* (that is, are real members of the invisible Church also) are particularly spoken unto, although indefinitely. And why then may not the Church in both these considerations be spoken of here in this Song?

3. If we consider either the visible or invisible Church, as whole or catholic, something is spoken to her under that consideration, namely as catholic. So she is said to be one made up of many (6.9), the Mother

having many Daughters, a Vineyard entrusted to all the Keepers, having some Children beloved, others hated, *etc.* which must be applicable to her as so considered.

4. If we look to particular members, either, 1. As professors of the visible Church, such as the “*Daughters of Jerusalem,*” seeking the Beloved with the Bride, and one of them are distinct from another, and from the Watchmen; such are the “*threescore queens*” and “*fourscore concubines*” [6.8], as distinct from the Church, considered as one. Or, 2. As members in particular of the invisible Church; so the Bride is distinguished from other professors and believers. She speaks to them and they to her (*ch.* 2). So is one Queen and Concubine, distinguished from another. Thus also is the Church considered in general, and in individuals, in their carriage. Yea, it serveth much to the scope of edifying believers, that the Church in these respects, be thus distinctly considered and looked upon.

Neither will this be thought strange, if we consider, that the Church however understood, and the particular and individual members thereof (especially of this invisible Church) are of an homogeneous nature; so that what may be said of the whole, may be said of all it's parts, and what may be predicated concerning the whole essentially, may be predicated of every part, *etc.* As when we consider the whole element of water, it's water, so when we consider a drop, it's also water, and what essential properties do agree to the whole, as such, agrees to every drop of the whole. So is it in the Church. All saints, members of the invisible Church, have the same Spirit, faith, and privileges, the same Covenant, Husband, *etc.* and what thus essentially agrees to one, agrees to all, and what may be said of all, may be said of one. I say in essentials, because, though there may be many circumstantial, and gradual differences, as one believer may be stronger than another, *etc.* yet that will not mar this oneness, and agreement in essentials.

III. Everything is not to be applied to each consideration of the Church in the same manner.

Yet we say, everything in this Song is not to be applied to all within the Church, or to the Church under every consideration in the same manner. What agreeth to the Church as visible, will not, at least in the same manner, agree to her considered as invisible, & *contra*. Nor will everything which agrees to a believer in one case, agree to all. Nay, not to that same believer always. Therefore, there is great need of wariness in application, that the Word may be rightly divided, and the diverse cases of the Church and particular believers would be rightly taken up for that end. Every place is not to be applied to all (though sometimes a place may be taken up under diverse considerations, as from other Scriptures, and the formerly cited Epistles, is clear) but what agrees to everyone, would be so applied, and solely upon that consideration, and under that notion, as it agrees unto such a person or such a case.

For helping us in this distinct application, it is necessary that we lay down these following rules:

Firstly, we must weigh the particular scope of such a place of Scripture: If it speak something concerning a believer in particular, or the Church in general. If it set out some outward, or some inward thing concerning them.

Secondly, we would consider the matter spoken to, and see how it agreeth, whether to the Church under one consideration, or under another. And if the matter predicated of her, or attributed to

her, will agree to her as visible, or as invisible only, for so it is to be applied. If to the whole Church, or if also to all its members, and every particular believer, for so it is to be understood.

Thirdly, we would see how the same matter is applied in other songs and Scriptures, and it will be safe for us to follow the same way of application here.

Fourthly, we would consider what the particular circumstances, that may be observed in such a particular Scripture, will help in finding out the sense. As who speaketh, to whom, in what frame, on what occasion, *etc.*

IV. The Song especially speaks to the cases of particular believers.

Yet we say that this Song doth most generally agree, and is especially applicable to the cases of particular believers, because:

1. The scope is not so much to speak to all collectively, as distributively to hold forth the several cases, that all of them, at all times are subject unto. For although every place do not point out the case of the Church in general, or her duty, yet we conceive it is still in every part, pertinent to some one believer or other. Such places must therefore be understood distributively.
2. The nature and strain of most of those things mentioned in this Song generally will agree best (if not only) to particular believers. As to love Christ, to seek him, to be commended so by him, to be out of one case into another, pursuing after him from one duty to another, *etc.* Which indeed shews the way of the Church in general, but so as considered in the exercises of her individual members, and in the intercourse of communion, which useth to be betwixt Christ and them, and so agreeth to the Church, only in respect of particular believers.
3. There is a plurality of parties speaking, differenced not only from carnal professors, but from one another, who are commending the Bride, and so loving her and Christ also. Which says that the several parts of this Song must especially be distributively considered of believers severally.
4. There is no time we can conceive all believers to be in the like case, so that one case or word will not suit them all. As to be "*sick of love,*" to have "*his right hand under her head,*" *etc.* Something then must agree to one, something to another, and both also at different times to the same person. And therefore we must consider this Song, as speaking distributively the Church's condition, to be applied according to the several cases of the saints, and according to their several conditions. Something as spoken to one, and something to another.
5. The putting of these exercises in a Song, as it were to be learned and sung by particular believers (as a little compend, both of what concerns their faith and manners) was certainly for helping their memories, and furthering their consolation. Which would be much impaired, if in singing of it, particular believers might not suck their own consolation in particular from Christ's words unto them. And what can hinder, but a believer may say, "*I am his, and he is mine,*" and that these and other places applicable to them, may not be so applied, seeing their comfort and edification is the scope of this Song?

V. The Song's subject matter is the same as many other plain and literal Scriptures.

The last branch of the proposition is that this Song holdeth forth the same love, and care in Christ to his Church, and the same exercises and duties of believers, under figurative terms, which are plainly and properly holden forth in other Scriptures, which are not figurative, such as are in the Gospel, in the *Psalms*, etc. There are no new, strange, or uncouth cases here; but believers' ordinary cases, there is no uncouth way of Christ's here, but what he useth to his Church. It's often the folly and vanity of men's minds that when expressions of Scripture look somewhat strange like, they suppose still some uncouth, and strange thing to be there, and therefore loathes that which is plain.

It's true, the cases mentioned here are most spiritual, having love often drawn in its most bright and lively colors, yet, for substance, the exercises are the same which in other plain Scriptures are otherwise expressed. For, it must express the same cases, or, we must say, it expresseth something different from them, not incident ordinarily to believers, and not mentioned anywhere in Scripture, which to affirm, were both dangerous and absurd. Beside, Christ being still the same in his way with believers, and they having still the same Spirit, and being still under the same Covenant, *etc.* we can conceive no other thing here, but what he hath expressed concerning himself and them, other-where in Scripture. And certainly, the scope of this Song is, rather in a sweet way, to compact together the ordinary cases of believers, and their consolations, for their edification, than to pitch on strange things, or make new cases, which would not be so profitable unto them, and would wrong, and enervate the great intent of this Song.

Conclusions from these Propositions.

We proceed now, and shall draw some conclusions from these propositions.

I. The Song being Scripture, it ought to be made use of.

First Conclusion. We may then warrantably read and expone this Song. It being Scripture, it must be edifying, and ought to be made use of. It's true, this, and some other Scriptures, were of old restrained by the Jews, from the younger sort, that none should read them, but these who were at thirty years of age. *Origen* marks four pieces of holy Scripture thus restrained by them: The history of the Creation (*Genesis* 1); the description of God's appearance (*Ezekiel* 1), and of his Temple (*chapter 40 ff.*); and especially this Song. Because the matters in them were so sublime, that there needed more than ordinary humility and experience in those who should meddle with them. This indeed, saith men ought to be sober, and with holy fear search these Scriptures, but that restraint (if peremptory) was unwarrantable, seeing the Lord hath put none such on his people, as to any portion of sacred Scripture. And though this Song be obscurer than many other Scriptures, yet, generally the reading of it, and hearing of it, will affect, and as to the composing of the Spirit, edify as much as other more plain Scriptures. Which sayeth, it's to be inquired into, that the meaning being found out, the profit reaped thereby, may be the more distinct and apparent.

II. Doctrine and Practice must be drawn from the Song.

Second Conclusion. We gather from what hath been said, that seeing this Song may be expounded, then doctrines for grounding our faith, and directing our practice, may warrantably be drawn from it, for the edification of God's people—seeing it is Scripture. And although it be allegorical, it is in a special way useful for edification, and may as bread be broken to the children. It's not only consistent with the nature of plain Scriptures, but also of allegories, that they be thus extended in their use. We shall clear this conclusion in these three:

First, there may be doctrines drawn from this Song, in reference to all cases that are incident to a believer. As, 1. In reference to the case of the Church, in all its considerations, visible or invisible, catholic or particular. And, 2. In reference to the more private and personal cases of believers, doctrines instructing them both in faith and manners, *etc.* For the doctrines must rise as extensively as their scope and matter. And these are of a great reach and extent, as formerly hath been said. Such doctrines then, when handled in this Song, would not be thought strange, nor unsuitable to it; but the broader they arise, the Spirit's wisdom and contrivance in this Song will be the more wonderful and evident.

2. These doctrines, must not be taken from the words properly, but allegorically understood, according to the intention of the Spirit in them, even as from parables, and other clearer allegories and figures in Scripture, it useth to be done.

3. These doctrines so drawn, when rightly concluded from the text and scope, are solid and sure, useful for faith and manners, as doctrines drawn from other places of Scripture are. For, 1. It's certain that many Scriptures are allegorically set down, and is their authority therefore any way less than that of other Scriptures? And if their authority be such in themselves, as is the authority of other Scriptures, then their exposition and doctrines drawn from them must be solid and useful as those that are drawn from other Scriptures. Or, 2. We must say, there is no use of such Scriptures, which were blasphemous. And if they be useful, there may be solid uses drawn from them, as from other Scriptures. 3. Our Lord useth parables and allegories often in the Gospel, and that in things relating both to faith and manners. Which sayeth, the use of them is solid and safe, when they are rightly understood and applied.

How to Interpret Scriptural Allegories.

All the difficulty is in the right understanding of them, and because allegories are frequent in Scripture, and this Song is wholly made up of allegories. Therefore, both for removing prejudices, and facilitating our way, I shall speak something to these three. 1. We shall shew what an allegorical exposition, or rather the exposition of an allegory is. 2. When it is necessary to understand a scripture allegorically. 3. How to walk in attaining the solid meaning or how to know if such a thing is the meaning of an allegorical scripture.

I. The Difference between Allegorical Exposition and Exposition of Allegory.

For the first, There is a great difference betwixt an allegorical exposition of Scripture, and an exposition of allegorical Scripture. The first is that which many Fathers and Schoolmen fail in, that is, when they allegorize plain scriptures and histories, seeking to draw out some secret meaning other than appeareth in

the words—and so will fasten many senses upon one Scripture. This is indeed unsafe, and is justly reprobable. For, this maketh clear Scripture dark, and obtrudeth meanings on the words, never intended by the Spirit. As, suppose one speaking of *Goliath's* combat and *David's*, should pass by the letter, and expound *Goliath* to be the Flesh, or the Devil, and *David* to be the Spirit, or Christ. Such expositions may have some pleasantness, but often little solidity; and such who most commonly thus interpret Scripture often fall in errors. As guilty of this fault *Origen* is generally complained of, though more also be guilty, as might be cleared by many instances.

An exposition of an allegorical Scripture is the opening and expounding of some dark Scripture (wherein the mind of the Spirit is couched and hid under figures and allegories) making it plain and edifying, by bringing out the sense according to the meaning of the Spirit in the place, though at first, it seemed to bear out no such thing. So in *Matthew* 13, Christ expoundeth that parable or allegory (for, though Rhetoricians make a difference between similitudes, or parables, and allegories; yet, in Divinity there is none, but that allegories are more large and continued) calling “the *Seed*,” “the *Word*,” “the *Sower*,” “the *Son of Man*,” etc. This way of expounding such dark Scriptures is both useful and necessary, and was often used as edifying by our Lord to his disciples. Now, it's this we speak of, which teacheth how to draw plain doctrines out of allegories, and not to draw allegories out of plain histories or doctrines.

II. When it is Necessary to Understand Scripture Allegorically.

It may be asked then, When are we to account a place of Scripture allegorical, and are we to seek out some other meaning than what at first appeareth?

Answer. First, When the literal proper meaning looketh absurd like, or is empty, and nothing to edification. As when it is said, we must eat Christ's flesh, whereby believing is expressed [John 6]. And so, these Scriptures that do command to “*pluck out the right eye*,” “*cut off the right hand*,” “*take up our cross*,” etc. All which, if literally understood, were absurd and ridiculous. And therefore, the mistaking such Scriptures hath occasioned many errors, as that of the *Anthropomorphites*, attributing members, to wit, head, hands, feet, etc. to God; and passions, yea, infirmities, as anger, repenting, etc. because the Scripture speaking of God, after the manner of men, doth allegorically attribute to him, eyes, hands, wrath, etc.

2. These places of Scripture are to be accounted allegorical which reach not the scope of edification, intended by them if literally understood. As when Christ hath spoken of *sowing*, the disciples thought that some more was intended than at first appeared. For, his aim could not be to discourse of husbandry to them. So gathers the Apostle an allegory from these words, “*Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn*.” And so also, that and the like precepts, discharging the Jews, “*the sowing their fields with diverse grains*,” etc. Which though they be not wholly allegorical, but have in the letter their own truth, yet, somewhat in these beyond what appears, was aimed at by the Spirit. For, saith the Apostle, “*doth God care for oxen?*” that is, that precept hath a further scope (1 Cor. 9.9-10).

3. When a literal sense would obtrude some falsity on the Scripture, then such a Scripture is to be understood allegorically. As when Christ said, “*Destroy this Temple, and I will build it up in three days*;” it is not to be understood of the material house, or Jewish Temple, because then Christ's Word would not have had it's accomplishment—but Allegorically of his body. So, when Christ saith, “*except a man eat his*

flesh, he shall not live" (John 6.53), it cannot be understood literally, seeing all who have obtained life, did never eat his flesh in a carnal bodily way.

4. Any Scripture is to be accounted allegorical when the literal sense agreeth not with other Scriptures, and is not repugnant to the Analogy of Faith, or rules of right manners. As, when we are commanded to heap coals of fire upon the head of our enemy [Prov. 25.22; Rom. 12.20]. Now, it were against the command of not avenging ourselves if literally and properly understood. It must therefore signify some other thing.

5. When a literal sense answereth not the present scope of the speaker, and the speaker would be thought impertinent, if his words were properly taken, then it would seem necessary to expound it as an allegory. So *Mat. 3.10*, when *John* is pressing repentance, he saith, "*The axe is laid to the root of the tree,*" etc. And that parable of Christ's speaking of the husbandman that spared his tree three years (*Luke 13.7*). If these places were only properly understood, they would not enforce repentance, which is aimed at. They must therefore be expounded as having something more in them of a deeper reach, which may conduce to that scope.

And seeing according to these rules, all the absurdities mentioned would follow if this Song were literally and properly expounded, it must therefore be taken allegorically, and the doctrines must be drawn from its inside, or scope, when the veil of the allegory is laid by.

III. How to Properly Interpret Allegories.

But because it's dangerous to leave men to coin what expositions they please of such Scriptures, therefore as upon the one hand, it's absurd to cast all doctrines from them as unsolid, so upon the other hand, we would see what may fix us in a solid exposition, and so what may be esteemed a well grounded doctrine drawn from such an allegory.

Five Rules for the Proper Interpretation of Scripture Allegories.

I shall, in order to our help in this, name five rules, whereof the last is safest.

First, some allegories at the first view seem plain and imprint their meaning on these that have the least capacity, that it may be known, at least, what in general they aim at. And therefore, such are left frequently in Scripture unexpounded, and are used to press most obvious truths, such is that of *John*, "*The axe is laid to the root of the tree; and he hath his fan in his hand,*" etc. (*Mat. 3.10*). The meaning whereof, is at first obvious to be a peremptory certification pressing present repentance. So is the Parable of the Marriage (*Mat. 22.1*), which at first view appears to be understood of espousing believers to Christ as their husband. And so Christ's command to "*take up the cross,*" etc. These, as to their meaning, are obvious, and we think such is this Song in its general series. The very reading of it seems to imprint that Christ and his people must be taken up as the parties, and the love here spoken of, must be such as is betwixt them. And though particular expressions be dark, thus far it is obvious.

2. The meaning of an allegory, may be gathered from the common use of such phrases and expressions in our common use, so *kissing* and *embracing*, etc. signify love, and are expressions of mutual affection. In an allegory then, these, and such like, are to express analogically some spiritual thing, answerable in our spiritual life to such things in our bodily life. Thus they express spiritual love and the sense of it. Thus eyes,

hands, feet, *etc.* applied to God, denote some singular property in him. If allegorically applied to believers, they denote some qualification of the new man that hath some analogy and resemblance to these, as knowledge, activity, patience, *etc.* because, by our eye we see, by our hand we work, and by our feet we walk and travel, *etc.* Thus are they transferred, to hold out some other thing than appeareth at first from the words, and the work of the interpreter is to bring out the scope and matter in plain expressions, that it may look like the thing it is, and which is aimed at as the scope.

3. It's helpful in expounding allegories to know how such phrases are expounded in other places. As when some things are spoken of *David* that cannot literally agree to *David*, then see who is meant, in other places of Scripture, by him. If it cannot be known what is meant by a marriage tie here, seeing it can be no human thing, see what other spiritual marriage is spoken of in any other place of Scripture, and who are the parties, and this is to be expounded by that.

4. Being to interpret any allegorical place of Scripture, we would see, not only to the scope of all Scripture, and the Analogy of Faith in general, but to the scope of the Spirit in that place. As for example, if we would understand what is intended by the Parable of the Prodigal, we would first consider the scope, which is to shew God's ready welcoming of a sinner, and then level the exposition, as serving to illustrate that scope. So we would consider what is the Bride's scope, and it's to describe Christ (5.10). And we would consider what is the Bridegroom's scope, and it's to describe her (7.1). So then it agrees with the scope to open these places and apply them to what is commendable in him, and her. And thus the exposition and doctrines from it do not only suit with the Analogy of Faith, and are not contrary to sound doctrine, but also suit with the intention of the Spirit there, and are agreeable to it. For the Holy Ghost under general commendations, may include all particulars, which may serve to make out the general.

And so when the scope is to hold Christ out as all desires, then whatever makes him appear desirable, and standeth with the analogy of the expression, may well stand with that scope. This is sure, especially when negatively it's inferred, that is, when such a scope necessarily inferreth such a doctrine, and when that scope could not be attained if such a doctrine were not supposed. As when in general, Christ and his Church are holden out to stand in a near relation together, and so to carry one towards each other, as being under such a relation, this will necessarily infer a Covenant, and an union by faith upon the grounds of it, and some evidencing of the proofs of Christ's love, *etc.* because without these, that relation could never have been, nor can it without them be understood by us.

5. The last rule, which we call most sure, is this: Then we may safely conclude that we have reached the true meaning of an allegorical Scripture, when from the Scripture in the same or other places, agreeing with the scope of the present allegory, we gather in plain expressions what is meant thereby, or what was intended by the Spirit in such an allegorical expression. As when Christ clears the Parable of the *Sower*, he calleth "the *seed*," "the *Word*," *etc.* which makes the meaning clear, and above question. Or, when a plain expression is mixed in with the allegory. So that expression, "Let him kiss me," *etc.* (1.2) in the words following is expounded by a more plain expression, to wit, "thy love is better," *etc.* Hence we solidly gather that by kisses are meant love. And this doctrine is sure, Christ's love is vehemently desired by the Bride. These ways for finding out what is the sense of such Scriptures are safe. And therefore, that saying, "*symbolic Scriptures are not argumentative*," is to be understood with a limitation, to wit, except in so far as the scope and meaning

of the Spirit is known, and in so far as the allegory, or the several parts thereof agreeth with, and conduceth to, the clearing and making up of the known scope.

All these ways going together and taken along with us, we may through God's blessing, undertake the opening of this Song, and draw doctrines from it so expounded—not only agreeable to other Scriptures and the Analogy of Faith, but also as agreeable to the scope of this Song. Yea, even the scope of such a portion of it, though possibly every expression in its meaning be not so fully reached. Which is not the thing we dare promise, but humbly to essay the making of it in some measure clear, relishing, amiable, and comfortable to God's people. And so we leave this conclusion.

III. The Doctrine and Practice drawn from the Song are the same as those drawn from other Scriptures.

The *Third Conclusion* and last is that the doctrines which this Song yieldeth for all conditions, and which for believer's use are to be drawn from it, are the same plain, solid, spiritual truths which are drawn from other Scriptures, wherein Christ's love to his Church, and people, and their exercises, are set down. And if in it's exposition, it resolves in the same meaning with other scriptures, then must also the doctrines be the same. And therefore such doctrines concerning faith and manners, for believers' direction in all cases, as ariseth from the Gospel, and other plain scriptures, psalms, and histories, may be solidly drawn from this Song. And such when they are drawn are solid (being according to the foresaid general rules) and weight is to be laid on them in a Christian walk. We shall therefore endeavour to make this out, that when the doctrine of faith, repentance, diligence, *etc.* and such other doctrines as are in the Gospel, concerning the Covenant, or Christ, are spoken of, ye may not think it strange, nor unsuitable to this Song. And therefore we say,

First, if the doctrines be suitable to the scope and matter contained in this Song, then they are sure and solid, and weight is to be laid upon them. But the doctrines concerning Christ's love to, and care of, his Church, and concerning her exercising of faith, repentance, *etc.* are suitable to the scope, and agreeable to the matter of it. Or thus, If the scope and matter of this Song, do agree with the Gospel (I call the Gospel what in the New Testament is more fully holden forth and more clearly) in the scope and matter of it, then must the doctrines which arise from it, be the same with these that rise from the Gospel. But the first is true, as is formerly cleared, therefore must this last be so also. And what is the scope of the Gospel, but to set forth Christ's love to his Church, to shew her duty, *etc.*? And is not that same the scope here also? Only what is preceptively or doctrinally delivered there, is here as it were acted in a sort of comedy and compiled in a Song, but still for the same end.

2. If the same allegories in other places of Scripture, will bear solid doctrines concerning Christ, his Covenant, faith, *etc.* even such as are in plain Scriptures, then must this Song do the like, seeing it is the Word of God, tending to the same scope with these. But it's clear that the same allegories of Vineyards, Fruits, and Marriage, *etc.* are used and to the same scope with this, and are made use of to yield solid doctrines concerning faith, fruitfulness, and other doctrines belonging to a believer's faith and practice (*Isa. 5.2; Jer. 3; Mat. 22; Rev. 19.7*). Therefore it must be so here. For though this Song be larger, and is made up

of more allegories together, that will not alter the nature of it, or of the doctrines which must be drawn from it.

3. If we compare this Song with the 45th *Psalms*, it cannot be denied, but 1. That Psalm and this Song are to one scope, and of one style or strain, in prosecuting that scope. It's a Song of love for the King, and a spiritual marriage is the subject thereof, as is clear from the very reading of it. 2. It cannot be denied, but that solid proofs and doctrines concerning many points of faith and practice, which are in other plain Scriptures, are, and may be warrantably drawn from it, even as if it were plain Gospel. Therefore must the doctrines be such which arise from this Song also, for that Psalm is used even by the Apostle (*Heb.* 1. 8-9) to confirm the great truths of the Gospel.

4. If this whole Song be one piece and of one nature, driving all along the same general scope, then such doctrines, as the places in it which are clear, do yield. Such, I say, must be contained (if we could discern them) in these places of it which are most obscure. But what is most plain in this Song, speaks out such plain doctrines, experiences, *etc.* Therefore what is more obscure, may be resolved in such also. For we may best know what kind of doctrines floweth from what is obscure by the places that are more clear, seeing God in the most dark Scriptures ordinarily hath inserted some plain passages, or given some hints of his mind, to be as a key for opening all the rest. Now if we will for instance, consider some such places as these, "*My beloved is mine,*" *etc.* "*I called, but he gave me no answer,*" they yield plain doctrines as other plain Scriptures do. And therefore, seeing it's one continued Song, and each of these dark, and plain places answer one another, to continue the series of the discourse upon the same subject, we may know by what is plain, how to understand what is couched within that which is more dark.

5. As one piece of the allegory is to be resolved, so by proportion must all the rest, there being one thread and scope. Now that some pieces of the allegory may be expounded in clear doctrines concerning Christ and his Church, may be gathered from paralleling some parts of it with other Scriptures. As if we compare that excellent description of Christ (*ch.* 5.10), with that which *John* sets down (*Rev.* 1.13), we will see a great resemblance betwixt the two (if this last have not respect unto the former) especially in that which is spoken anent his feet and legs, and his countenance. But it is certain, that description (*Rev.* 1.13) is given him with a purpose to describe him, and to set out the several attributes, and excellent qualities he is furnished with, as Omniscience by his eyes, Justice by his legs walking surely, Omnipotence by his arms, *etc.* which are particularly so applied in the Epistles to the seven Churches (*ch.* 2 and 3), and afterward. If then there by the Spirit's warrant, we may draw from Christ's being said to have eyes that he is Omniscient (and so in other properties), may we not also think that seeing it's the same Spirit that speaks here—in the particular description that is given of Christ, and the Bride in their several parts—hat these same particular properties may be aimed at? And may we not make use of such interpretations elsewhere given, for our help in the like particulars, and so also in other things?

6. Thus we argue: Either this Song is so to be resolved, as hath been said, and such doctrines are to be drawn from it as arise from the Gospel, for expressing the way of believers with Christ, and his with them. Or then, 1. There are no doctrines to be drawn from it, but this Song is a mere complement, and but ignorantly, with holy blind affection to be sung, which is absurd. Or, 2. The doctrines are but to be guessed at, and so the truth of them is only conjectural, which will come near the former absurdity, and spoil the believer of any solid edification he could have from it. Or, 3. It must contain such a kind of love, such cases and doctrines

concerning Christ and believers, which are different from the Gospel, and the cases of saints plainly recorded elsewhere. Now this would necessitate an uncertainty of it's meaning, and hazard the coining of two ways of Christ's dealing with his people, as also, of theirs with him, two unions, two marriages, *etc.* Or, 4. It must contain the same doctrines concerning faith, Christ, the Covenant, the Church, *etc.* which are contained in other Scriptures, and in the Gospel, which was the thing to be proven.

Two Extremes in the Interpretation of the Song of Songs.

We have been the larger on this to obviate two extremes that men are given to follow in reference to this Song.

1. Some loathing plain truths, which are plainly delivered in Scriptures, properly to be taken, and because this in expression and strain differeth, they conclude there must be some uncouth, strange, and odd thing here. It is true, if we look to the degree of warm affections that breathe forth here, we may conceive that there is something odd, and singular in this Song. But, as to the kind of doctrine here delivered, there is nothing new. And to imagine the contrary, were as if a man supposed, there behoved to be some strange liquor or meat in curious-like glasses and dishes, because the master of an house might use variety of vessels for the delectation of the feasters, yet still giving the same solid food and drink, though diversely prepared. Or, as if a man would suppose, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Christ our Lord, and *John*, did preach different Gospels because they were of different gifts, and had a different manner of expression.

2. On the other hand, some are ready to cast at this Book as useless, because they see not plain truths at the first in it, and possibly think all endeavours to expound it, or draw doctrines from it, but a guessing, and are ready to offend, when they meet with nothing but some such truths as are obvious in some other Scriptures. This wrongs the worth and divine authority of this Scripture also, and though many (and we among others) may misapply somethings in this Song, yet to say they cannot be rightly applied, or that such doctrines as we have before mentioned, are not native to it, is too precipitant, to say no more.

Objections Answered.

For further clearing and confirming of these propositions and conclusions, we shall answer some objections or questions which may be proposed concerning what is said.

Objection 1. Why would Scripture use Figurative Expressions?

First, it may be objected: If allegorical Scriptures are so to be expounded, and such doctrines to be drawn from them, then why are such Scriptures set down under such figurative expressions? Might they not be better in plain words? Or might not such plain Scriptures be rather expounded, which bear such doctrines with less difficulty?

Answer. If this were urged, it would not only reflect on this Song, but on many places of Scripture, and also, on the expounding of such Scriptures. Yea, it would reflect on the wisdom of the Spirit and his Sovereignty, who may choose what way he pleases to express his mind to his people, and whatever way he take to do this, sure, it is still the best, and it may warrant us to acquiesce in the way he hath taken to speak his mind, that it

is he that speaks. Yet, there may be good ends given of this his way, or weighty reasons (even for our behoal) why he speaks to his people in such terms, and language. As:

1. Here he putteth all the conditions of a believer together, as in one map, which are more sparsely, and as it were, here and there, to be found elsewhere through the Scriptures. We have them here compended together in a sort of spiritual dependence one upon another, and in a connection one with another. And they are put in a song to make them the more sweet and lovely. And under such poetical and figurative expressions as best agreeth with the nature of songs and poetical writings, that so believers may have them together, and may sing them together, for the help of their memory and upstirring of their affections.

2. These figures and similitudes, have their own use, to make us the better take up, and understand the spiritual things which are represented by them. When in a manner, he condescends to illustrate them by similitudes, and so to teach (as it were) to our senses things which are not otherwise so obvious. For which cause, Christ often taught by parables the greatest mysteries of the Gospel.

3. Thus not only the judgement is informed, but it serveth the more to work on our affections, both to convince us of, and to deter us from, what is ill, when it is proposed indifferently in an allegory—as *Nathan* in his parable to *David* did [2 Sam. 12]. And also, it conduceth the more to gain our affections to love such things as are here set out, wherefore, even Heaven itself is so described from similitudes of such things as are in account with men (*Rev.* 21.22). And Christ's love becomes thus more comfortable, and our relation to him the more kindly-like, when it's illustrated by marriage, and the kindly expressions of a husband and wife. For this also, God is compared to a father, and his pity to a father's pity to children, to make it the more sensible and comfortable.

4. Thus also any knowledge that is attained, or any impression that is made, is the better fixed and kept. Similitudes are often retained when plain truths are forgotten, as we may see in experience. Yea, the retaining of the similitude in the memory doth not only keep the words in mind, but helps to some acquaintance with the thing which is signified, and furthereth us in understanding the manner how such and such things the Lord doth to his people are brought about.

5. Thus both the wisdom and care of God and his Spirit appeareth, who taketh diverse ways to commend his truth unto men, and to gain them to the love of it, that they who will not be affected with plain truth, he may be more taking expressions, commend unto them the same thing. Which is the reason why he hath given diverse gifts and ways of holding forth his truth unto ministers. Some have one way, like Sons of Thunder, some another, like Sons of Consolation. And yet all to carry on the same end, that the one may be helpful unto the other. Indeed if God had delivered his truth only in obscure terms, the objection might seem to have some weight. But when he doth it both in plain and obscure ways, this is his condescendency and wisdom, by all means seeking to gain some.

6. Thus also the Lord removeth occasion of loathing from his Word, by putting it in some lovely artifice in the manner of its delivery. And also, he doth hereby provoke his people to more diligence in searching after the meaning of it. It being often our way to esteem least of what is most obvious, and most of that which is by some pains attained.

7. Thus also the Lord maketh the study of his Word delectable, when both the judgment and affections are jointly wrought upon. And to shew that all the believers' conditions may be matter of a sweet song to him—whereas some things, if plainly laid down, would not be so cheerfully digested. Thus he maketh the saddest matter sweet by his manner of proposing it.

8. Also the Lord useth to keep the songs, and spiritual allowance of his own, somewhat veiled from the rest of the world. For “*they have meat to eat the world knoweth not of*” [John 4.32], that believers may see, and feed sweetly, where they discern nothing, and that they having this commented on by experience betwixt him and them, may sing that Song, which none other in the world can learn, as the 144,000 do (*Rev.* 14.1). For thus it's said (*Mat.* 13.9-11), that Christ spake in parables, that not only he might condescend to the weakness of his own, so as they might bear it (*Mark* 4.33-34), but also that others “*seeing might see, and not perceive.*” Often that same way which his own gets good of, proveth a stumbling to others, through their own corruption.

9. There may be also something of God's design here, to try the humility and sincerity of his people, if they will stoop to every way he useth, because it's his. And if they will love the Word, not as so, or so proposed, but as it cometh from him, and is his, and as such humbly receive it, as being that which (though it seem to others foolishness, yet) makes them wise unto salvation. The mockers taunted *Ezekiel's* message under this notion, that he spake parables (*Ezek.* 20.49), but when the prophet broke the two staves (which was a dark and mysterious-like action) the “*poor of the flock waited on him,*” when (as it's like) others stumbled also (*Zech.* 11.10-11). By all which we may see why the Lord hath so compacted together plain useful doctrines under such expressions in this Song. And also, why our undertaking to open it may be well constructed, even though these same truths may elsewhere as clearly arise. Yet, these truths are here in such a way connected together, and so not only proposed, but also commended unto us, as will not anywhere else be found.

***Objection 2.* This makes the Song look more like the Gospel of the New Testament than an Old Testament Book.**

If any say, the raising of such Gospel doctrines makes this Song look more like the Gospel of the New Testament, than a Song of the Old.

Answer 1. Is it the worse, that it looks like the Gospel? Or, are not such doctrines (if they follow from it) the better and more comfortable? Certainly there is no doctrine more edifying and comfortable to believers, and more like, or more becoming Christ's way with believers, or theirs with him (which is the scope and subject of this Song) than Gospel doctrines are. High soaring words of vanity, and mysteries having nothing but an empty sound, are much more unlike this spiritual Song, than these.

2. If it set out Christ's way to believers, even under the Old Testament, and believers' way of keeping communion with God even then, is not that the same Gospel way which we have now? Their faith and communion with God stood not in the outward Ceremonies, which were typical, but in the exercise of inward graces, faith, love, *etc.* which are the same now as then. Was not Christ the same to them as to us? Had they not the same Spirit, Covenant, *etc.* and so the cases and experiences of, or incident to believers then, are also applicable to us now? That Christ was then to come, and hath now suffered, and that the way

of revealing him then was some way different from that we have now, will not make another Gospel, Covenant, faith, yea, nor Church. We being grafted in that same stock which they once grew upon, and being by faith heirs of the same promises, which sometime they possessed [Rom. 11].

Objection 3. Solomon could not have understood the Gospel themes alleged in the Song.

If any should yet doubt if *Solomon* knew or intended such doctrines as these, and that therefore, they cannot be well digested, if drawn from this Song, beyond his mind and meaning.

Answer 1. Our great purpose is to know what the Spirit intended, and not what *Solomon* understood. And if this be the Spirit's intention, to set out Christ's way with his Church, then such doctrines as agree therewith must be agreeable to his meaning.

2. Yea, suppose *Solomon* and other prophets should be ignorant in a great measure of the meaning of such things as the Spirit foretold by them (as it is not impossible in some extraordinary things, especially when their knowledge in these was not essential to the truth of their prophecy, for they might have a kind of nescience in the particulars, though they were sure the things they delivered were in the complex prophecy God's Word), yet, will any say that we should limit the words spoken by them to their understanding of them? If so, by what rule would we know if, or how, they did understand them?

3. Therefore we say: It was with *Solomon* here as with other prophets (as *Isaiah*, and others) who spake many of the Gospel truths, which in particular they might not so fully know as we do now, when these prophecies are fulfilled, yet was it never doubted, but the most deep mysteries of the Gospel were contained in their prophecies.

Yet, 4. We say there is no ground to think, but *Solomon* knew much of the mind of the Spirit in this Song, yea, more than many learned men nowadays. For,

1. He was not only a believer, but one eminent for gifts and knowledge. And none will say but he was so for divine knowledge as well as human. As his books, particularly *Proverbs chs. 4, 8, and 9* in his description of Christ, the substantial wisdom of the Father, *etc.* do shew. And can it be thought he wrote this book without any sense of what he wrote?

2. Can it be thought but he levelled what he wrote here at a scope? And that afterwards himself made use of it for his edification and comfort? Which could not be done if he had not understood the most of these Gospel mysteries, upon which all this sweet conference betwixt Christ and believers is founded.

3. His writing in such terms shews that the words were not ignorantly fallen upon. But he, having knowledge of all herbs, spices, *etc.* and how to apply them to spiritual things, pitched upon these as the most pertinent similitudes, which are therefore by the special wisdom of the Spirit made use of in this Song, as in other his writings. Yea, certainly his knowledge how spiritual mysteries are couched up in these similitudes, and represented by them, was beyond what we can reach unto

now. And therefore we dare not insist or be peremptory in the particular application of these similitudes.

4. The subject of this Song not being prophetic, but narrative and doctrinal, containing such exercises as might be, and certainly were, found in believers even then, and such dispensations as they used to meet with, will any say he was a stranger unto them, seeing there was access to know these much better than prophecies of things which were to come?

Yea, 5. Is there anything here, but what in other Scriptures of the Old Testament (and especially Songs and Psalms) is to be found, where the cases and exercises of God's people are set down? And it needs not be thought strange if we equal him in knowledge with others of his time or before him. And that he sets down in a more artificial manner, according to his measure of gifts, that which others set down in more plain terms, yet both by the same Spirit.

We may then confidently hazard to draw the same doctrines concerning Christ, the Gospel, Church, *etc.* from it, that are to be found in other more clear and plain Scriptures. One of the Fathers (*Athanas.* in *Synops.*) comparing this Song with other Scriptures of the Old Testament, says, it is as *John Baptist* among the Prophets. Other Scriptures speak of Christ as coming (saith he) and afar off, this speaks of him, and to him, as already come, and near hand. And indeed it is so. For so even then he was sometimes very familiar and present both to the faith and sense of his people, as well as now. Thus also, even *Origen* (though in plain Scriptures too luxuriant, yet in this he) seems to own this same scope. Thus also *Zanchi* in *Eph.* 5 makes it a compend and copy of the spiritual marriage with Christ. And *Bodius* (*Eph.* p. 119) says it's "*ipsius fidei, et Religionis Christianae, medulla*" [the marrow of his faith, and the Christian Religion].

***Objection* 4. What use is the Song for the yet unredeemed elect?**

If it be said, if we interpret this Song after this manner, then all the observations will run upon believers cases only—which would seem to say that no doctrines may be drawn from it for the edification of these who are yet unrenewed. And what use can it then be for them who yet are the greater part in the Church?

Answer. 1. The Gospel hath doctrines suitable to all within the Church. And this Song being in substance Christ's way with his Church, must also contain doctrines useful for all within the same.

2. In this Song the Church is not only considered as invisible, and united by true faith to Christ, but also as visible, and as under external ordinances, as hath been said. And in that respect, it furnishes doctrines fit for all.

3. This Song will furnish doctrines useful for these, as other parables or allegories of that kind do, which Christ used often even for the edification of such.

4. Doctrines from all places of Scripture may be raised by analogy. As from such places where God holdeth forth the way he useth with his own, when they have wronged him by sin, which is to humble them and bring them to repentance, ere they see his face again, sin becomes bitter even to them. From such places, I say, we may gather by proportion that God's way with unrenewed sinners—whom he minds to bring to

peace and friendship with himself—is to humble them and make sin bitter to them, seeing the recovering of peace and the first founding of peace as to this, is brought about after the same manner.

5. From such places as speak directly of Christ's special love to believers, there may be drawn good uses and applications to others. Partly, to engage them to him who so loves his own; partly, to terrify those who are not his, by their being debarred from any right to such excellent privileges.

6. Where the Bride's carriage is commendable, it's a copy and pattern to all. Even as examples and precepts are ordinarily given in common to all, and serve to direct everyone in what they should aim at, and also to convince for what they are short of. The duties she is taken up with, being moral, her example in these, must lay an universal obligation upon all, and in such things wherein she falleth through infirmity, her carriage serveth well to deter all from these evils.

Conclusion.

In the last place, for better understanding of the subject of this Song, we would take along with us: 1. Some Observations. 2. Some Rules.

I. Observations for the Better Understanding of the Song.

1. The subject thereof is to hold forth the mutual and interchangeable exercise, and out-lettings of love, as well betwixt Christ and particular believers, as betwixt him and the Church. As also his various dispensations to the Bride, her diverse conditions and tempers, and both his and her carriage under them, and her out-gates.

2. The manner in which this sweet subject is set down is by way of dialogue, in several conferences, after a dramatic way (as it's called) because thus the mutual love of these parties is best expressed. In which there are, 1. The principal parties in the discourse. 2. Others as friends or attendants waiting on. In the Gospel there are mentioned the "*Bridegroom*," and his "*friends*," and the "*Bride*" (John 3.28-29). And "*children of the marriage chamber*" are spoken of (*Mat. 9.15*), by which are understood "*virgins*" and "*companions*" that attend her, and also go forth to wait on him. Which are of two sorts, some *wise*, being really so, some *foolish*, being wise in profession only (*Mat. 25.1-2*). There is also mention made of a "*Mother*," which hath two sorts of children, some born after the "*Flesh*"—and but children as it were of the "*Bond-woman*"—others born after the "*Spirit*," and true members of the Church invisible (*Gal. 4.26*). The former persecutes the latter; and of both kinds of children are some of all ranks, amongst priests, apostles, ministers, *etc.*

The Parties in the Song.

We will find all these parties in this Song, acting their several parts:

First, the *Bridegroom* is Christ (*John 3.24*), called the "*one Husband*" (*2 Cor. 11.2*), for there is not another spiritual husband to whom believers can be matched. He is "*the King's son*," for whom the marriage is made (*Mat. 22.1-2*). He is "*the Lamb*" unto whose marriage the hearers of the Gospel

are invited (*Rev.* 19.9; *Psal.* 45). He is the *King* unto whom the *Queen* is to be brought after she is adorned—by this name he is also styled in this Song, “*the King*” (1.4. 12, etc.) and “*the Beloved.*” Those and such titles are given to him which cannot be understood to be attributed to any but to Christ only, by believers.

2. The *Bride* is the Church, and every believer in diverse considerations (as is said before) who are married to Christ, and are to be made ready and adorned for the solemnizing of the marriage. Of the nature of this marriage see more (8.8).

3. The *Bridegroom's friends* are honest ministers who rejoice to see him great. Such as *John* was (*John* 3.29), and such were the Apostles (*John* 15.15). Such are here the *Watchmen*, trusted with the oversight and edification of others, spoken unto in 2.15, and spoken of in 3.3.

4. The *Virgins*, or children of the marriage-chamber, are here called “*Daughters of Zion*” (3.11) and “*of Jerusalem*” (many whereof are weak, ready to stumble, 1.6, and of little knowledge, 5.9, and ready to stir up the Bridegroom, 3.5) and the “*Virgins that love*” *Christ* (1.3) and “*the upright*” (1.4).

5. The *Mother* is the universal visible Church, wherein are many true believers, who are converted to Christ by the Word and ordinances dispensed therein, and to which also many hypocrites belong as members.

6. The *Children of the Promise*, are true virgins that love Christ. The *children of the bond-woman*, and the flesh, are unrenewed professors in the Church, as also, false teachers, who act their part here likewise (1.6; 2.15; 5.7).

3. This conference, as it is betwixt Christ and the believer, is followed as betwixt married parties. 1. In their titles they attribute to each other. 2. In their claiming of this relation one in another, as that he is her's, and she is his. 3. In their expressions, which are such as used to be betwixt most loving parties who live exercising conjugal love, most kindly and intimately together. The reason whereof is,

1. To shew the near union that is betwixt Christ and his Church. There is a relation, and a most near relation betwixt them, that is not betwixt him and any others.

2. To shew the kindly effects of that relation in both the parties, especially the faithfulness and tenderness of the husband, in walking according to it in everything.

3. It's to sweeten every piece of exercise the believer meets with. Yea, to make all dispensations digest the better, seeing they are dispensed and ordered by such a loving husband.

4. It's for warming the believer's heart the more to Christ, and to make this Song heartsome and delightful, that so believers may have always a marriage Song, and every night may be to them as a marriage night.

4. The purpose or subject of this Song is Christ and divine things of all sorts, but mainly the experiences of grown Christians, held forth in most noble and lively expressions, as was before a little cleared.

5. The scope of all is to express the desirableness of fellowship with the Bridegroom, and how the Bride thirsteth and longeth for it, and how careful she is to entertain it, and by laying out his matchless excellencies to commend him to others. Which also seems to be the scope and design for which this Scripture is given to the Church. And so her breathing after communion with him doth here begin the conference, "*Let him kiss me,*" etc. (1.2).

6. The manner of their expression is,

1. Sweet and loving; and therefore, this conference is carried on under the terms of marriage, and the titles of "*beloved,*" "*my love,*" "*spouse,*" etc. (as being the most lively that can express that relation, and most apposite for entertaining of mutual love) are here made use of.

2. The manner of expression is something obscure, though sweet, that so the Lord's people may be stirred up to painfulness and diligence in searching out his mind. And also, because the mysteries here contained are great and cannot, as they are in themselves, be conceived. Therefore that they may be illustrated, parables are used, as *Matthew* 13.34 compared with *Mark* 4.33 where it's clear that the intent and effect of the Lord's speaking by parables is to help some to take up these mysteries, and to leave some ignorant.

3. The Spirit of God doth here make use of borrowed expressions—the more lively to set out the spiritual matter contained under them—and by things most taking and best known to our senses, to hold out divine mysteries unto which these expressions are to be applied.

4. Often these same expressions are made use of in one place, in speaking to the Bridegroom, and in another speaking to the Bride, he calling her "*chief amongst the Daughters*" [2.2], and she him "*chief amongst the Sons*" [5.10], but in a different sense. For, he styles her from his acceptance of her, and from his imputation and communication of his graces to her. But she styles him from his own excellency and worth, he having all in himself, and nothing borrowed from any other, but imparting that which is his, to her.

II. Rules for the Better Understanding of the Song.

The rules we would take along with us in our proceeding are these:

First, we would find out who speaks in every passage of this Song—for this serves much to clear what is spoken.

2. We would carefully ponder, what is the purpose of the Spirit in every part thereof.

3. We must apply and conform expressions to the scope, and expound them by it, and not stick too much in following of everything which these allegories seem to bear; but draw the doctrines from them, being compared with the scope, and other places of Scripture, not insisting too far upon the similitudes.

4. We are to take special notice of the Bride's frame in her manner of speaking. For we may observe that often in the vehemency of her passionate love, she breaks out without any seen connection or order (as in 1.2), and by cutted, broken, and vehement expressions, in her diverse flames and tender fits, as her case is up or down (abruptly, as it were), she useth to express herself.

5. We must not apply all so to the Church as to shut out [individual] believers, nor contrarily, but take in both, where both may come in. And more especially apply to the one, where the purpose makes most for it, as hath been said.

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